



Lopamudra Taught That Spirituality Must Embrace Life

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● Kshema Jatuhkarna

Long before philosophy flourished in ancient Greece, before Plato and Aristotle shaped Western intellectual traditions, profound philosophical ideas were already being explored in the Indian subcontinent. Among the remarkable voices preserved from this early period is Lopamudra, a Vedic rishika (female seer) whose words are recorded in the Rig Veda, one of humanity's oldest surviving religious and philosophical texts. For many scholars of Indian philosophy, Lopamudra stands as one of the earliest known women whose philosophical reflections have been preserved in written tradition. Her dialogue with the sage Agastya in Rig Veda 1.179 remains one of the most compelling conversations on the relationship between spirituality, desire, duty, and human life. Rather than advocating absolute renunciation, Lopamudra presents a philosophy of balance, one that continues to resonate thousands of years later. Lopamudra is also known as Kaveri, Kaushitaki and Varaprada, and was a philosopher according to ancient Vedic Indian literature. She was the wife of the sage Agastya who is believed to have lived in the Rigveda period (1950 BC-1100 BC) as many hymns have been attributed as her contribution to this Veda. She was not only the consort of

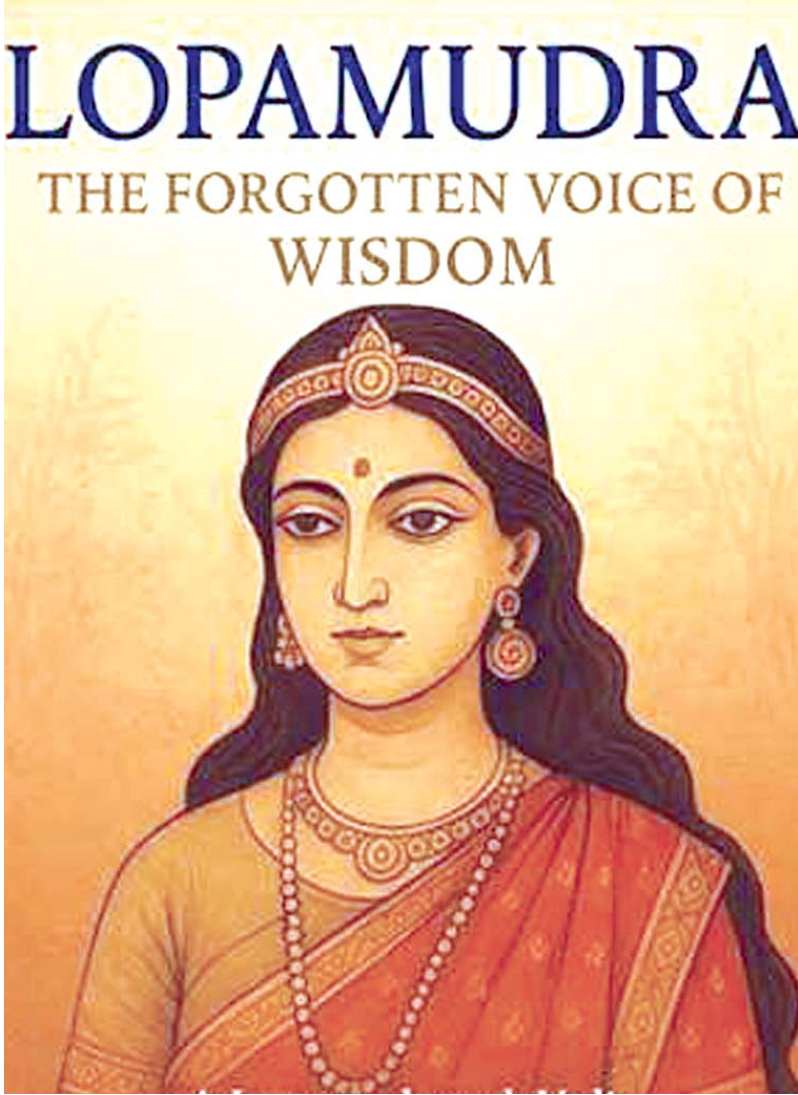
Agastya but a Rishiki in her own right, as she was the well known Rishiki who visualized the "Hadi Panchadas" mantra of the Srikul Shakta tradition of Hinduism. She was one of the prominent Brahmasvadinis. There are three versions of Lopamudra's legend; one is in the Rigveda Hymns; the second is in the epic Mahabharata (Vanaparva: Tirtha-yatra Parva), where there is an elaborate version with a mention that Agastya Rishi did penance at Gangadwara (Haridwar), with the help of his wife, Lopamudra (the princess of Vidarbha). According to this legend, Lopamudra was created by sage Agastya with the most graceful parts of animals such as eyes of the deer etc. The third version is Giridhara Ramayana. The name Lopamudra signifies the loss (lopa) that the animals and plants suffered by giving their distinctive beauties (mudras) when Agastya created her. After creating her, Agastya gave Lopamudra to the King of Vidarbha who was doing penance seeking for a progeny. Agastya had created Lopamudra with the intention of marrying her. The king brought up Lopamudra as his daughter. When she grew up, Agastya demanded her hand in marriage. Lopamudra agreed to marry him and left the King's palace for his hermitage. However, after some time, she grew tired of Agastya's austerity. She wrote hymn in the Rigveda, asking for his attention and love.



