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ASHTAVAKRA AND MAHARAJ JANAK

The learned Rishi Uddalaka married off his daughter Sujata to his favourite disciple Kahoda. They continued to reside in his Ashram. Sujata used to hear their discussions when she became pregnant.

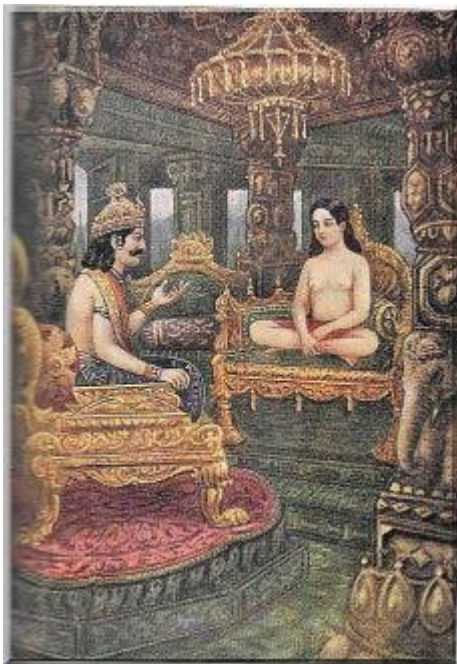
The unborn child, thus, acquired mastery on Vedas.



Kahoda was not as skilled as his Guru and made mistakes frequently. Unable to bear this, the unborn child started correcting him from his mother's womb. Humiliated Kahoda cursed his child to be born with 8 bends in his body. Thus, Ashtavakra was born (meaning one with 8 bends).



Much later, a brahmin from varunlok challenged learned men in Janak's court for a shastrartha (competition on shastra). Kahoda also participated but lost. So he was taken as captive by the brahmin. When Ashtavakra came to know this, he travelled to Janak's court to meet him.



In the court, all men ridiculed him due to his twisted body. Ashtavakra told Janak that his court was full of shoemakers and not learned men. They see only skin. They do not see the atma. They have no realization of paramatma. For them, outer skin is what matters.



All heads hung in shame. Janak bowed down to Ashtavakra and touched his lotus feet. Ashtavakra then challenged the brahmin to have shashtraartha and defeated him. As per the rules of challenge the brahmin freed all captives, including Ashtavakra's father Muni Kahoda.

Narayan Hari■■■

