

Gandhi grandson 'comes home'

By Charmaine
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ALTHOUGH South Africa had been in the heart and mind of Professor Rajmohan Gandhi since childhood he resisted the urge to visit this country while apartheid was still intact.

Prof Gandhi who is currently on a three week 'understanding' visit to this country can boast links to two of India's great freedom fighters.

His paternal grandfather was the world-

renowned Mahatma Gandhi and his maternal grandfather was the great South Indian freedom fighter, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari.

His father was Mahatma Gandhi's son, Devdas who was born in Durban and when Professor Gandhi reached this city on Tuesday he says it "felt like I had come home."

He is a research professor at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi.

In addition to which he is a journalist, author and former politician.

His publications include biographies of Indian political figures and a study of Hindu-Muslim relations in the last 150 years.

ENORMOUS

Prof Gandhi, who so far has visited Johannesburg and Pretoria including some of the townships, says he has some idea of the enormous difficulty being faced by South Africans but he wants to have a better understanding of what is going on here.

"Like everybody else I am watching South Africa's venture into freedom and democracy with great eagerness, but I want to know how the people feel about it. I want to absorb South Africa more.

"Legal and constitutional safeguards function in a climate of trust. If trust is right then other safeguards will work.

"Right now people should spend their energies and thoughts on creating trust at community and grassroots levels across South Africa," he said.

Prof Gandhi said the compartmentalisation of the different race groups should be viewed with 'great

sadness' because people 'just don't know much about their brothers and sisters'.

"There is a self-imposed cultural poverty of an extreme kind amongst people in this country".

Prof Gandhi believed a truly equal partnership between the different race groups would be an adequate memorial for Mahatma Gandhi.

"It sounds like a hopeless dream but it is important to dream like that. If just a few people from each race group share this dream, then it can be turned into reality one day".

What touched his heart this week was a visit to Pietermaritzburg where he spoke to people sitting around the Gandhi statue.

"They were people of all races and they were intrigued when I was introduced as the Mahatma's grandson but they all spontaneously spoke about peace day and how people had gathered around the statue on that day to pray for an ideal for which my grandfather had lived and died."

Prof Gandhi is equally proud of his maternal grandfather, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and has written a two volume biography about him, entitled, "The Rajaji Story".



Prof. Rajmohan Gandhi with his cousin Sita Dhupelia and wife Usha.