

History of Persian Media in Ontario

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Given that the Iranian community in Canada, particularly in the Province of Ontario, is very young - coming into existence a mere quarter of a century ago - the development of the mass media therein and the relevant issues and problems, too, are undergoing their initial, though fast developing and evolving, phases.

A brief account of the history of the Iranian media in Ontario since it's very beginning is presented hereunder in the following order:

1. The Press
2. Year Books & Directories
3. Radio Programs
4. Television Programs

1 - The Press

The first Persian language newspaper - a monthly publication - began life in Toronto shortly after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 or early 1980 under the title of *Sarbazane Iran* (Soldiers of Iran). With very basics of means and immense printing problems, it contained a few pages, and was only published for 10 months. It was distributed in southern Ontario as well as the City of Buffalo. The publishers were Dr. Pirasteh, Mr. Mansour Salem-Haghighi, and an Iranian businessman. Using a small Persian typewriter, the typing, printing and distribution of the paper proved to be a difficult challenge.

Two years hence, the literature/culture-based monthly magazine called *Rasaneh* (media) began publication under the direction of Mr. Mohammad Sadegh Kazemi, a scholarly person, who acted as the publisher and the editor-in-chief. This man to whom our community is indebted is in Toronto and to this date is continuing with his cultural activities. Interestingly, due to lack of facilities such as a Farsi typewriter or other type-setting means, all the news and articles, which were not many of, were calligraphed by the well-known and respected calligraphist, Mr. Sa'adatollah Monjazeab .. This process was practiced until a small typewriter was acquired much later. *Rasaneh* was published for five to six years.

The Iranians Monthly

The first professional newspaper, which observed journalistic values and practices, was the *Iranian* (Iranians) whose publisher and editor-in-chief was Dr. Mohammad Hossein Yazdanfar. It was first published in September 1985 and continued its regular monthly publication for 14 years with the help of Mr. Mansour Salem-Haghighi, who acted as the paper's manager. In 1998, the newspaper's publication rights were transferred to Mr. Ali Farshineh, an old friend of the publisher who worked very hard and continued publication of the paper until 2003. Unfortunately due to poor health this 20-year-old paper stopped publication in 2003

The Alborz Monthly

In 1987 another Persian newspaper, called *A/borz* (named after a mountain range in Iran), was published with a leftist slant by Mohammad Soleimani whose background was in writing and social activities. However it was short-lived due to financial problems and insufficient revenue from advertisements.

The Saiban Monthly

In late 1980's a monthly socio-cultural magazine named *Saiban* (sunshade) began publication under the management of 3 partners Mr. Bijan Binesh, Mr. Hassan Zerehi and "Mr. Soleyman Vaseghi, better known by the name, "SOLI", a famous singer. (Two of these gentlemen are currently editors of two of the most distinguished weekly papers in the Persian community in Canada), The *Saiban*, met with financial and technical problems, and did not survive long.

***Rooydad* (event)**

Mr. Bijan Binesh left *Saiban* shortly before its demise and launched his own monthly publication named *Rooydad* (event) which was a large newspaper format of general interest and published it for 18 months.

Rooydade Iranian

In 1989 *Rooydad* and *Iranian* merged together to form *Rooydade Iranian* which after a few months dropped *Rooydad* from its title and continued publication under the old format of the *Iranian* monthly newspaper.

Shahrvand twice-Weekly Newspaper

In July 1991 Mr. Massood Mansourzadeh and Mr. Hassan Zerehi and Ms. Shakiba Dilmaghani began publication of, *Shahrvand* (The Citizen), utilizing improved techniques as well as the experience gained from previous media and publication participation. In February 2000, *Shahrvand* also began publishing a mid-week edition due to increased demand of the market and in 2004 began an English language section in the same edition, making it a unique paper within our community. *Shahrvand* is now considered to be one of the most successful publications.

Emrooz Newspaper

In early 1990s, the first daily (5 days-a-week) newspaper called *Emrooz* (Today) was published in Toronto by Mr. Parviz Mohajer with Mr. Naghibi as its editor-in-chief. This also stopped publication within a few months due to insufficient advertisement revenue and high cost of operation.