परवीरं शरदः शश्रमणा दोषा
वस्त्रेषुसो जयन्तीः
मिनाति शरियं जरिमा तनुमय्यु
नु पत्नीरूपो जगम्युः
ये चिद धि पूर्व रत्नसाप आसन
साकं देवेश्वरदत्तानि
ते चिदवसुर्नृन्तमायुः समू नु
पत्नीर्लभिर्नृजगम्युः
Agastya answered-
न यथा शरत्तं यद्वन्ति देवा
विश्वा इत सार्था अप्यस्ननाव
जयादेव शतनीयमजिं यत
सयज्वा मिथुनाव्यजाव
नदस्य मा रुधतः काम आगन्ति
आजातो अमुतः कुतरित्त
लोपामुद्र वर्षजं नी रिणति धीरमयीर
धरति शवसन्
One student of the muni asked and commented-
इमं न सोममन्त्रितो हर्तुं पीतमयु वरुवे
यत सीमागश्चवर्मा तत सु मर्तुं पुत्रकामो
हि मर्यः
अग्रस्तः खनमनः खनिर्तः परजमपत्यं
बलिष्ठमानः
उभौ वर्णव रश्मिरुः पुषोष सत्या
देवेषुशिषो जगाम
In English, it means:
[Lopamudra] For many

#VEDIC PHILOSOPHY
autumn has 1 been laboring, evening and morning, through the aging dawns. Old Age diminishes the beauty of bodies. Bullish men should now come to their wives. [Lopamudra] For even those ancients who served truth and at one with the gods spoke truths, even they got out of harness for they did not reach the end. Wives should now unite with their bullish (husbands). [Agastya] Not in vain is the labor that the gods help. Let us take on all contenders; let us two win here the contest of a hundred stratagems, when a united couple we will drive on. [Agastya] The lust of a mounting bull has come to me, lust arisen from there, from everywhere. Lopamudra draws the bull to herself: that giddy woman sucks the steadfast man. [Student or Agastya] This soma within my heart, just drunk do I adore. Whatever offense we have committed, let him forgive that for of my many desires in mortal man. Agastya, digging with spades, seeking offspring, descendants, power, cherished, a sage of mighty strength, both classes, and with the Gods obtained his prayer's fulfilment. The hymn made Agastya realize his duties towards his wife. The couple had a son named Dridhasyu, who became a poet. Together with her husband, she is also credited with spreading the fame of the *Latita Sahasranama* (the thousand names of the Divine Mother). It is also believed that Agastya learnt the hymns of Latita Sahasranama from *Hayagriva* who is an avatar of Lord Vishnu. **A Voice Preserved in the Rig Veda**
The Rig Veda is more than a collection of hymns. It is a window into the intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical world of Vedic civilization. Among its many composers are several women seers whose contributions demonstrate that philosophical inquiry was not limited to men. Lopamudra's hymn is distinctive because it takes the form of a dialogue. Addressing her husband, the revered sage Agastya, she questions an approach to spirituality that neglects worldly responsibilities in pursuit of extreme asceticism. Her words are thoughtful rather than confrontational. She does not reject spiritual discipline. Instead, she asks whether a life that suppresses human needs and responsibilities can truly be considered complete. **Challenging Extreme Asceticism**
At the heart of Rig Veda 1.179 lies a timeless philosophical question:

