

Laghu Pārāshari – Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra Controversy

Myth versus Truth

In the modern times I see a lot of misunderstanding amongst even those who swear by Sage Pārāshara and claim to follow his teachings per “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra”, about another great astrological text “Laghu Pārāshari”, that has been available to astrologers even before “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra” saw the light of the day. I do not generally like to comment on what other astrologers opine as everyone is free to his/her opinion, and more so in the vedic science of astrology. However it pains me when one ancient text or other is criticized, without understanding how they came to be well-known in modern times.

The story of how what we know as “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra” got its name, and was discovered and its commentary came to be known by that name is interesting. As a matter of fact, texts like “Ududāya-Pradeepa aka Laghu Pārāshari” and “Ududāya Dashā aka Madhya Pārāshari” were already available to astrologers of the day. This led the revered astrologer Sitārām Jhā, who was also Professor of Astrology in the “Kāshi Sanskrit University”, to surmise that there must be some larger text of sage Pārāshara from which the portion on Vimshottari Dashā (Laghu means small) has been commented upon in “Laghu Pārāshari”, since Ududāya Pradeepa (also commonly known as Laghu Pārāshari) had the following shloka:

वयं पराशरीं होरामनुसृत्य यथामतिं।

उदुदायप्रदीपाख्यं कुर्मो दैवविदां मुदे ॥ २ ॥

vayaṁ parāśarīṁ horāmanusṛtya yathāmatim |

ududāyapradīpākhyam kurmo daivavidāṁ mude ||2||

Meaning: Having read/followed/understood the treatise of Sage Pārāshara on Horā (predictive science related to living beings), to the best of my intellect, I am now writing this astrological text called the “Ududāya Pradeepa” for the pleasure/benefit of the knowers of the fate (astrologers).

Pandit Sitārām Jhā, then began searching for the manuscripts preserved with the learned pundits of Holy City of Kāshi (Banaras). Finally his teacher Pandit Muralidhar Jhā told him that late Pandit Jeevanātha Jhā had one manuscript called “Pārāshara Horā” and that it might be with his disciple Pt. Kāshināth Jhā. Pt. Sitārām Jhā then contacted Pt. Kāshināth Jhā and obtained his permission to copy the manuscript. He then wrote a commentary on the Sanskrit manuscript, in Hindi language. Being a Sanskrit Scholar, since Laghu means small, Madhya means medium and Brihat means large (or all encompassing), he named his commentary on “Pārāshara Horā” as “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra”. There is also a manuscript named “Pārāshariya”, which has somewhat similar shlokas, available in the Oriental Library in Ujjain. There are other versions of the manuscript available in different oriental libraries.

I am certain that those who swear by Sage Pārāshara and “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra” and tend to project Laghu Pārāshari as some other and non-standard text, have obviously never bothered to read either Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra aka Pārāshari Horā/Pārāshariya, or Laghu Pārāshari themselves. It might interest the readers to know that Laghu Pārāshari does not contain a single shloka (barring the first two shloka which are prayer and comment of the commentator), that is not available in the “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra”. As a matter of fact, as indicated in that text, “Laghu Pārāshari” is a commentary on what Sage Pārāshara has said about how to analyze the effects of Vimshottari dashā (at different levels) only, for the benefit of astrologers.

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It is indeed a sorry state of affairs, in present times, that astrologers who claim Sage Pārāshara to be the only authority of vedic astrology, do not even bother to read his tome in its entirety, otherwise they would have read the below shloka:

Meaning: *Oh Brahmin! This science was told to Sage Nārada by Lord Brahma and he (Nārada) then told the same to sage Shaunaka and other sages. I have told this knowledge (of the science of astrology), as understood by me, to you. Do not give this science to those who are jealous of others or those who indulge in criticizing others.*

Had the modern astrologers bothered to read “Brihat Pārāshara Horā Shāstra”, carefully, they would have understood that even the venerated Sage Pārāshara does not claim to be originator of the science of Vedic Astrologer and with all humility at his command credits Nārada, Shaunaka and other sages, for the knowledge in Vedic astrology. He then goes on to say that what he is telling his disciple Maitreya the same knowledge as understood by him, not even claiming that he has understood it in all its flavors. This humility of the Sage Pārāshara makes him truly knowledgeable and much venerated. I wish modern astrologers learn from him, both his humility and also that knowledge of vedic astrologer so vast that no single person can claim to know all of it and that many sages have contributed to that knowledge.