IRCA Time

In 1993 Mr. Yunes Lak, who had long-standing experience in commerce and trade, started the *IRCA Time* (IRan-CANada Time), a weekly publication in Farsi and English. *IRCA Time* discontinued publication after only 66 •Issues.

Iran Star Newspaper

In April 1994 Mr. Bijan Binesh and Mr. Shahram Binesh began publication of The *Iran Star* weekly which is currently considered to be one of the most successful weeklies in Toronto.

Iran Javan Weekly

In 1994 Mr. Bohlool Panjeh-Bandpour and Mr. Hajizadeh began publication of *Iran Javan* (young Iran) in a magazine format which was received favourably by the community. The ownership of Iran Javan was subsequently transferred to the current publishers Mr. Babak Reyhanpour and Mr. Koorosh Shahbazian. This publication is mainly aimed at the younger generation and articles include youth-related.

Sarmayeh Weekly

In June 1994 Mr. Arman Parsi established *Sarmayeh* (The Investment), containing cultural and financial news and articles targeting the higher income higher educated individuals. This also did not survive for too long.

Jadval Magazine

Mr. Mohammad Amin Ismaili began publication of 1998 *Jadval* (crosswords), this bi-monthly entertainment magazine in March 1998, printed in a small pocket-sized format, containing mainly crossword puzzles, but also includes short stories, jokes and other entertainment news and articles., is liked by many people interested in such entertaining publications.

Iranica / Persica Magazine

Mr. Alireza Fakhrashrafi started this publication in March 1999, usually published monthly and sometimes in a quarterly format, the title was changed in 2003 to Persica and will begin publication in full English

language in January 2005, the target market of Persica is the intellectual circles and is solely subscription based.

Javanan (The Youth) Weekly

In late 1999 Javanan Weekly was founded by Mr. Mohammad Sohi and Mr. Bohlool Panjeh-Bandpour In order to cater to the increasing demand of our expanding youth population.

Honar va Me'mari (Art & Architecture)

This magazine, was published by Mr. Amir Amirsoleymani in December 1999 in a magazine format specifically for the interior design and architecture enthusiasts and was printed for several months.

Salaam Toronto Weekly

Salaam Toronto (Hello Toronto) has been publishing by Mr. Mohsen Taghavi since October 2000. It contains news and articles mostly related to Toronto and Canada. Salaam Toronto Weekly has allocated a section to the publication of news in the English language.

Maskan / Khaneh va Khanevadeh

In November 2002 Mr. Reza Fattahi began publication of the Maskan magazine aiming to target the real estate niche market. Maskan was published for one year and then in 2003 Mr. Taha Hassaniani joined the team, the name was changed to Khaneh va Khanevadeh and so the target market was also changed to address family issues.

Peyk Rooz Weekly Paper (daily messenger)

In March 2003 Dr. Mohammad TajDolati and Mr. Arash Abadi began publication of this daily paper but after 2 months the frequency was changed to a weekly format. The size, format and layout presentation of this paper was totally new and dynamic but it stopped publication in July 2004.

Ay Iran Weekly

Ay Iran (O Iran) published in 2003 attempting to find a niche for itself in Toronto's Persian language media to no avail.

Ava Weekly

Ava (The Voice) is one of the recent publications which began in April 2004 by Mr. Vahid Majidi containing socio-cultural and community-based articles and news.

Iran Times Weekly

This paper, affiliated with *Iran Javan* weekly started in November 2004 and has only printed 4 issues thus far, it is however, expected to have a successful future.

Rozaneh

This monthly magazine started publication in August 2004 by Mr. Ashkan Yousefpour. The format of this magazine is totally different from other publications in so far as the printing quality (full colour and full glossy) and presentation.

Moshaver Amlake Iranian

Amlake Iranian (Iranian real estate) Mr. Akbar Zare a veteran real estate broker started this paper in 2004 and has published 3 issues so far concentrating on property and real estate issues.

Discontinued Publications

There have been other Publications which could not stand the test of time and were discontinued very soon after starting up include: *Ara* (opinions) weekly, , *Sepidar* (aspen) weekly, *Khandaniha* (reader's digest) magazine.