Can spiritual progress come at the cost of human relationships and worldly responsibilities? Agastya represents the ideal of rigorous austerity and renunciation. Lopamudra responds by reminding him that human life is not fulfilled through denial alone. Her argument is subtle yet profound. Asceticism without balance, she suggests, risks becoming dryness of the soul. Spirituality should elevate human life, not detach it from the responsibilities and relationships that give it meaning. Rather than opposing renunciation, she refines its purpose. **Three Timeless Principles**
Lopamudra's philosophy can be understood through three enduring principles. **1. Spiritual Life Must Not Deny Material Responsibility**
For Lopamudra, genuine spirituality does not require abandoning one's obligations. Family, society, and duty are not obstacles to enlightenment but part of the path itself. A life of wisdom includes fulfilling one's responsibilities with integrity rather than escaping them. **2. Desire Is Not Evil, It Must Be Guided by Dharma**
One of Lopamudra's most striking insights is her treatment of desire. She does not portray desire as something inherently sinful or



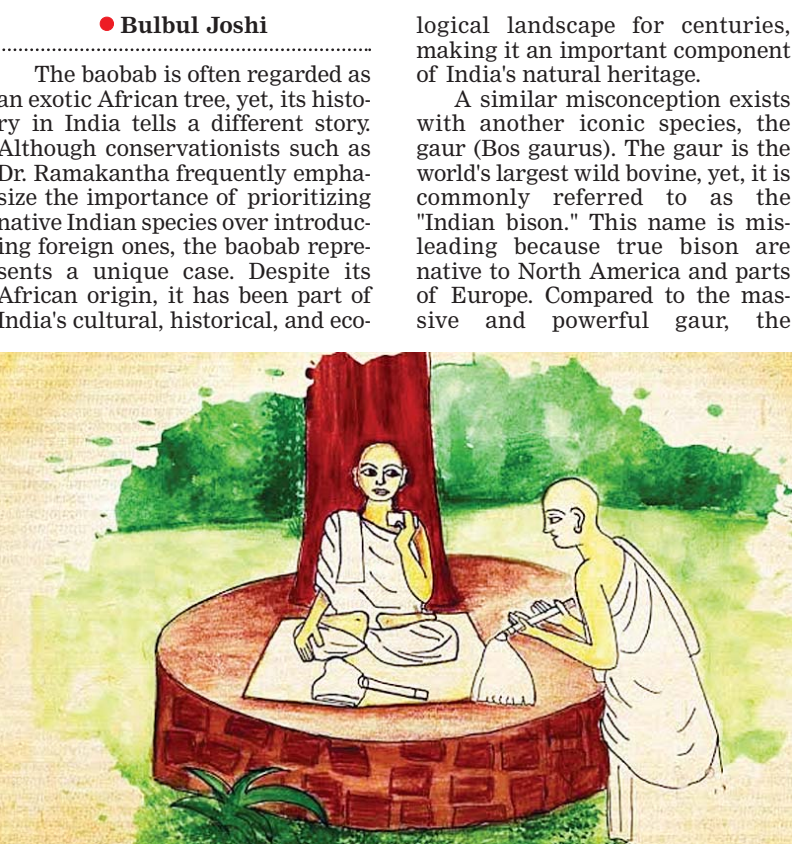
impure. Instead, she argues that desire becomes meaningful when aligned with dharma, ethical responsibility, moral order, and righteous conduct. In this vision, desire is neither worshipped nor suppressed. It is disciplined, integrated, and directed towards a meaningful life. **3. Wisdom Requires Balance**
Perhaps, Lopamudra's greatest philosophical contribution is her insistence on harmony. Human flourishing requires balance between contemplation and action, austerity and affection, renunciation and household life. This balanced vision later finds echoes in many streams of Indian thought, where spiritual realization is often understood as compatible with responsible engagement in the world. **A Philosophy of Harmonised Living**
When philosophy was still taking shape in many parts of the ancient world, Lopamudra was articulating a sophisticated vision of integrated living. She did not dismiss spirituality. She humanised it. She did not reject asceticism. She refined it. Her philosophy suggests that inner freedom is not achieved by fleeing the world but by living wisely within it. **A Deeper Truth of Sanatana Dharma**
Lopamudra's dialogue reflects a broader ideal found across many

