

## INFLUENCE OF SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA IN CANADA

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When I first landed on the soil of North America 20 years ago, many new things dawned upon me. New culture, unique weather, a distinct society, and one thing that impressed me a lot was a vast network of the South Asian media in Canada. When I was striving hard to fit in a different environment of the greater Toronto area, a number of South Asian newspapers and several Radio and Television programs appeared to be like a pleasant surprise.

Based on records from the [National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada](#), there are 75 South Asian newspapers and more than 55 radio and TV productions in the greater Toronto area, though the quality and staffing of them varies widely. It is always said about South Asian Radio and TV programs in Canada that there is not a prerequisite or qualification to be a host or anchor. Anybody who could arrange sponsorships and commercials is a program presenter and that is why there has always been a question mark on the quality of South Asian radio and TV programs in Canada.

Despite all these facts, the influence of South Asian media in Canada is overwhelming and amazing that one of Canada's federal ministers once said that mainstream media has become a myth. It is interesting that many Canadian politicians closely monitor the South Asian media to be in contact with the community and to woo the electorate.

“Brampton's South Asian media, long dismissed as merely outlets that brought news from “back home” to immigrants, has evolved dramatically in the past decade. Now, these papers and broadcasters cover many local issues, have become major community influences and even score better access to politicians than their mainstream counterparts on occasion,” says DakshanaBascarmurthy.

“As a politician, you want to get your message out to the voters in these ridings as much as possible,” says April Lindgren, an associate professor at Ryerson University and director of its Journalism Research Centre. “If there are language issues you need to surmount or if you want to

show that you are engaged with that community and listening to its concerns and voices, ethnic media are an apt vehicle.” (The Globe and Mail, Canada.)

According to Dyversity Communications, there are two south Asian English daily and 1 Punjabi daily. There is a profusion of community publications in Toronto and Vancouver - servicing different south Asian language groups - Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali and Gujarati. There are more than five national south Asian TV stations in Canada with locally produced programs- more stations are coming to the market.

Four regional TV stations in Ontario and three in Vancouver provide 5 to 20 hours of programs each week. Numerous south Asian radio stations in Canada servicing the local communities, distinguished by the language of broadcast.

The future of South Asian media in Canada looks bright. Although the second generation may not be actively engaged with South Asian media, influx of immigrants from South Asia will always keep it alive.

Sources:

The Globe and Mail Canada

Dyversity Communications

Statistics Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

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