BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Rise of Magadh.

The Pradyota Dynasty.
(779 B.C. to 655 B.C.)

The 8th century B.C. is a turning-point in the history of ancient India. For, it witnessed "the old order changed, yielding place to new." The old dynasties gave place to new ones; Sanskrit bowed to Prakrit; spiritualistic civilisation to a materialistic one; the Vedic rites to philosophical speculations. Magadh (South Behar) will now exercise her imperial sway over India and outside for over a thousand years.

Ripunjaya, the last king of the Vāhradātha dynasty was profligate, worthless and despotic. The ministers and the people were equally sick of him and his long reign of 50 years. At length Sunaka, the prime minister, most probably a Brahmin, killed his master and secured the throne for his own son Pradyota who began to rule about 779 B.C. The Pradyota dynasty, a short one of 5 kings, ruled some 124 solar years. The usurper Pradyota ought to have been a good king, but he proved the reverse of it. He was a hypocrite and believed none; nobody believed him in return. The nobles of the State, a powerful body, showed him no regard. The Matsya Purana does not mention even his name.
He ruled some 15 years. The second king Pālaka was a better monarch. It is said that he did nothing unbecoming a king. He was powerful and wise. The vassal kings were all submissive to him. He ruled 23 years (764 to 741 B.C.). The third king Visākha-yupa, a mere blank name, ruled some 35 years (741-706 B.C.)

The next king was Janaśaka who ruled some 30 years (706 to 676 B.C.) The last king was Nandi-varbhana who ruled 20 years. The last three kings departed from the wise policy of Pālaka and were thorough despots. The country groaned under them. At last, the people, justly indignant, dethroned Nandi-varbhana and set up Sisunaga in his place. The Puranists call the kings of the Pradyota dynasty Varna Sakara i.e. mingled colours. Before we pass on to the next dynasty, we shall note here some other important points.

Parasvanath (830 to 750 B.C.), the 23rd Jain Reformer, son of king Asavasena and queen Bāmādevi of Benares and son-in-law to king Prasenajit of Oudh, refused royalty, lived as an ascetic and attained pure wisdom at Benares. Then he began to preach. His Jainism prevailed from Bengal to Gujrat. The districts of Maldah and Bogra were great centres of his faith. His converts were mostly from the depressed classes of the Hindus and Non Aryans. He died on the Sumheta or Pārśvanath Hill in the Hazaribagh district, at the age of 72+70 (Solar), 230+23 (Solar) years before the death of Mahavira in 527 B.C. In Rajputana his adherents grew very powerful and oppressed the Hindus in many ways. The Rishis applied to Hindu
kings for help, but in vain. At last they created new warriors on Mt. Abu to fight out their enemies, the atheistic Jains. The new heroes, Hinduised certainly from some foreign source,—most probably from the early Scythians or Takshaks (Turks) defeated the Indo-Greeks and saved the Hindus. We are told, that this happened at least before 600 B.C. The new warriors, called the “Pise-Bolu,” were Pratihāras, the Prāmāras, the Chālukyas or Solanki and the Chauhāns. Agnīśāla was the first great Chauhan. We shall see them very powerful later on.