traditions within Sanatana Dharma: liberation is not necessarily an escape from life but mastery within it. The spiritual path is not always one of withdrawal. It can also be a path of responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, and harmonious living. In this understanding, the household itself becomes a place where wisdom may be cultivated. **A Voice That Still Speaks**
Thousands of years have passed since Lopamudra's words were composed, yet her questions remain deeply relevant. How should ambition be balanced with contentment? Can spirituality coexist with family life? Is desire always an obstacle, or can it become a force for ethical living? Her dialogue offers no simplistic answers. Instead, it invites reflection on what it means to live a complete human life. Today, her voice continues to echo through the hymns of the Rig Veda, reminding readers that some of humanity's earliest philosophical conversations included the insights of women. Whether viewed through the lens of history, philosophy, or spirituality, Lopamudra stands as one of the most significant female thinkers preserved in the ancient world, a Vedic philosopher whose vision of balance, responsibility, and inner freedom continues to inspire across cultures and generations. rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

An Indian Heritage Tree with African Roots



A similar misconception exists with another iconic species, the gaur (Bos gaurus). The gaur is the world's largest wild bovine, yet, it is commonly referred to as the "Indian bison." This name is misleading because true bison are native to North America and parts of Europe. Compared to the massive and powerful gaur, the American bison is a different species altogether. The continued use of the term "Indian bison" obscures the gaur's distinct identity and global significance.



American bison is a different species altogether. The continued use of the term "Indian bison" obscures the gaur's distinct identity and global significance. The baobab's journey to India is closely linked with ancient trade networks. Historical accounts suggest that Arab traders introduced the species from the Sub-Saharan regions of Africa to the Indian subcontinent many centuries ago. Over time, the tree became firmly established in India's dry landscapes and was gradually absorbed into local traditions and belief systems. Indian mythology often speaks of the Samudra Manthan, the great churning of the cosmic ocean by the devas and asuras using the serpent Shesha Nag. According to the legend, twelve precious treasures emerged from the ocean, along with the deadly poison (vish). While the baobab is not one of these treasures, its remarkable presence and longevity have allowed it to acquire a sacred status in several parts of India, becoming woven into local folklore and religious traditions. The tree also holds significance in Jain history. According to tradition, the second of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, Ajinath, was once a



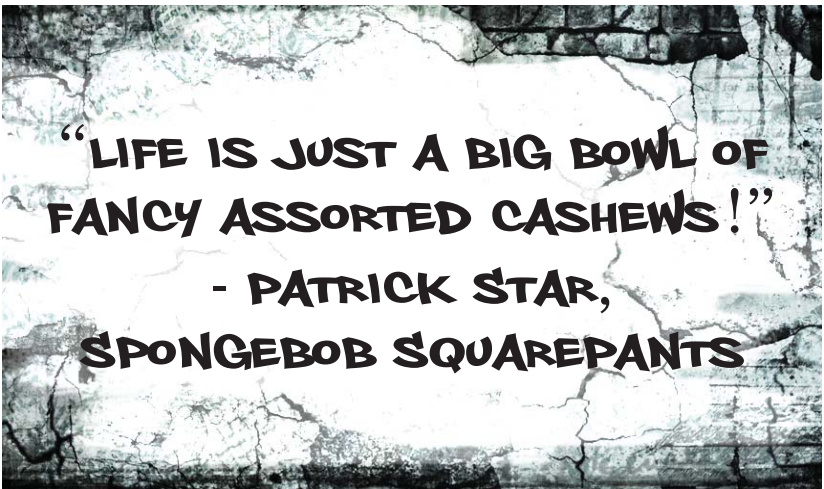
#BAOBAB
Tirthankara, Mahavira, lived around the 6th century BCE, the earlier Tirthankaras belong to a much older and largely undateable spiritual tradition. Such associations have further strengthened the baobab's place in India's religious heritage. The baobab also symbolizes the deep biological connections between Africa and India. Numerous plant species are shared across the two regions, reflecting ancient trade, migration, and ecological similarities. One example is Acacia nilotica, whose scientific name is derived from the Nile River in Africa. Although African in origin, it has become an integral component of Indian landscapes, agriculture, and traditional medicine. Another example is Balanites aegyptiaca, commonly known as the desert date. This hardy tree forms part of the medicinal heritage of dryland ecosystems in both Africa and India. Its fruits are highly nutritious, and the National Institute of Nutrition has identified them among the ten most nutritious fruits found in India. They are exceptionally rich in polyphenols and possess strong antioxidant properties, while also providing

