

HEADLINER

PROMOTING GOOD NEWS STORIES ON THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION IS SUHANA MEHARCHAND'S MISSION IN LIFE. BY RENU MEHTA



A DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKER IN THE OFFING — SUHANA MEHARCHAND

THE telephone rings at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the caller wants the woman with the raspy voice giving the news to be taken off the air. But voice quality notwithstanding, the prime time six o'clock news anchor of the prestigious CBC has proven time and again that she can do a great job and do it better than many others.

Suhana Meharchand's love affair with journalism began when she was a little girl growing up in South Africa. Her uncle, who was fighting against apartheid and who truly believed that journalism could help inform people in making better choices, was her inspiration.

Her dreams, however, met with parental hurdles. As typical South Asian parents, Meharchand's parents wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer. She tried to fulfil their wishes and did a one-year stint at Queen's University studying biology. Then, deciding she had had enough, she took off for Europe for two years. It is during this period that she finally gained the courage to tell her parents that she had decided to be a journalist because that filled her soul.

On completing the four-year journalism programme at Ryerson, Meharchand was offered two jobs — a rare thing in itself. The first was to anchor the six o'clock news at Yorkton, Saskatchewan, which was a bigger desk and offered more money. And the other was to be an editorial assistant with the CBC at Windsor.

A JOURNALIST FIRST

Suhana chose the editorial assistant's

position because she wanted to be a journalist first. She knew how to tell stories, she knew how to interview and the CBC at Windsor gave her the opportunity to start from the bottom.

Today, other South Asians see her as a path breaker and many want to follow in her footsteps, which she takes as a real honour. What makes her different? Her steady step-by-step approach, her one, two and three-year plans. She always makes her goals known to her executive producer or boss because, according to Meharchand, if you don't tell them, they cannot read your mind and women very often tend to shy away from talking about their dreams. Her advice to others is to focus clearly on your dream, find a mentor, somebody you admire and respect, and let them help you attain that dream.

Meharchand's dream is to anchor the National News. The first day she filled in for Peter Mansbridge (the current National News anchor for CBC and the number one news anchor in Canada), her father cried and said he didn't feel like an immigrant any more.

Her best achievement has been to host a special luncheon in honour of President Nelson Mandela of South Africa during his last visit to Canada.

FUTURE PLANS

Meharchand wants to make documentaries in the future, focusing on immigrants who have made a difference to Canada. She doesn't think that enough has been done to pat ourselves on the back. In her words, "We're all tired of bad news and we still have a long way to go in promoting the good news."