2 - Year Books and Directories

The first Persian language business directory for Iranians in Toronto was published by Mr. Mohammad Sadegh Kazemi, publisher and editor of the *Rasaneh* monthly, this was published for a few years only.

Zarvaragh (Iranian golden Pages of Canada Directory)

Mr. Shahram Saremi embarked on publishing *Zarvaragh* (Iranian golden Pages of Canada Directory) which catered to a larger audience is currently the leading such directory in Canada in terms of general information it contains and circulation.

***Ketabe Aval* (The First book)**

In 2003 Mr. Mohsen Massoudi published *Ketabe Aval* as a complement to *Zarvaragh* and the second issue was published in early 2004.

Katibeh (epigraph)

In 2003 Mr. Kiumars Rezvanifar published an annual directory called Katibeh which stopped publication after the first issue.

3 - Persian Language Radio

The first Persian language radio was aired weekly in 1980-81 for The Iranian Association of Ontario, utilizing some of the best talents of that time. It was short-lived and eventually discontinued.

Payame Ashena

In June 1990 Payame Ashena weekly radio program was established by Mr. Mohammad Hossein Farahani, airing from CIAO radio station, a 2 hour program preserving Iranian culture and traditions. In October 1999 this radio program ceased to broadcast.

Radio Sedaye Parsi (Persian sound radio)

In 1986 Radio Sedaye Parsi was aired from CHIN network at the initiative of Mr. Massoud Mansourzadeh. It continued until 1994-5 at which point it was transferred to Fairchild Radio station. In 1997 the ownership was transferred to Mr. Nader Soltani who kept it going until 2002.

Radio Jom'a (Friday radio)

was initiated by Mr. Ghobadpour another Persian language radio which aired its programs on Fridays in the late 1990s, but it did not last very long.

Radio 24 Sa'ateh Sedaye Iran (24-hour voice of Iran radio)

In 1995 Ms. Afsaneh Ahmadi began broadcasting of this radio station. It operates as a complete radio station with local productions and direct broadcast of satellite programs.

Radio Sedaye Rooz (day's voice radio)

In 2002 Mr. Homyoun Rezavand established this 24 hour programs and currently locally produces a large percentage of its programming.

Radio Sedaye Iran (voice of Iran radio)

This 24 hour program started to air in 2002 and is affiliated with Persian Vision TV program. Ms. Sheena Amiri also oversees the management of this program which is aired from Rogers Cable digital channel 612.

4 - Persian Language Television Programs

Sheyda TV program

In late 1986 Mr. Nasser Clabirian established Sheyda TV program, a onehour weekly program. It contained entertainment, interviews, community news and was on the air for 3 years and was broadcast on CITY TV.

Namaye Iran TV (Images of Iran TV)

Mr. Behrouz Deravi who was the videographer and the cameraman of *Sheyda TV*, started Namaye Iran in 1991. Namaye Iran TV continued broadcasting until mid 2000, and was discontinued due to Mr. Deravi's departure to Los Angeles.

***Shahre Ma TV* (our city TV)**

Was established and managed by Mr. Assad Zarrinmehr in October 1994 and was aired for 30 minutes every week from Rogers Cable and in October 2000 started broadcasting from City TV in a one hour weekly format. It aims to broaden the knowledge of the community in southern Ontario about itself and its surroundings.

Iran Zameen TV (land of Iran TV)

Mr. Shahram Saremi established this one hour TV program which was directed by Mr. Kiumars Rezvanifar in 1993. This one hour weekly program was aired from CHCH TV station in Peterborough, soon after the departure of Mr. Saremi from this venture in 1996; Mr. Rezvanifar changed the format to a ½ hour, but started *Pasargad TV*, another ½ hour program with a similar format to Iran Zameen TV. These two programs are currently being aired on OMNI TV.

Bamdad TV (Morning TV)

Started in 2004, this bi-weekly 30-minute program airs from Rogers Cable (cultural channel). It has an air of freedom, politics, culture and intellectualism.

Persian Vision 24-Hour TV

In mid-2004 Ms. Sheena Amiri established this first 24 hour TV program with the help of Mr. Mansour Salem-Haghighi. This program is being aired from Rogers Cable on digital channel 611