

The king who gave his name to earth.

Retold by
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In the royal lineage of Dhruva, there was a king called Anga. He married Suneetha who was the daughter of Yama, the god of death. Suneetha was a very cruel woman and used to beat and punish all people. Once she went to the forest and saw a gandharwa, Sushankha, the son of Gethakolahala. Sushankha was doing penance in the forest. He was extremely pretty and a great adept in music. Suneetha was very much attracted towards him, but he did not respond to his overtures. She started troubling him. But Sushankha being good, excused all this. One day she beat him black and blue. Sushankha told her, "This is not befitting a lady. You should not do this." Suneetha replied, "I am the daughter of God of death and I will also punish like him." When she told about this incident to her father, he simply kept quiet. This made Suneetha more angry and she again started beating Sushankha. Infuriated he cursed her, "The Son who will be born to you would be a great sinner and all his life he would trouble Devas and Brahmins."

Suneetha never bothered about this curse and a son was born to her. She called him Vena.

Vena was an extremely cruel man and started troubling all his subjects as well as the great saints living in his kingdom. He told them, "From now on you should not offer any fire sacrifices to Gods. If you are particular you can do them to please me." Though the saints told him, that fire sacrifices would please the gods and they would shower their blessings on him and his country, he simply did not listen to them. Then the sages killed him by using a Durbha grass which was made a weapon by their holy chants. Since there was no king or government, the entire country suffered under bad people and robbers. So all the people approached the sages and requested them to create a king for them. The Saints then churned the left hand of the dead Vena. From his left hand a black short individual emerged. He was the personification of sins committed by Vena. The saints named him as Nishadha and asked him to hunt for his living.

Then the saints churned the right hand of Vena. From his right hand emerged, a divine boy armed with bow and arrows as well as the holy wheel. The saints and devas called him Prathu and made him the king to rule over all the earth. A holy bow called Ajagavam and armour fell from the heaven for his use. The seas brought lot of precious gems for his carnation. Lord Brahma found the mark of holy wheel on his right hand and recognized him as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

He integrated the people who were troubled and divided by his father and was called as "Raja" (He who integrates). He was so great that the ocean gave way to him whenever he wanted to cross and mountains became small allowing him to cross. The two poets created by Lord Brahma named as Sootha and Magadha praised him as follows" This king will always tell the truth, would stick to his oaths, would be charitable and a personification of all good characters."

But Prathu faced a major problem. During the misrule of his father, all the plants and trees were drawn in to the earth by the goddess of earth and there was nothing to eat for any being. Prathu hunted for the goddess earth, which took the form of a cow and started running. Prathu followed the goddess, wherever she went. Tired of the chase, Prathu decided to shoot an arrow at the Cow (Goddess). She asked him, "Oh king, why are you

trying to kill me, who am a lady?" The king replied, "The shastras permit killing of anyone who does evil deeds and you are killing my people by starving them." The cow replied, "When you kill me, they won't have a place to stay." The king replied, "I would create a place for their stay by my divine powers." Then the cow who was earth told him, "I will give back all the plants and food to you in the form of milk. You can milk me for them, after creating a calf for me." Prathu saw that the mountains were everywhere and with their being scattered everywhere cultivation was not possible. So he drew the mountains together and created groups of mountains leaving lot of plain land. He then made Swayambhuva Manu as a calf and milked the Cow Earth. Through this he got back all the plant and animal systems. Because of this he became the father of earth and the earth, because of him was called "Pruthvi".

Prathu then became the emperor of the entire earth and looked after his subjects which included all beings properly. After reaching the ripe old age Prathu retired to the forests leaving the Earth to his son Vijithaswa. After a hoary penance he merged with God.