

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF
PARSEE PRAKASH COMPILED BY B. B. PATEL**

Notes composed by

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In 1849, was born in the city of Bombay (Mumbaī), India, a son to a Parsee couple (followers of the religion of the Prophet Zarathushtra, from Ancient Persia), who was destined to have his name intrinsically connected with his community's history. His full name is Bahmanji Behramji Patel. From his early childhood he maintained detailed scrapbooks of newspaper and periodical cuttings of major events in the life of the Parsee community on a world wide basis, but more particularly from the city of Bombay (Mumbaī). It is estimated at the time of his demise, that he had left behind about 200 fully filled scrapbooks of varying size and formats to posterity. The accumulated information was so vital and important, that even before his death, members of his community and benevolent institutions helped him establish a periodical, that would eventually make available to the general public, the contents of those scrapbooks. The periodical was simply named "Parsee Prakash". Several issues (or parts) of this periodical were later bound together and re-published as Volumes of Parsee Prakash. For instance the first 11 parts of this periodical were later bound and made available to the public as Volume 1 of Parsee Prakash, in 1878. The whole volume was later re-published in 1888.

After the publication of Volume 1 of Parsee Prakash, Mr. B. B. Patel passed away in 1908, and the Volume 2 of this work was subsequently published by the efforts of his benevolent wife. After Volume 2, a Parsee benevolent institution hired the services of an illustrious scholar, Mr. Rustam Barjorji Paymaster to carry on the publications of Parsee Prakash. Mr Paymaster was able to compile and edit Volumes 3 to 7 of Parsee Prakash and have them subsequently published. Volume 7 was thus published as late as 1942.

With the demise of Mr. Paymaster in 1943, further work on Parsee Prakash came to a grinding halt. Several individual scholars and benevolent institutions, attempted to revive the periodical with added volumes in the early 1960s, but their attempts and products are described in very sketchy and nebulous terms. The composer of this note (NMK) is informed without substantial proof by some scholars that the periodical currently ends with Volume 11, with an added Volume 12, serving as the Index to the whole set. Elsewise he is informed that the set is reprinted in the late 1960s in 20 volumes.

Irrespective of the actual size of the Parsee Prakash set, one fact remains totally undisputed, by one and all. No history of the Parsee community can be written without constant consultations to Parsee Prakash. Time has made it one of the last and most definitive source for events in the history of the Parsee community of Bombay (Mumbaī). With very limited number of copies published, it is perhaps the rarest of monographs that is sought by book lovers the world over, today. This set printed since 1878 and ending in 1942, now stands on the brink of extinction. The chemicals used in the papers will eventually in the next few decades reduce the existing sets to a mere powder state. Its total extinction would be a grievous loss to the Parsee community the world over, and to the future historians of the Parsee community. It is in dire need of being digitized at very high resolutions and archived for posterity.

The composer of this note (NMK) was most fortunate to find an outstanding individual and sympathizer in the person of Dr. Richard Kunst, the Director of the Humanities Computing Laboratory, who understanding the gravity of the situation, gave his utmost in digitizing the rarest section of this set (i.e Volumes 1,2,3 only) from a nearly disintegrated copy of the original, making it truly a “labour of love” and a “deep and dedicated service” to friends and lovers of the Parsee community. He has no adequate words to thank Dr. Richard Kunst, and hopes his community will be deeply appreciative of his efforts.

Thus one and all may now have from the Humanities Computing Laboratory, a CD-R version of Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the “Parsee Prakash” set (to be later reissued in a single disc DVD format). Each volume of “Parsee Prakash” is formatted on two physical CD-Rs.

You have a rare piece of history before you. May you be enlightened and delighted by this very wonderful 3-volume digitized set.



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