significant amounts of vitamin C, potassium, calcium, and phosphorus. In many parts of India, the fruit is known by local names such as Khurasani Imli and Vilayati Imli, reflecting its long-standing integration into regional cultures. The story of the baobab reminds us that heritage is not determined solely by a species' place of origin. Some species, though introduced centuries ago, become deeply embedded in a

country's ecological, cultural, and spiritual fabric. Like the baobab, several African species have become inseparable from India's landscapes and traditions. Their histories demonstrate that the relationship between India and Africa extends beyond commerce, it encompasses shared biodiversity, cultural exchange, and centuries of ecological coexistence. rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



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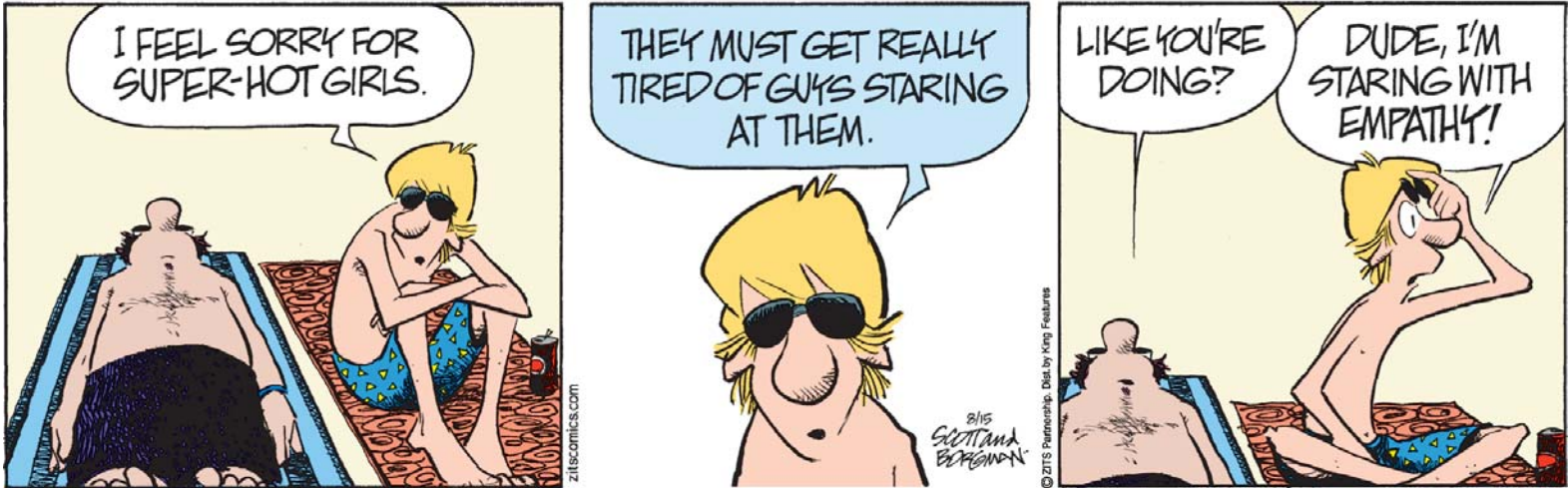


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman