

TRADITIONS OF THE SAPTARSI GROUP

DOWN TO THE END OF THE GUPTA PERIOD

John Edward Mitchiner

Thesis submitted to the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Oriental
and African Studies

1976



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ABSTRACT

Traditions of the Saptarṣi Group underwent a number of changes in the period between the Vedic Saṃhitās and the early Purāṇas. The change in designation of the constellation Ursa Major from Rkṣas to Rṣis is an indication of the Indianisation of essentially Indo-European ideas: while the tradition of the Saptarṣis as Prāṇas is indicative of the early speculative identity of macrocosm and microcosm within the Saptarṣi traditions. (Chapter 1).

Two main lists of the Saptarṣi group may be discerned: one of which appears primarily in the Vedic texts, and the other in the Epic and Purāṇic texts. (Chapters 1-2).

The formulation of the second main list is developed from lists of six Prajāpatis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: and in turn gives rise to lists of eight, nine and ten Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. (Chapter 2).

The change in identities between the Rṣis of the two main lists is traceable in some measure to the influence over the Saptarṣi traditions of Brahmin families in regions to the south of the Vindhya. (Chapter 3).

The Purāṇic tradition of listing 14 Saptarṣi groups in different Manvantaras presupposes an earlier tradition of the appearance of Saptarṣi groups in different Yugas of a Kalpa. (Chapter 4)

The tradition of the Saptarṣis as stars develops from ideas of their nature as embodiments of Fire: while the astronomical theory of the Saptarṣi Yuga demonstrates two versions, differing in the number of Nakṣatras in each version. (Chapter 5).

Both the second main list of the Saptarṣi group and the second version of the Saptarṣi Yuga (Chapters 2-3 and 5) demonstrate the degree to which the Epic and Purāṇic traditions of the Saptarṣi group were promulgated and influenced by Brahmin families of the Western Deccan, particularly under the Śātavāhana and Vākāṭaka dynasties during the early centuries of the Christian era.

CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Contents	3
List of Tables	6
Abbreviations	7
Acknowledgements	8
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	10
(a) Previous Studies	10
(b) The Chronology of the Textual Material	14
(c) Textual Citations	32
<u>CHAPTER 1 : Early Traditions of the Saptarsi Group</u>	33
1. Introduction	33
2. Enumerations of the Saptarsi Group	34
(a) The Sūtra Texts	34
(b) The Brāhmana and Upaniṣadic Texts	37
(c) The Vedic Samhitās	40
3. Further Designations of the Saptarsi Group	44
(a) Vipras	44
(b) Rksas	47
(c) Prānas	57
(d) Other Designations	69
4. Alternative Names of Individual Rsis	80
<u>CHAPTER 2 : The Later Lists of the Saptarsi Group</u>	86
1. Introduction	86
(a) The Two Main Lists of the Saptarsi Group	86
(b) Further Designations of the Saptarsi Group	88
2. Enumerations of the Saptarsi Group	90
(a) The Rāmāyana	90
(b) The Mahābhārata	92
(c) The Harivaṃśa	101
(d) The Early Purānic Texts	106

	4.
(e) The Astronomical Texts	114
(f) Conclusions	117
3. Further Designations of the Saptarsi Group	119
(a) The Prajāpatis	120
(b) The Mind-born Sons of Brahmā	125
4. Conclusion	132
<u>CHAPTER 3</u> : Gotra and Regional Factors operative in the Formulation of the Second Main List of the Saptarsi Group	134
1. Introduction	134
2. Gotra Factors	135
(a) The General Nature of the Gotra Organisation	135
(b) Lists of the Saptarsis as Founders of Lineages	138
(c) Relationships between the Main Rsis	147
(d) Gotra Influences in the Rsi Traditions	157
(e) Conclusion	165
3. Regional Factors	168
(a) The Region of the Saptarsi Group	168
(b) The Region of Rsis in the Earlier Texts	175
(c) The Region of Rsis in the Rāmāyana	178
(d) The Region of Rsis in the Mahābhārata and the Early Purānic Texts	185
(e) Conclusion	193
4. Conclusion	197
<u>CHAPTER 4</u> : The Manvantara Traditions of the Saptarsis	202
1. Introduction	202
2. The Identity of the Saptarsis in the 14 Manvantaras	205
(a) The Lists of the Saptarsis	205
(b) Examination of the Lists	213
(c) Observations	220
3. The Saptarsis within the Manvantara Theory	222
(a) The Function and Appearance of the Saptarsis within the Manvantara	222
(b) The Appearance of the Saptarsis within the Mahāyuga	226
(c) The Abode of the Saptarsis	239
4. Conclusion	246

	5.
<u>CHAPTER 5 : The Saptarsis as Stars in the Sky</u>	248
1. Introduction	248
2. The Earlier Literature	249
3. The Later Literature	254
(a) Poetical References	254
(b) Mythological References	256
(c) Astronomical or Observational References	262
4. The Transference of the Saptarsis to the Sky	266
(a) The Intermediary Role of Fire	266
(b) Fire as the Means whereby the Rsis attain Svargaloka	268
(c) The Rsis as Embodiments of Fire-Agni	273
(d) The Rsis as Suns	277
(e) The Transference of the Saptarsis to the Sky	282
5. The Saptarsi Yuga	284
(a) Introduction	284
(b) The Saptarsi Yuga according to Varāhamihira	288
(c) The Saptarsi Yuga according to the Early Purānic Texts	304
(d) The Saptarsi Yuga according to Vrddha Garga	315
(e) Conclusion: The Two Versions of the Saptarsi Yuga	328
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	336
Bibliography 1 : Textual Editions Cited	343
Bibliography 2 : Main Translations of Texts	351
Bibliography 3 : Select Secondary Works	354

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Harivamśa	207
Table 2	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Matsya Purāna	208
Table 3	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna	209
Table 4	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Viṣṇu Purāna	210
Table 5	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Brahmāṇḍa Purāna	211
Table 6	: The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarṣi Group - Vāyu Purāna	212
Table 7	: The Period of the Saptarṣi Yuga, according to Varāhamihira	302
Table 8	: The Saptarṣis in Maghā and associated Events, according to the Epic and Purānic texts	303
Table 9	: The Period of the Saptarṣi Yuga, according to Vrddha Garga	326
Table 10	: The Period of the Saptarṣi Yuga, according to Varāhamihira and the Purānic Texts (commencing with Śravanā)	327

ABBREVIATIONS

ADMG	Abhandlungen der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.
AKAWB	Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Berlin.
AOSP	American Oriental Society Publication.
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India.
ASS	Ānandaśrama Sanskrit Series.
Bib.Ind.	Bibliotheca Indica.
BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
BSPS	Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series.
CASS	Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit.
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.
CSS	Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.
Ep.Ind.	Epigraphia Indica.
GOS	Gaekward's Oriental Series.
HOS	Harvard Oriental Series.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
Ind.Ant.	Indian Antiquary.
Ind.Stud.	Indische Studien.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
KSS	Kashi Sanskrit Series.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library.
MAR	Mythology of All Races.
NKGWG	Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft zu Göttingen.
n.s.	New Series.
OST	Original Sanskrit Texts.
PSS	Punjab Sanskrit Series.
RAS otf	Royal Asiatic Society Oriental Translation Fund.
SBE	Sacred Books of the East.
SBH	Sacred Books of the Hindus.
ŚP	Śata Pitaka Series.
SVS	Sarasvati Vihara Series.
TCAAS	Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences.
TSS	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series.
TITLVK	Tydschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land en Volken-Kunde.
VIS	Vishveshvaranand Indological Series.
WIS	Woolner Indological Series.
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

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in Benares, the Central Library and Department of Philosophy Library of the Benares Hindu University; and the Sanskrit University; in Poona, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute; in Madras, the Central Library of the University of Madras; in Calcutta, the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

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INTRODUCTION.(a) Previous Studies.

The thesis is primarily a study of the traditions of the Saptarsi group as a whole, rather than of the traditions of individual Rsis who are included in that group. It seeks in the first instance to elucidate the identity of the Rsis who are included in that group: to discern some of the reasons affecting the inclusion of Rsis in the group: and to examine some of the main traditions associated with the group. In this respect it considers traditions of individual Rsis only insofar as those traditions would appear relevant to the group as a whole, and only insofar as they help to explain the inclusion of a Rsi within the group or to throw further light upon the traditions of the group as a whole.

Traditions of individual Rsis have been considered by many previous writers: as for example in the recent studies of Bhrgu by Goldman,⁽¹⁾ of Vasistha by Dandekar⁽²⁾ and Sharma,⁽³⁾ and of Visvāmitra by Das Gupta,⁽⁴⁾ Sastri⁽⁵⁾ and Kapadia.⁽⁶⁾ Similarly, references to individual Rsis have been collected in such general studies as those of Hillebrandt,⁽⁷⁾ Macdonell,⁽⁸⁾ Macdonell-Keith⁽⁹⁾ and Muir⁽¹⁰⁾ for

-
- (1) R. Goldman - Myth and Metamyth: A Critical Study of the Evolution and Manipulation of the Bhārgava Corpus in the Mahābhārata : University of Pennsylvania 1971.
- (2) R.N. Dandekar - Vasistha as a Religious Conciliator : CASS 41, Poona 1970.
- The Two Births of Vasistha : Innsbruck 1974.
- (3) U.C. Sharma - Vasistha in the Purānas : Purāna vol.16, 1974.
- (4) K.K. Das Gupta - The Purānas on the Audumbaras : Purāna vol.7, 1965.
- (5) A.M. Sastri - The Mahābhārata on the Relation between Visvāmitra and the Audumbaras : Purāna vol.7, 1965.
- (6) B.H. Kapadia - Visvāmitra in Vedic, Epic and Purānic Literature : Vidyanagar 1971.
- (7) A. Hillebrandt - Vedische Mythologie : Breslau 1891-1892.
- (8) A.A. Macdonell - Vedic Mythology : Strassburg 1879.
- (9) A.A. Macdonell & A.B. Keith - Vedic Index : London 1912.
- (10) J. Muir - Original Sanskrit Texts : London 1872-1884.

the early Vedic texts, and those of Dowson⁽¹¹⁾ and Hopkins⁽¹²⁾ for the later Epic and Purānic texts. Such studies have not generally been intended to consider such individual traditions of Ṛsis in relation to their relevance to the traditions of the group of Saptarṣis as a whole: nor to the reasons for the inclusion of Ṛsis in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group. This is accordingly one of the principal aims of the thesis: in particular to discover why two separate main lists of the group should have been formulated, and to see what factors have been instrumental in bringing about the change in identities between the Ṛsis of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group. Previous studies have tended to notice without any further comment or attempted explanation the existence of two separate lists - as for example in the works of Dowson and Hopkins. They have not generally attempted to consider in any detail the relative importance of these groups both in relation to each other and also in respect of the textual material within which each is primarily to be found: nor have they attempted to discern the reasons which have led to the virtual replacement in importance of the one group by the other, as occurs between the Vedic texts on the one hand and the Epic and Purānic texts on the other hand. It would indeed be perhaps little exaggeration to say that nearly all previous studies of the Ṛsis, both individually and more especially as a group, have tended to be descriptive rather than analytical in nature: and in this respect it might be said that the thesis attempts to initiate a new direction in such studies.

The task of discerning such reasons for the replacement of the one group by the other is undertaken especially in respect of the role of the Saptarṣis in the Gotra organisation, and also in respect of regional data within the Ṛsi traditions. Such regional data have not been previously collected or analysed in detail for

(11) J. Dowson - A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology : London 1913.

(12) E.W. Hopkins - Epic Mythology : Strassburg 1915.

individual Rsis included in the Saptarsi group with reference to the resulting regional association of the group as a whole: and similarly, while such previous studies as those of Brough,⁽¹³⁾ Rahurkar,⁽¹⁴⁾ Bhargava,⁽¹⁵⁾ and Fargiter⁽¹⁶⁾ have considered the lineages of individual Rsis, these have again not generally been assessed in relation to the role of those Rsis within the Saptarsi group, nor in relation to the changes in identity which occur between the Rsis included in either of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group.

In examining such lists and traditions of the Saptarsi group, certain further terms which are used to designate the group are also taken into account - such as Rksa, Prāna and Frajanpati. Several of these terms have not been previously considered in any detail insofar as they are applied to the Saptarsi group: and where such consideration has been given to them - as for example in the case of the term Rksa by Keith⁽¹⁷⁾ - this has been largely on only one aspect of the term, and frequently in a brief and somewhat unsatisfactory manner.

The Manvantara theory has been considered in general terms by several previous writers: most recently for example by Chenburkar,⁽¹⁸⁾ Church,⁽¹⁹⁾ and Gupta.⁽²⁰⁾ But neither the lists of Saptarsis in each of the 14 Manvantaras nor the specific role of the Saptarsis within the Manvantara theory have previously been considered in detail.

(13) J. Brough - Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara : Cambridge 1953.

- Early History of the Gotras : JRAS 1946.

(14) V.G. Rahurkar - Seers of the Rgveda : Poona 1964.

(15) P.L. Bhargava - India in the Vedic Age : London 1971.

(16) F.E. Fargiter - Ancient Indian Historical Tradition : London 1922.

(17) cf. A.B. Keith - Indian Mythology, p.102 : Boston 1917.

(18) J. Chenburkar - Historical and Religious Background of the Concept of Four Yugas .. : Purāna vol.16, 1974.

(19) C.D. Church - The Myth of Four Yugas in the Sanskrit Purānas : Purāna vol.16, 1974.

(20) A.S. Gupta - Purānic Theory of the Yugas and Kalpas : Purāna vol.11, 1969.

Several previous attempts have been made to discern the precise nature of the Saptarsi Yuga: most notably by Cunningham,⁽²¹⁾ and more recently by such writers as Sethna⁽²²⁾ and Roy.⁽²³⁾ Such attempts have frequently resulted in contradictory, and sometimes manifestly inaccurate, results. Cunningham gave no detailed consideration to the Purānic accounts of the Saptarsi Yuga, referring only to the accounts in the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purānas: and he supposed that the version followed by Vrddha Garga was the same as that followed by the Purānas. Most later writers have relied upon the interpretation of such Purānic data given by Pargiter:⁽²⁴⁾ yet that would in itself appear to be somewhat inadequate in the case of certain ślokas which are of central importance in establishing the version of the Saptarsi Yuga used in those texts. All previous writers, while discerning two different versions of the Saptarsi Yuga, have tended to assume that these differ only in the periods ascribed to the Saptarsis being in each Nakṣatra: yet it would appear necessary to question the validity of such an assumption. It would also appear necessary to question the bold claims made by several recent writers for the antiquity of the Saptarsi Yuga: while at the same time attempting to discern the likely antiquity and origin of each of the two versions.

(21) A. Cunningham - A Book of Indian Eras : Calcutta 1883.

(22) K.D. Sethna - Megasthenes and Indian Chronology : Purāna vols.8-10, 1966-1968.

(23) S.B. Roy - Ancient India, a Chronological Study : Delhi 1975.

(24) F.E. Pargiter - Dynasties of the Kali Age : Oxford 1913.

(b) The Chronology of the Textual Material.

The texts which are examined in the thesis are, as indicated through the use of the term saptarsi, those which relate to the Sanskrit traditions of the Saptarsi group. They are moreover those whose date of composition may be ascribed to the period prior to the end of the Gupta dynasty. Although no precise date can be given of when the Imperial Gupta dynasty actually came to an end, this may be placed around the middle of the 6th century A.D. It would appear that Gupta suzerainty in Magadha had ceased by the mid-6th century A.D.: as is suggested by a land-grant in the Gāyā district issued in A.D. 551, which makes no reference to any Gupta ruler but to a certain Nandana who is styled kumārāmatya mahārāja. On the other hand, Gupta suzerainty is still acknowledged in north Bengal in a land-grant from Dāmodarpur of Gupta 224 or A.D. 543.⁽²⁵⁾ It would also appear that remnants of Gupta power lasted considerably beyond this date in outlying regions: as is indicated for example by the acknowledgement of Gupta suzerainty in an inscription from Sumandala in Kalinga of the year Gupta 250 or A.D. 569.⁽²⁶⁾ The expression "the end of the Gupta dynasty" is therefore taken to denote in this context the ending of imperial Gupta power around the middle of the 6th century A.D.: and the texts to be considered in the thesis are accordingly those whose date of composition may be said to be probably prior to this period.

The textual material to be taken into consideration comprises a very large number of individual works. It would not appear necessary to enter upon a detailed discussion of the chronology of each individual text - or of the chronological divisions within each text - when such a text furnishes only one or two passages which are of relevance to the thesis: since such a discussion, although of value in its own right, would not serve the purpose of the thesis

(25) cf. D.C. Sircar - Select Inscriptions, book 3 no.39, p.346.

(26) cf. Ep.Ind. vol.28, p.79 : also S.R. Goyal - A History of the Imperial Guptas, pp.384-386.

as a whole. On the other hand, several works to which reference is made - such as the Yuga Purāna of Vrddha Garga - demand in the present context a more detailed discussion than has usually been accorded them by previous writers. In the following account of textual chronology, therefore, much reference has been made to the work of Renou,⁽²⁷⁾ particularly on the dating of Vedic texts: while reference has also been made to the earlier works of Winternitz⁽²⁸⁾ and Macdonell,⁽²⁹⁾ and to the relevant sections in the Cambridge History of India⁽³⁰⁾ and in the first three volumes of the History and Culture of the Indian Peoples.⁽³¹⁾ Further studies of individual texts or authors are referred to in the appropriate contexts.

Although individual texts may on occasions fall beyond the strict categories within which they are nominally included in respect of their chronology, it has nevertheless been thought useful to employ such general categories as those of Vedic Samhitās, Brāhmanas, and so forth, and to ascribe an approximate overall period to them: while subsequently noting the relative chronology of individual texts within each category.

(27) L. Renou - L'Inde Classique : Paris 1947.

(28) H. Winternitz - History of Indian Literature : Calcutta 1927-1933.

(29) A.A. Macdonell - History of Sanskrit Literature : rep. Delhi 1971.

(30) E.J. Rapson (ed) - Cambridge History of India, vol.1 : rep. Delhi 1968.

(31) R.C. Majumdar & A.C. Pusalker (ed) - History and Culture of the Indian People, vols.1-3 : Bombay 1951-1954.

1. Vedic Samhitās : approximate period c.1400-900 B.C.

a.) R̥gveda: The earliest of the four Vedas: books 2-9 are older than books 1 and 10. Attempts to interpret astronomical data in the hymns as indicating dates in the 4th or 5th millenia (e.g. by Jacobi and Tilak) are not here accepted as conclusive. The hymns generally indicate the recent entry of the Vedic Āryans into India around the Panjāb: and the close connection of the language with that of the Avesta suggests a very recent Indo-Iranian separation, and a similar date for both the R̥gveda and the Avesta. Renou suggests a date not later than the 6th or 7th century B.C. for the composition of the Avesta: but Burrow⁽³²⁾ has recently suggested that the founding of the Zoroastrian religion is not likely to be later than c.1100 B.C., and may be as much as 600 years earlier. Archaeological indications are somewhat ambiguous: it is possible to suggest, for example, that Painted Grey Ware is to be associated with invaders who were not identical with the Vedic Āryans; and it would therefore seem possible to use such evidence only in a secondary capacity to further arguments. It may however be noted that there is considerable evidence for placing the Mahābhārata war as an historical event around the 10th century B.C., on the basis of the flooding at Hastināpura:⁽³³⁾ hence, if this were to be accepted, then the composition of the R̥gveda should most probably be placed at a period considerably earlier than this, since while knowing of the Bharatas the hymns show little knowledge of such a war. In general terms, the latter part of the 2nd millenium B.C. would seem the most likely period of composition of the R̥gvedic hymns: the period might be extended back to c.1750 B.C. if it were to be accepted that the Vedic Āryans who composed the hymns were also those who finally destroyed the Indus Valley Civilisation. Against the suggestion of Renou, however, it may be

(32) T. Burrow - The Proto-Indoaryans : JRAS 1973.

(33) cf. B.B. Lal - Excavations at Hastināpura : Ancient India vols.10-11, 1954-1955.

suggested that even if the Indus Civilisation were proved to be of Indo-European character, this would not necessarily demand a revision of the date of the R̥gveda: for the hymns would appear to know little of urban civilisation, hence even in the case of an Indo-European civilisation in the Indus it might be inferred that the peoples of such an urban civilisation would have had little apart from a language-base in common with the Vedic Āryans. Thus the date of c.1750 B.C. may be taken as the very earliest date: the probability being that the R̥gvedic hymns were composed mainly several centuries later than this date, with books 1 and 10 being added probably at a still later date.

- b) Yajurveda: This frequently borrows mantras from the R̥gveda, and generally presumes its existence. The Black recension is probably older than the White: and according to Schröder the Maitrāyaṇī, followed by the Katha, are the oldest of the Black recensions. Such a view is not unanimously accepted. If the R̥gveda is ascribed to c.1400-1100, the Yajurveda may probably be ascribed in approximate terms to c.1200-1000 B.C. The Sāmaveda is very largely borrowed from the R̥gveda: and it is variously considered to either predate, postdate, or be contemporary with the Yajurveda.
- c) Atharvaveda: This borrows considerably from the R̥gveda, approximately one-seventh of the total being taken directly from that work. The language also appears to be generally considerably later than that of the R̥gveda, and the work gives evidence of a more eastern geographical orientation (e.g. the references to the Māgadha in the Vratya-Kāṇḍa 15). The content would however seem to be often primitive and archaic in character: and its relation to the other Samhitās is unclear. Books 19-20 are probably of later date than the rest of the work. A very approximate period might be proposed of c.1300-900 B.C.
-

2. Brāhmanas : approximate period c.900-600 B.C.

All follow the various Vedas to which they are attached.

- a) R̥gveda Brāhmanas: The Aitareya precedes the Kausītaki, the latter being more systematic and detailed: both are probably among the oldest of the Brāhmanas, second only to the Taittirīya in age. Perhaps c.850 B.C.
- b) Yajurveda Brāhmanas: The Taittirīya is perhaps the oldest of all the Brāhmanas, c.900 B.C.: the Śatapatha is considerably more recent as a whole, perhaps c.700 B.C.
- c) Sāmaveda Brāhmanas: The Jaiminiya precedes the Pañcaviṃśa, both perhaps c.800 B.C. The Śadvīṃśa, Sāmavidhāna and other minor Brāhmanas are among the latest of this class, perhaps c.600 B.C.
- d) Atharvaveda Brāhmanas: The Gopatha is among the latest of all the Brāhmanas: perhaps 7th or even 6th century B.C.

3. Āranyakas and Upaniṣads : approximate period c.700-400 B.C.

Both categories presuppose the Brāhmanas to which they belong and refer; Āranyakas predate Upaniṣads, and prose sections in the Upaniṣads generally predate verse sections. The earliest of the Upaniṣads are probably the Brhadāraṇyaka, Chandogya, Aitareya and Kausītaki - perhaps c.600 B.C.; next are the Kena, Taittirīya, and Īśa. To a somewhat later date belong the Katha, Śvetāśvatara, Mundaka and Praśna - perhaps c.500 B.C.; while to a considerably later date belong the Māṇḍukya and Maitri. Further Upaniṣads extend into medieval times.

4. Kalpa Sūtras : approximate period c.500-200 B.C.

- a) Śrauta Sūtras: According to Caland, certain Śrauta Sūtras may have been composed prior to sections of the Brāhmanas - for example the Baudhāyana prior to parts of the Śatapatha Brāhmana. This opinion is not unanimously accepted. Following Renou, it may be accepted that a Śrauta Sūtra is generally later than the Brāhmana from which it derives. The Baudhāyana is probably one of the earliest: the Śāṅkhāyana earlier than the Āśvalāyana; and the Mānava, Lātyāyana, and Drāhyāyana also relatively early, perhaps c.400 B.C. To a later date belong the Āpastamba and Hiranyakeśin: and the latest are probably the Kātyāyana, the Vaikhānasa, and the Vaitāna.
- b) Grhya Sūtras: These are generally later than the Śrauta Sūtras. The Gobhila and Mānava are among the earliest: the Baudhāyana is earlier than the Āpastamba. The Hiranyakeśin is somewhat later than these; and the Vaikhānasa is perhaps the latest.
- c) Dharma Sūtras: Yaska quotes legal rules in the Sūtra style, hence it is likely that this class of literature may date back as early as c.500 B.C. The Gautama is probably the earliest: the Āpastamba is also early, perhaps c.400 B.C., and the Hiranyakeśin is closely related to it. The Vāsistha is somewhat later, perhaps c.300 B.C.; while the Vaikhānasa in its present form is unlikely to be earlier than around the 3rd century A.D.

5. Yāska, Śaunaka, and Kautilya.

Yāska is probably considerably earlier than Pānini, and the Nirukta is usually ascribed to around the 6th or 5th century B.C.

The Brhaddevatā is based considerably upon the Nirukta, and mentions Yāska: while it is probably earlier than Pānini, who mentions Śaunaka - and earlier again than Kātyāyana in the 3rd century B.C. Its composition may thus be ascribed to around the 5th or 4th century B.C.

The chronology of Trautman may be cited in the case of Kautilya:⁽³⁴⁾ parts of the Arthaśāstra may date from early Maurya times, c.300 B.C., but it would seem likely that considerable parts have been added to the work perhaps several centuries later, and in its present form it probably dates from the early centuries A.D.

6. Dharma Śāstras : approximate period c.200 B.C. - A.D. 500.

The chronology of Kane⁽³⁵⁾ is adopted in this instance. Manu is probably the oldest of the Dharma Śāstras, being formulated in its present form between c.200 B.C. and A.D. 200. Next is probably the Viṣṇu, dating in its present form to between c.A.D. 100 and 300: and the Yājñavalkya may also be ascribed to the same approximate period. The Nārada may be ascribed to between A.D. 100 and 400: while the Brhaspati is the latest of these texts, reaching its present form between c.A.D. 300 and 500.

(34) T.R. Trautman - Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra : Mysore 1958.

(35) P.V. Kane - A History of the Dharmaśāstra : Poona 1930-1962.
(esp. vol.1).

7. Epics : approximate period c.300 B.C. - A.D. 300.

a) Rāmāyana: The original story of the Rāmāyana is likely to be of considerable antiquity. No mention is made, for example, of the city of Pātāliputra, even though Rāma is said to have passed by the very place where that city later stood: the capital of Kosala is invariably referred to as Ayodhyā, rather than Sāketa as in Buddhist, Jain and Greek sources and in Patañjali: and both Mithilā and Viśālā are spoken of as twin cities under separate rulers, whereas even in the time of the Buddha they had combined to form the city of Vaiśālī under a single ruler. Together with further indications, the original story of the Rāmāyana would thus seem likely to date from before c.500 B.C.

In its present form, books 1 and 7 are generally of later date than books 2-6. Frequent references in the Mahābhārata to both Valmīki and the Rāmāyana - including the quotation in the Drona Parvan of a passage from the Yuddha Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana - suggests that parts at least are of earlier date than such parts of the Mahābhārata. The Rāmopākhyāna in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata presupposes and in parts agrees verbatim with the Valmīki Rāmāyana - again suggesting dependence on the latter. Conversely, however, parts of the Mahābhārata would appear to preserve more archaic features of language than are found in the Rāmāyana. Pāṇini mentions Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira, but not Rāma - thus suggesting that the Mahābhārata story had at least a greater currency in the late centuries B.C. than the Rāmāyana story. The latter point would not, however, seem a conclusive indication that the Rāmāyana had not been formulated by the time of Pāṇini, as has been suggested by several writers: since the story itself was almost certainly current before the time of Pāṇini, and his silence on the subject cannot necessarily be taken as an indication of the lack of a definitive Rāmāyana story. In general terms, the composition in their present

form of books 2-6 may probably be placed substantially between c.250 B.C. and A.D. 50: while that of books 1 and 7 may be placed substantially between c.50 B.C. and A.D. 200.

b) Mahābhārata: The original story of the Mahābhārata is again likely to be of considerable antiquity. The date of the war, which would seem likely to represent a basically historical struggle, is traditionally placed around 3137 or 2449 B.C.: while archaeological evidence would tend to suggest a date around the 11th or 10th century B.C. on the basis of the flooding at Hastināpura in the 9th century B.C. (see under Rgveda) which is said in the Epic to have occurred a few generations after the war itself. The Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra refers to the Bhārata and Mahābhārata as sacred works: while Patañjali refers to a Pāṇḍu epic, and Pāṇini to a Mahābhārata. Thus some form of Epic composition is likely to have been in existence by around the 4th century B.C., which was subsequently considerably added to and received its final form probably by the 4th century A.D. - and in any event not later than the early-6th century A.D., as indicated by the reference in the Khoh inscription of Śarvanātha of (Gupta) year 214 = A.D. 533 to the Epic as śatasahasryām samhitāgam,⁽³⁶⁾ thereby denoting that it had by this time attained the full length of the form in which it is now known.

The relative chronology of individual books and passages in the Mahābhārata within this period is complicated by the fact that a passage of manifestly late origin may be interpreted either as an interpolation within a book, or else as an indication that the book as a whole is of late origin: and in certain cases it is difficult to decide between the two interpretations. The Critical Edition produced by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is followed in the thesis as that most likely to represent a comprehensive form

(36) cf. CII vol.3 no.31; on dating, cf. Sircar - Select Inscriptions, book 3 no.49 p.390 note 1.

of the Mahābhārata common to each of the two main recensions of the text, as opposed to including interpolations found only in individual editions of the text. It is generally accepted that much of the material in books 1, 3, 12, and 13 represents a later addition to the text, in comparison with the material in the other books. Without at this stage entering upon a more detailed discussion of individual passages and books, it may be noted that further indications of the relative priority of individual passages may be discerned through an examination of the Saptarṣi traditions themselves: hence such indications will accordingly be referred to in the examination of such texts, particularly in Chapter 2.

8. Early Purānas : approximate period c.A.D. 100-550.

The term "early Purānas" is here intended to designate those Purānic texts whose date of composition is generally accepted by most writers as being substantially in or before the time of the end of the Gupta dynasty - that is to say, before approximately the middle of the 6th century A.D. The Harivamśa is for practical purposes here considered as a Purānic text: for although it may be considered either as a supplement to the Epic literature or as a Purānic text, it contains many features which in the present context connect it more closely with the latter literature - as for example through its accounts of the Saptarṣi Manvantara tradition, which are not found in the Epic texts and which occur only in the Purānic literature.

- a) Yuga Purāna: This text occupies a unique position among the early Purānic texts. Although it is extremely brief and lacks many of the features of the classical Mahāpurānas, nonetheless its name, content and antiquity lay claim to considerably more attention than has previously been given to it. The text, as collated in the edition of Mankad,⁽³⁷⁾ occupies only some 235 lines: and it appears as a chapter in a work variously called the Gārgī-saṁhitā, the Gārgī-ḥyotiṣa, or the Vrddha-Garga-saṁhitā - its authorship thus being ascribed to the early astronomer Vrddha Garga. The content of the Purāna is, as the name indicates, designed to give a description of the four Yugas: and in doing so, it admits of an historical interpretation which affords evidence of the likely date of the text. Since such a date is of importance both for establishing the date of Vrddha Garga and also for determining the date for this stage in the development of the Yuga and Manvantara theories, it is of value to give an account of the content of the work,

(37) D.R. Mankad (ed) - Yugapurānam : Vallabhavidyanagar 1951.

particularly since it has been so little considered by previous writers.

After the accounts of the Kṛta, Treta and Dvāpara Yugas (lines 1-73), which contain similar details to those found in the Mahābhārata and elsewhere, the account of the Kali Yuga moves from Janamejaya Pārīksita to Udāyin Śiśunāga and the founding of Pātaliputra (lines 74-88): and then to the reign of Śāliśūka (lines 89-93) - who, according especially to the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purānas, was a Maurya successor of Aśoka. It next describes a brief incursion of the Yavanas or Greeks to Sāketa, and refers to this time as being the advent of the end of the Kali Yuga (lines 94-115). Next comes an account of the reigns of Agniveśya kings, followed by the brief incursions of Śāka rulers who are defeated by peoples of the Deccan but leave the land desolate (lines 116-131). The account then returns to give details of the Agniveśya kings, and of the Śuṅga Agnimitra: this is followed by an account of their destruction at the hands of a Śātuvāra or Śātavāhana king, and then again by an incursion of the Śakas who plunder the land and leave it desolate before returning to their own land (lines 131-180). There next follows an account of a great famine and 12-year drought, particularly among the peoples of the river Śipra (near Ujjayinī), which finally heralds the end of the Kali Yuga (lines 181-199). The remainder of the work describes how men survive into the start of the new Kṛta Yuga, in 12 regions which extend from the Vindhya and Western Deccan into Southern India: where they establish new kings and sow the seeds of future prosperity (lines 200-233). The final two lines give the length of the Kalpa as 1,000 Yugas (lines 234-235).

On the basis of this summary of contents, it may be observed that the account clearly recalls the incursions of Greeks and Śakas, and the reign of the Śuṅga Agnimitra (c. 2nd century B.C.). It also suggests the rise of a Śātavāhana king, who destroys the

Agniveśya (= Śuṅga?) successors of Agnimitra, which is followed by a brief incursion and plundering raid by Śakas who do not settle but return to their own land, and then by a great famine and 12-year drought which is interpreted by the author as the end of the Yuga. Bearing in mind particularly the Kālaka stories, which would seem to contain an accurate reminiscence of Śaka activity in Western India immediately prior to 58 B.C., the account may be interpreted as referring the end of the Kali Yuga to a period around the middle of the 1st century B.C.: a period which would be consistent with the apparently vivid and detailed reminiscences in the text of incursions of Greeks and Śakas during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. The account also omits any reference to a period of Śaka rule, as opposed to Śaka incursions: and states explicitly that the Śakas returned with their plunder to their own distant land (harisyanti śakāḥ kośam caturbhāgam svakam param - line 180). The work would thus appear to have been composed prior to the establishment of Śaka settlement and rule in Western India in the early- and mid-1st century A.D. Moreover, in referring to the rule of a Śātvāra or Śātavāhana king who defeated the successors of Agnimitra, and by then depicting the continuation of life after the end of the Kali Yuga in the region of the Western Deccan and Southern India, the account would seem to refer to the early period of Śātavāhana rule. The almost visionary prophecy that prosperity would come to those living in such regions after the withdrawal of the Śakas and after the subsequent 12-year drought would again seem to indicate that the writer is referring to a time very shortly after c.50 B.C., during which the region of the Deccan and South India was witnessing the rise of new prosperity under the recently-established rule of the Śātavāhanas. It would therefore seem likely that this account in the Yuga Purāna was composed during the latter part of the 1st

century B.C.: and accordingly, since its composition is ascribed to Vrddha Garga, the date of this writer may also be placed on this basis in the latter part of the 1st century B.C.

- b) Harivamśa: The Critical Edition produced by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is followed in the thesis. It may be inferred in general terms that this postdates certainly the earlier parts of the Mahābhārata, and probably also many of the later parts of that work: while it is likely to be earlier than or contemporary with the other early Purānic texts. Further indications of the relative chronological relationship of these texts are discernible within the Saptarsi traditions in the texts: thus for example the Manvantara accounts, which do not appear in the Mahābhārata, are presented only in part in the Harivamśa (as also in the Matsya Purāna), and appear in a greatly developed form in the other early Purānic texts (see Chapter 4). Such indications will accordingly be referred to in the examination of such traditions in the thesis. The date of composition of the Harivamśa text as given in the B.O.R.I. edition may be placed in approximate terms within the period between c.A.D. 150 and 300.
- c) Matsya Purāna: Frequently considered as the earliest Purāna. In respect of the Saptarsi traditions in the text, certain sections demand an early date relative to the other texts: thus for example the Manvantara lists of Saptarsis agree most closely with those of the Harivamśa (see Chapter 4), suggesting a close association between the two texts on this topic. Certain further lists of Rsis in the Matsya are otherwise found only in the Mānava Dharma Śāstra (cf. 3.5-8, 102.19 and Manu 1.34-35: see Chapter 2): thus suggesting a date prior to c.A.D. 200 for such sections. Other indications of relative chronology in respect of the Saptarsi traditions will be noted in the thesis. It is noteworthy that no mention is made
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in any of the 20 Editions and Manuscripts surveyed by Pargiter⁽³⁸⁾ to the Guptas among the lists of royal dynasties, as occurs in all of the other early Purāṇas which contain such lists. The approximate period of composition may be given as between c.A.D. 100 and 300.

- d) Vāyu and Brahmānda Purāṇas: These two texts frequently agree with each other verbatim, while also containing a minority of passages specific to each: and they may thus be said to share a common date of composition, and probably a common prototype - with the possibility that one has been largely copied from the other. The lengthy Lalitopākhyānam in the Brahmānda is, however, of considerably later date: and is accordingly not considered in the thesis. The Manvantara lists of Saptarṣis are evidently of later date than those in the Harivaṃśa and the Matsya Purāṇa, particularly through the consistent addition of Gotra names (see Chapter 4); also, the Guptas are mentioned among the royal dynasties, while on the other hand a text of the Vāyu is referred to by Bana in the Harṣacarita (c.A.D. 650). The approximate period of composition may be given as between c.A.D. 200 and 400.
- e) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa: The Manvantara list of Saptarṣis in this text agrees most closely with that of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (see Chapter 4). Certain lists of Ṛsis which are included in all the other early Purāṇas are omitted from the Mārkaṇḍeya (see Chapter 2): and no accounts are given of royal dynasties or of the Saptarṣi Yuga. Certain other lists of Ṛsis which are included in the Mārkaṇḍeya, Vāyu, Brahmānda and Viṣṇu Purāṇas are omitted from the Matsya: hence such omissions might perhaps be interpreted as an indication of early date. The approximate period of composition may be given as between c.A.D. 100 and 500.

(38) cf. F.E. Pargiter - Dynasties of the Kali Age : Oxford 1913.

- f) Viṣṇu Purāna: This text is generally taken to be later than the others, and is closest in form to the classical definition of a Purāna. It gives a different account of the Saptarṣi Yuga from that in the Matsya, Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas (see Chapter 5): and it gives only a summary account of royal genealogies which Pargiter has termed a condensed redaction of the accounts in the other Purānas. Other sections would however seem to be of relatively early date: as for example several of the lists of Rsis (see Chapter 2). The approximate period of composition may be given as between c.A.D. 250 and 500.
- g) General: The sections in the Matsya, Vāyu, Brahmānda and Viṣṇu Purānas relating to the Saptarṣi Yuga presuppose the end of the Andhra dynasty in A.D. 238, and may most probably be ascribed in composition to the latter part of the 3rd century A.D. (see Chapter 5). In respect of the remaining 13 Mahāpurānas, these may almost certainly be said to date substantially from a later period, sometimes considerably so: the bulk of the Bhāgavata Purāna, for example, may most probably be ascribed to around the 9th or 10th century A.D., although since this is the only other Mahāpurāna to contain a detailed account of the Saptarṣi Yuga - which is largely copied from the Viṣṇu Purāna - reference has accordingly been made to such sections of this work in Chapter 5. The remaining Mahāpurānas may in all probability be ascribed in composition to between the 7th and 11th centuries A.D.: and these have accordingly not been taken into account in the thesis.

9. Astronomers.

- a) Vedāṅga-Jyotiṣa: This work may most probably be ascribed to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. Commentators on the work cite the opinions of Vṛddha Garga: and it would seem likely that the work is earlier than Garga himself, since otherwise some reference to such an authority as Garga might have been expected within the text, rather than in elucidation of the text
- b) Vṛddha Garga: Considerably earlier than Varāhamihira, who regards him as an ancient authority. On the basis of his identity as the author of the Gārgī-jyotiṣa or Vṛddha-Garga-saṃhitā (see under Yuga Purāna), he may be ascribed to the latter part of the 1st century B.C.
- c) Sūrya Siddhānta: Referred to by Vṛddha Garga as one of the five great Siddhāntas - the other four being no longer extant in anything resembling their original form. It is probably earlier than Parasara, and probably dates originally from between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D.: although subsequent interpolations have been made to the text, possibly by Lāṭa around A.D. 500.
- d) Parāśara and Āryabhata: Āryabhata cites Parāśara as an authority, hence Parāśara may be placed perhaps between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. Āryabhata was born in Śaka 398 or A.D. 476: and he dates his own work the Āryabhaṭīya in Śaka 421 or A.D. 499.
- e) Varāhamihira: According to one somewhat questionable tradition, Varāhamihira died in Śaka 509 or A.D. 587.⁽³⁹⁾ He bases his own calculations on the year Śaka 427 or A.D. 505, and he also makes reference to Āryabhata. He may accordingly be said to have flourished probably during the first half of the 6th century A.D.

(39) cf. S.B. Dikshit - Bhāratīya Jyotiḥ Śāstra, p.211.

10. Bhāsa, Śūdraka, Vātsyāyana, and Kālidāsa.

The chronology of Keith⁽⁴⁰⁾ is adopted in this instance.

Bhāsa is almost certainly earlier than Kālidāsa - assuming his identity as the author of the plays ascribed to him; and he is probably later than Aśvaghōsa in the 1st century A.D. He may thus most probably be ascribed to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.

The Mṛcchakatika ascribed to Śūdraka is probably of later date than the plays of Bhāsa, and earlier than Kālidāsa: and it may thus be ascribed to between the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D.

The Kāma Sūtra of Vātsyāyana mentions the Vākāṭaka city of Vatsagulma, which was probably not of importance or note until the mid-4th century A.D.: while on the other hand Varāhamihira would appear to have made use of parts of the work in his Brhatsamhitā, and Kālidāsa is acquainted with a work of this nature. The date of Vātsyāyana may thus probably be placed between the 4th and the 6th centuries A.D.

The arguments of Keith and others ascribing Kālidāsa to approximately A.D. 400 are accepted in the present context.

(40) cf. A.B. Keith - History of Sanskrit Literature : rep. Delhi 1973.

(c) Textual Citations.

Extensive textual citations are made throughout the course of the thesis. These are taken from the editions referred to in Bibliography I, unless otherwise stated; and the following points should also be noted. In the case of citations from the Rāmāyana, from the Mahābhārata, and from the Harivaṃśa, the Critical Editions of these texts are accepted as basic guides to a composite text of these works; and passages relegated to the Appendices of these Editions are not cited in the thesis. Similarly, śloka-citations from these works refer in all cases to the Critical Editions of the texts. In the case of citations of passages common to several works - as occurs particularly in the case of passages from the early Purāṇic literature - the form cited is generally that given in the text of the first work which is referred to in the footnotes, as is also the form of śloka-division. Minor differences occur in some cases between parallel passages cited from different Purāṇic texts; and where marked differences occur between such texts, the relevant passages in each of the texts are cited separately.

It may also be noted that the forms santa xai and santarsi are both encountered in the texts: the former primarily in Vedic texts, the latter primarily in Epic and Purāṇic texts. The forms cited in quotations are those which occur in the editions referred to in Bibliography I; while in the main text of the thesis, the classical form Septarsi is consistently used.

CHAPTER 1 : Early Traditions of the Saptarṣi Group.

Section 1 : Introduction.

One of the first and most important questions to be dealt with in discussing the Saptarṣi group is the question of the identity of the Saptarṣis: that is to say, the question of which Rṣis are actually included within the group of seven, and of how consistent these groupings remain between the various texts which are to be examined.

It may in general terms be said that there exist two main lists or enumerations of the Saptarṣi group: only one of which appears in what may for practical purposes be termed the earlier literature. The terms "earlier literature" and "early traditions" as they are being used in this context are intended to denote primarily such traditions as occur within literary texts whose date of composition may be said to precede that of the Epics and Purāṇas, in accordance with the general chronology of textual material outlined in the Introduction. The other main list of the Saptarṣi group occurs only in the Epic and Purāṇic texts, and in further literature contemporary with those texts. In addition to these two main lists, there also occur a number of more general lists of Rṣis which include most or all of the Rṣis in the two main lists: as for example in the various lists of Prajāpatis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, which occur primarily in the Epic and subsequent texts. A further development is to be found in the Purāṇic texts, which contain lists of Saptarṣis for each of the fourteen Manvantaras. Each of these various lists or enumerations will be examined separately in the following Chapters, together with further traditions of the Saptarṣi group, in order to illustrate how the actual identity of the Saptarṣis alters and develops between the various texts and groups of texts.

Section 2 : Enumerations of the Saptarsi Group.

In view of the fact that enumerations of the Saptarsi group are given explicitly only from the Sūtra texts onwards, the following account in this section will first deal with the Sūtra texts, and will then trace the earlier references to the group and its members back through the Brāhmana and Upaniṣadic texts to the Vedic Samhitās.

(a) The Sūtra texts.

Although it is not until the Sūtra texts that an enumeration of Rsis is given who are explicitly said to constitute the Saptarsi group, nevertheless in these texts the members of the group appear to constitute a well-defined and ordered list -- particularly in connection with the gotra organisation. Thus for example several of the Śrauta Sūtra texts, in the sections on gotra and pravara, relate that the Saptarsis are Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa -- together with Agastya as the eighth:

"viśvāmitro jamadagnir bharadvājo 'tha gotamaḥ
atrir vasisthaḥ kaśyapa ity ete sapta ṛsayah |

....

saptānām ṛṣīnām agastyāstamanām yad apatyam tad gotram ity ācakṣate" |

(1)

The appearance in these lists of Agastya as the eighth Rsi occurs in several further contexts. A similar list of the Saptarsis is to be found in the Hiranyakeśin Grhya Sūtra:

"viśvāmitro jamadagnir bharadvājo 'tha gautamaḥ |
atrir vasisthaḥ kaśyapaḥ ||
ity ete saptarsayah" ||

The passage thereafter gives instructions for setting up seats of darbha-grass for the Saptarsis and for Arundhatī (the wife of Vasistha) towards the north, and also for Agastya towards the south:

(1) e.g. periśiṣṭabhāgah to 12.15 of the Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra: pravara-praśna line 54 of the Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra: etc.

(2) Hiranyakeśin Grhya Sūtra 2.8.19.2-7.

99.

"nivīṭina uttarata udīcīnapravāna udagagrair darbhaiḥ
 prāḡepavarḡāny āsanāni kalpayanti |
 vasisthakaśyapayor antarāle 'rundhatyai kalpayanti |
 daksinataḥ prācīnapravāne 'gastyāya" |

The regional association of Ṛsis suggested in this passage is a topic which will be pursued in Chapter 3. In the present context it may be noted that, in listing the members of the Saptarṣi group - and in actually calling them the Saptarṣis - such Sūtra texts enumerate the Saptarṣis as Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa: together with the addition of Agastya as the eighth Ṛsi.

It becomes necessary at this point to make one important qualification in respect of the lists which are found in the Śrauta Sūtra texts in connection with the Gotra and Pravara organisations. The passage quoted above from various Śrauta Sūtra texts is unequivocal in stating the identities of the Saptarṣis to be as listed above. In practice, however, when dealing with each of the individual Gotras and Pravaras, these Śrauta Sūtra texts invariably subordinate the Jāmadagnyas to the Bhṛgu or Dhārgavas, and subordinate the Gautamas and the Bhāradvājas to the Āṅgirasas. Thus the Bhṛgu are always subdivided into the Jāmadagnya-Bhṛgu and the Kevala-Bhṛgu ("just Bhṛgu", "Bhṛgu by themselves"): while similarly the Āṅgirasas are subdivided into Gautama-Āṅgirasas, Bhāradvāja-Āṅgirasas, and Kevala-Āṅgirasas. Hence the resulting list of Ṛsi-Gotras and Pravaras is indeed seven in number: yet the seven Ṛsi-founders are now listed as Bhṛgu, Āṅgiras, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Vasistha, Kaśyapa, and Agastya.⁽³⁾ It should however be noted that these seven are never referred to in the Sūtra texts as the Saptarṣis: and indeed, both these and also much later texts such as the Gotra-pravara-mañjarī explicitly state the identities of the Saptarṣis to be as quoted above - the latter

(3) e.g. Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra 12.1-15 & Apastamba Śrauta Sūtra 24.5-10 : Mānava Śrauta Sūtra 11.8.1-9 : etc. (see Chapter 3 for further details).

text also stating that Bhṛgu and Āṅgiras do not belong to the Saptar̥sis.⁽⁴⁾ The question of this variant list of Ṛsis given in the gotra and pravara sections of the Śrauta Sūtras is one which will be examined in detail in chapter 3. It may however be noted here that the subordination of the Ṛsis Jamadagni, Bharadvāja and Gotama to the Ṛsis Bhṛgu and Āṅgiras represents an incipient trend to bring the Ṛsis Bhṛgu and Āṅgiras - as also Agastya - into closer connection with the Saptar̥si group: a trend which is to be found in a greatly developed form in the Epic and Purānic texts.

In the present context it may thus be observed that the Sūtra texts recognise one main list of Ṛsis who are called the Saptar̥sis, which consists of the Ṛsis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa: while these texts also append Agastya to the group, terming him the eighth Ṛsi, and thus giving him the status of an outsider to this group of seven Ṛsis.

(4) e.g. Gotra-pravara-mañjarī 1.11-12 : 10.131-132.

(b) The Brāhmana and Upanisadic texts.

While the Sūtra texts make explicit the dual statements both that there are seven Ṛsis and also who are those seven Ṛsis, the preceding texts frequently make reference either to the Saptarṣis as a group or to the individual members of the Saptarṣi group, without explicitly connecting the two.

The Jaiminīya Brāhmana for example contains a list of Ṛsis who strove to attain Svargaloka or "the world of heaven". The Ṛsis listed in this context are, in order of reference, Vasistha, Bharadvāja, Jamadagni, Gotama, Atri, and Viśvāmitra: and then, in addition to these six, also Agastya who went last of all to Svargaloka after uttering a hymn:

"tad u vāvāgastyah paścevanububudha ṛsayo ha vā ime prajā asmil
loke vidhāya svargam lokam agman iti so 'kāmayatāham api prajā
asmil loke vidhāya svargam lokam anugaccheyam iti sa etam
sodaśam stomam apaśyat tam āharat svargam lokam anvagacchat" (5)

It will be noted that in this passage Kaśyapa is omitted from the otherwise standard list of Saptarṣis as found in the Sūtra texts: while Agastya appears to be included in the group of seven, yet only just - for the text makes it plain that he went last of all behind the other Ṛsis, and uses this as justification for saying that for this reason the Agastis are outside the Kuru-Pañcālas:

"tasmād v agastayo bahirdheva kurupañcālebhyah" |

The Gopatha Brāhmana - a relatively late Brāhmana text - gives a list of Ṛsis who perform tapas: these Ṛsis being enumerated as Vasistha, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Guṅgu, Agastya, and Kaśyapa. (6) The Guṅgu mentioned in this context appears once also in the Rgveda in plural form, denoting the name of a certain tribe of people. (7) Yet in this Brāhmana passage it would seem more

(5) Jaiminīya Brāhmana 2.218-221.

(6) Gopatha Brāhmana 1.2.8.

(7) Rgveda 10.48.3.

likely that "Guṅgu" may be taken as an alternative designation -- or perhaps less likely as a replacement -- of the Ṛṣi Atri: since the list would then read as yet another enumeration of what was then becoming the standard group of Saptarṣis, together with Agastya as the eighth Ṛṣi.

One further passage is of considerable interest inasmuch as it highlights what would appear to represent, in this group of earlier texts, a list of the Saptarṣi group in a form which suggests that the actual Ṛṣi-members of this group had not yet been fully constituted in the period of the composition of the Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣadic texts. The passage occurs in the final section of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, which constitutes the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. (8) It commences by quoting a verse from the Atharvaveda: although the actual form of the original passage has been slightly altered by the later text. The Atharvaveda verse relates that there is a cup with its opening at the side and with its bottom turned upwards, in which is placed the glory of all forms, and where are seated the Saptarṣis who have become its keepers:

"tiryaḅbilas̄ camasa ūrdhvabudhnaḥ tasmin yaśo nihitaṃ viśvarūpam |
tad āsata ṛṣayaḥ sapta sākam ye asya gopā mahato babhūvuh" || (9)

The later text makes explicit the connection between the Saptarṣis and the seven Prāṇas within the head (see next section), while adding in addition Voice as the eighth: a situation which calls to mind other Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra references to lists of the Saptarṣi group with Agastya as the eighth. Yet this Upaniṣadic passage next continues by enumerating each of these Ṛṣis, in a manner which can only be described as self-contradictory and confused. The passage would seem to be intended as a visual and tactual exposition of the Saptarṣis as the Prāṇas, as demonstrated by the teacher to his pupil:

(8) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 14.5.2.6 = Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.2.3-4.

(9) Atharvaveda 10.8.9.

"tad esa śloko bhavati arvāgbilāś cenasa ūrdhvabudhnaś tasmin
yaśo nihitam viśvarūpaṃ tasyāsata ṛṣayah sapta tīre vāg aṣṭamī
brahmanā samvidānety idam tac chiroḥ prāṇo vā ṛṣayah
. . . . || imāv eva gotamabharadvājāv ayam eva gotamo 'yaṃ bharadvāja
imāv eva viśvāmitrajanadagnī ayam eva viśvāmitro 'yaṃ janadagnir
imāv eva vasisthakaśyapāv ayam eva vasistho 'yaṃ kaśyapo vāg
evātrir vācā hy annam adyate 'ttir ha vai nāmaitad yad atrir iti" || (10)

It can readily be seen that, although the passage commences by saying that there are seven Ṛsis and that Voice is the eighth, nevertheless in practice Voice is here accounted the seventh while the eighth appears to be missing. It may be supposed that the text has been subsequently altered and reworked by a later commentator, so that the list of Ṛsis now includes Atri - as the Voice - among the seven, thus bringing this list of seven Ṛsis in line with the standard enumeration as given in the Sūtra and other texts. It may further be inferred that this has taken place at the expense of Agastya, who by the Sūtras has come to be termed the eighth Ṛsi, and who - as in the passage referred to above from the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa - is deemed even in the Brāhmaṇa texts to be something of an outsider to the other group of Ṛsis who come to constitute the Saptarṣi group.

It may therefore be suggested in general terms that the actual composition of membership of the Saptarṣi group was still in the process of formulation during the period covered by the Brāhmaṇa texts: and that it reached its more or less standardised form only during the period of the Sūtra texts, as evidenced by the extant references and textual material.

(c) The Vedic Samhitās.

While the actual composition of individual membership of the Saptarṣi group was well in the process of formulation in the Brāhmana texts, it would seem that the individual identity of each of the members of the Saptarṣi group remained largely unformulated -- and was certainly largely unexpressed -- by the composers of the Vedic hymns and texts. That is not to say that the group itself was unknown during this early period: on the contrary, there occur many references to the Saptarṣi group throughout the Vedic Samhitās which will be examined in this and the following sections. But it is to say that the individual members of the Saptarṣi group were neither fully specified nor fully enumerated in the Vedic Samhitās.

The Vedic hymns do, however, on occasions provide a prototype which is then expanded upon in later texts to give an enumeration of the Saptarṣi group. One such example of this has already been noted in the case of a passage in the Atharvaveda, which speaks of the Saptarṣis as sitting on the edges of a bowl (the head) of which they are the keepers (the Prānas). As has been noted, the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad adds a supplement to this verse, and then gives an enumeration of each of the Saptarṣis. (11)

One passage in a R̥gvedic hymn -- which appears also in the Atharvaveda -- may similarly be seen to act as a prototype for several of the traditions of the Saptarṣi group: even though it does not mention any of the R̥sis individually by name. The passage declares that, of the R̥sis who were born together, six are called twins and God-born R̥sis, while the seventh is said to be born alone:

"sākamjānām̐ septatham̐ āhur̐ ekajam̐ s̐n̐ idyam̐ r̥sayo devajā̐ iti" | (12)

The variant form of this verse in the Atharvaveda contains similar information, relating that six are twins and one born alone:

(11) Atharvaveda 10.8.9 : Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 2.2.3-4.

(12) R̥gveda 1.164.15 : Atharvaveda 9.9.16.

"idam savitar vijānīhi sad yama eka ekajah" | (13)

In a further Rgvedic hymn, Viśvāmitra is moreover referred to as being one who is devaja:

"mahā r̥sir devajā devajāto 'stabhnāt sindhum arnavam nṛcakṣāh |
viśvāmitro yad avahat sudāsam apriyāyata kuśikebhīr indrah" || (14)

Hence within the Rgveda itself it is said that, of the seven R̥sis who were born together, six are devaja -- and one of them is Viśvāmitra. In this respect it might be suggested that the inclusion of Viśvāmitra within the Saptar̥si group is already implied in this Rgvedic passage.

The idea of six R̥sis as twins and one as born alone may be seen to apply to the Saptar̥si group in two separate ways. On the one hand, the idea may be seen to be expressed through the concept of the Saptar̥sis as the Prāṇas in the body. As has already been seen, the enumeration in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad of the Saptar̥sis as the Prāṇas speaks in terms of six R̥sis who are paired together: namely Gotama and Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni, Vasistha and Kaśyapa: and it then speaks of one R̥si as being a "loner", identifying this R̥si with the Voice and with Atri. Thus, as applied to the concept of the Saptar̥sis as the Prāṇas, "six twins and one loner" may be interpreted as the two ears, the two eyes, the two nostrils, and the mouth or voice.

On the other hand, the idea may be seen to be expressed through the concept of the Saptar̥sis as stars in the sky, namely as the constellation Ursa Major (see next section, and chapter 5). The stars of Ursa Major may be divided latitudinally into three pair-groups: namely Dubhe and Megrez (α and δ), Merak and Phedka (β and γ), Mizar and Alkaid (ζ and η): thus leaving Alioth (ϵ) as a lone or unpaired star. Since the above quotation from the Rgveda continues by saying that "he who has eyes sees this -- not he

(13) Atharvaveda 10.8.5.

(14) Rgveda 3.53.9.

who is blind" (paśyad akṣanvān na vi cetad andhaḥ - see discussion in chapter 5 section 1), it would accordingly seem likely that some such visual observation is primarily intended by this passage: hence that the reference is primarily directed towards the Saptarṣis in the sky. It may be noted that the star ε Ursa Major - the unpaired star - is the fifth of these seven stars: while the R̥gvedic passage speaks of the seventh as being the unpaired R̥ṣi. But it may be suggested that the term saptatham refers primarily not to the seventh in order of enumeration, but rather to the seventh in the sense of the one which is beyond the six paired ones: thus the expression "six are twins, the seventh is born alone" overcomes the ambiguity inherent in saying "six are twins, the fifth is born alone", while also conveying the information that there is a total of seven R̥ṣis to which reference is being made. Similarly the variant form of the verse in the Atharvaveda omits the term saptatham, saying merely that six are twins and one born alone: and it may be inferred that this has been done once again in order to overcome a possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the term saptatham as designating the seventh in order of enumeration, rather than the seventh in the sense of being beyond or set apart from the other six "twins".

It may accordingly be inferred that the eka ekajaḥ corresponds in one respect - with reference to the Saptarṣis in the sky - to the "lone" or unpaired star ε Ursa Major. It will be noted that this star is the fifth in order of enumeration of the stars of Ursa Major: and it may thus be said to correspond to the fifth R̥ṣi in order of enumeration of the Saptarṣi group. As has been seen in the examination of the Brāhmana and Sūtra texts, the standard enumerations of the Saptarṣi group in those texts list the R̥ṣi Atri as the fifth in order of enumeration. Hence it may be concluded that the saptathan ekajam or eka ekajaḥ is here to be taken as the

R̥si Atri, both in respect of the Saptar̥sis in the body (as the Pr̥ānas) and also in respect of the Saptar̥sis in the sky. Thus once again the above passages in the R̥g and AtharvaVedas may be seen to provide a model or prototype for the Saptar̥si group, while not yet providing individual identifications of each of the R̥sis who compose that group: and that the Br̥hmana and Sūtra texts provide such individual identifications which are fully and consistently in accord with the Vedic passages referring to the group as a whole. Hence, while the Vedic texts consider one of the Saptar̥sis to be a loner or born alone, such references are taken to apply to the mouth (in the body) and to the fifth star of Ursa Major (in the sky), and are accordingly applied in subsequent texts to the R̥si Atri, who becomes the fifth R̥si in the enumeration of the group of seven.

In the cases of all of the above passages, it may be inferred that while the Saptar̥si group was well-known during Vedic times - as stars in the sky, as the Pr̥ānas in the body, as speakers of R̥ks and as the Pit̥rs of the Ārya peoples (see next section) - nevertheless the individual identities of the members of that group were not yet fully formulated in the Vedic Samhit̥as, and became expressed and firmly established only from the Br̥hmana texts onwards.

Section 3 : Further Designations of the Saptarsi Group.

(a) Vipras.

The Saptarsi group, and the individual members of that group, are referred to from the R̥gveda onwards by a number of different terms, in addition to the term Rsi. One of these terms is Vipra: a word derived from the root vip meaning to tremble, shake or vibrate, whose meaning may thus be associated with the idea of being inwardly excited or inspired - the noun therefore corresponding in meaning to a seer, a sage or a shaman.

Since the term Vipra is associated with the idea of inward movement and inspiration, it is not surprising to find the seven Vipras being referred to in connection with the inspiration of the Soma cult and with singing the praises of Indra and other Gods. One R̥gvedic hymn speaks of the seven R̥sis or Vipras as having approached king Soma as he sits on the sacrificial camu-vessels:

"sīdan hoteva sadane camūsupem agman r̥sayaḥ sapta vipraḥ" || (15)

The seven Vipras are similarly urged to hasten to the sacrifice:

"vīlau satiṛ abhi dhīrā atṛndaṇ prācāhinvaṇ manasā sapta vipraḥ" || (16)

Elsewhere the seven Vipras are said to have sung the praises of Indra, and to have thereby invigorated him:

"tan u naḥ pūrve pitaro navagvāḥ sapta vipraso abhi vājeyantaḥ" | (17)

"sa sustubhā sa stubhē sapta vipraḥ svarenādriṃ svaryo navagvāḥ |
saranyubhiḥ phaligaṃ indra śakra valaṇ ravena dāreyo daśagvāḥ" || (18)

One hymn speaks of the seven Vipras as holding dear the path laid down for the bird, and as going to the east for their pleasures:

"adhvaryubhiḥ pañcabhiḥ sapta vipraḥ priyaṃ rakṣante nihitaṃ padaṃ voḥ |
prāuco madantỵ ukṣano ajuryā devā devānāṃ anu hi vratā guḥ" || (19)

(15) R̥gveda 9.92.3.

(18) R̥gveda 1.62.4.

(16) R̥gveda 3.31.5.

(19) R̥gveda 3.7.7.

(17) R̥gveda 6.22.2.

The "bird" in this passage might be taken to refer to Agni, to whom the hymn as a whole is addressed; while the reference to the seven Vipras as travelling to the east for their enjoyment might be interpreted as the eastwards motion of the Saptarṣis in the sky towards their wives the Kṛttikās, who are said to belong to Agni (20) (see further on this and on the designation uksena in the following sub-section and in chapters 3 and 5).

A further hymn speaks of the seven Vipras as being born from mother Usas or dawn as the first virtuous or creative ones (vedhas):

"adhā mātur usasah sapta viprā jāyemahi prathamā vedhaso nṛṇ" | (21)

Other contexts speak of individual Rsis as Vipras. Thus for example it is related in one hymn that the Aśvins came to the help of the Vipra Bharadvāja:

"yābhir vipraṃ pra bharadvājam āvatan tābhir ū su ūtibhir aśvinā gataṃ" || (22)

The term Vipra is similarly applied to the Saptarṣi group, and more especially to the individual members of that group, throughout the subsequent literature: and in many contexts the two terms Rsi and Vipra would appear to alternate indiscriminately. Similarly the terms Viprarṣi and Brahmarṣi would appear to be interchangeable and synonymous in the subsequent literature, and particularly in the Epic texts. Thus for example Viśvāmitra is usually spoken of as attaining the status of a Brahmarṣi or of a Brāhmaṇa: but he is also said to have attained Vipratvam:

"divyaṃ varṣasahasraṃ hi viśvāmitrena dhīmatā |
ksāntam ekena bhaktena tena vipratvam āgataḥ" || (23)

So too in the Mahābhārata Bharadvāja is said in one passage to be a Tapasvin, but to have gained knowledge of the Vedas through the tanu of his son Yavakrīta - whereafter he is no longer despised by the

(20) cf. e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.1-5.

(21) Rgveda 4.2.15.

(22) Rgveda 1.112.13.

(23) Mahābhārata 13.109.65.

Vipras:

"yavakrih̄ pitaraṃ dr̄stvā tapasvinam asatkr̄tam |
dr̄stvā ca satkr̄tam viprai raibhyaṃ putraiḥ sahan̄agha" || (24)

The myth equates the status of a Vipra with that of a Brahmin, both of which are said to rely upon knowledge of the Vedas. The story itself would seem to be somewhat in contrast to the earlier Vedic passages which speak of Bharadvāja as being a Vipra: similarly to further passages in the Epic literature which speak of Bharedvāja as being a Viprarsi, as for example in the following:

"bharadvājasya viprarseḥ skannaṃ reto mahātmanah̄ |
dr̄stvāpsarasam āyāntīm̄ ghr̄tācīm̄ pr̄thulocanām" || (25)

The term Vipra is similarly applied in the later literature to other members of the Saptarsi group - as for example to Atri:

"etad dadāni te vipra sarvajñas tvam̄ hi me mataḥ ||
tad atrir̄ nyāyataḥ sarvaṃ pratigr̄hya mahāmanāḥ" | (26)

A similar interchange of the terms Vipra, R̄si and Brāhmana may be seen especially in the myths of both Vasistha (27) and Viśvāmitra. (28)

It may be inferred that, by the later texts, these three terms had become so interchangeable as to be virtually synonymous with one another: and that the term Vipra, which in the R̄gveda retains its essential meaning of inward movement and inspiration, has by the later texts come to be synonymous with knowledge of the Vedas.

(24) Mahābhārata 3.135.15.

(25) Mahābhārata 9.47.57.

(26) Mahābhārata 3.133.30-31.

(27) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.167.1-21: 1.168.1-25.

(28) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.17.30ff.

(b) Rksas.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains a passage which relates that the seven Ṛsis were in former times called Rksas. The passage clearly indicates that it is the Saptarṣis in the sky to whom reference is being made: since it also speaks of the Saptarṣis as rising in the north, while the Kṛttikās - their wives - rise in the east:

"kṛttikāsv agnī ādadhīta | etā vā agninaḥsatram ||
 etā ha vai prācyai diśo na cyavante | sarvāni ha vā anyāni
 nakṣatrāni prācyai diśaś cyavante ||
 rksānām ha vā etā agre patnya āsuh saptarṣiṇ u ha sma vai purā
 rksā ity ācaksate tā mithunena vyārdhyantāmī hy uttarāhi
 saptarṣaya udyanti pura etā" || (29)

Similarly a reference in a Rgvedic hymn may also be interpreted as referring to the Saptarṣis in the sky, through mention of the Rksas in the sky which are seen by night but disappear somewhere else by day:

"amī ya rksā nihitāsa uccā naktam dadrśre kuha cid diveyuh" | (30)

These two passages raise two separate but closely related topics: namely on the one hand the connection between the Ṛsis and the Rksas, and on the other hand the more general idea of the Saptarṣis as stars in the sky. The first of these topics will be examined in the present context, while the second will be pursued in a separate chapter (chapter 5).

The passage just quoted from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa implies that the Saptarṣis in the sky were referred to as the seven Rksas at a period prior to the composition of this text, through the use of the term purā (formerly, previously, in former times). The term Rksa is generally taken to denote a bear: and in later times it also has the general meaning of a star or shining object, as is to be

(29) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.1-5.

(30) Rgveda 1.24.10.

found more especially in the Epic and Purānic texts.⁽³¹⁾ The latter meaning may be taken as a secondary or derivative meaning, arising through the association of this term with the stars of the Saptarsi constellation, namely Ursa Major or the Great Bear.

Since the idea of the Saptarsi constellation as a bear, or as seven bears, is one which is not limited to India, reference may here be made to certain extra-Indian ideas of the constellation. The idea of the constellation as a bear occurs in Greek sources: thus Homer for example refers to it as ὀ ἄρκτος (the bear), while also using the term ἡ ἄμαξα (the chariot or wain) as a name of the constellation:

" Ἀρκτον θ' ἦν καὶ Ἄμαξαν ἐπέκλησιν καλέουσαν " (32)

The term ἄμαξα or chariot would seem to have been assimilated from Babylonian usage, where the constellation was known as MAR.GID.DA meaning the wagon or chariot:⁽³³⁾ and such later writers as Democritus,⁽³⁴⁾ in describing the Babylonian system of astronomy, notice this possible origin of the Greek concept. In explanation of the term ἄρκτος or bear there is related - for example by Hyginus and Apollodorus - the myth of Callisto, one of the companions of Artemis. When Zeus one day seduced Callisto, Artemis noticed that she was with child, and in jealousy turned her into a bear and set a pack of hounds upon her: Callisto would have been hunted to death (and in some versions she is killed), but Zeus took her up into the sky and set her image among the stars.⁽³⁵⁾ In Roman astronomy Callisto was accordingly known as the Ursa Major or Great Bear, and the above myth was further related by such writers as Ovid.⁽³⁶⁾

(31) e.g. Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.23.52: 1.2.24.91-92: 1.2.24.131: etc.

(32) cf. Homer - Iliad 18.487; Odyssey 5.273.

(33) cf. F.X. Kugler - Sternkunde und Sterndienst in Babel, book 2 pp.249-251.

(34) Democritus - Vitruvius 9.4.1 - 9.5.3.

(35) cf. Hyginus - Poetica Astronomica 2.1 : Apollodorus - Bibliotheca 3.8.2 : R. Graves - The Greek Myths, vol.1 section 22.

(36) e.g. Ovid - Metamorphoses 2.450ff.

The idea of this constellation as a bear is again to be found among many Finno-Ugrian, Central Asian, Siberian, and North American Indian tribes and peoples.⁽³⁷⁾ Some view the constellation as a bear: others conceive of four of the stars as a bear, and the other three stars as hunters in pursuit of the bear: while others again see it as seven wolves - an idea comparable to the Western Aryan notion of $\lambda\upsilon\kappa\omicron\omicron$ or Wolf as a name of the constellation (see below).

It is of interest to note here that among many peoples in both Asia and North America the bear is regarded as a sacred animal, and is closely connected with the phenomenon of Shamanism. Thus for example among many North American Indian tribes every natural object is deemed to possess its own inua or "indweller", that of the bear being especially potent: and if the inua of a bear becomes the tornak or "helper" of a man, then the man is symbolically eaten by the bear and vomited up again - whereupon he becomes an Angakok or Shaman.⁽³⁸⁾ This close connection between the bear and the phenomenon of Shamanism has interesting similarities with the Indian connection between the Rksa and the Rsi: which might possibly help to explain in conceptual terms how the ideas of the Bear and the Seer came to be connected with each other. In historical terms, however, such a similarity may merely be noted in the present context without further comment: for no firm conclusions can be drawn as to possible cultural connections or diffusions of ideas, due to the fact that such Asian and North American Indian accounts cannot be dated with any certainty prior to their first documentation around the early second millenium A.D.

By way of contrast with these ideas of the constellation as being in some way connected with a bear, it may be noted that Ursa Major was known as the Hippopotamus in ancient Egypt - a name which

(37) cf. U. Holmberg - Finno-Ugric and Siberian Mythology, pp.83ff, 425ff. : H.B. Alexander - North American Mythology, pp.9, 26, 96ff, 278.

(38) cf. Alexander - op.cit. p.5.

it retains there to the present day: (39) while in China from at least the eighth century B.C. in the Odes it was known as Pei Tou - the northern dipper or ladle. (40) It may thus be inferred overall that the ideas of the constellation as a bear derive - on the basis of their appearance especially in both Greece and India - from a cultural milieu of what may for convenience be termed fundamentally Indo-European character: and that such ideas are quite clearly distinct from the further ideas which are to be found in Babylonian, Chinese and Egyptian contexts.

It may further be noted in connection with the question of cultural affiliations that in India the Saptarsis are consistently associated with the northern region - a quite natural association, in view of the fact that this constellation is closest to the "centre of the sky" or the northern celestial pole (see further discussion on this in chapter 3). Similarly, the designation for "The North" in the Latin languages is "The Seven Oxen" (for example Latin Septentriones): and this usage may be seen as parallel to the Indian designation of the Saptarsis as the Seven Oxen or Uksanas who travel to the east for their enjoyment:

"adhvaryubhiḥ pañcabhiḥ sapta viprah̄ priyam raksante nihitam padam veh̄
prāncō madanty uksano ajuryā devā devānām anu hi vratā guh̄" || (41)

As has already been noted, this passage may also be connected with that quoted earlier from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which speaks of the Saptarsis as rising in the north while their wives the Kṛttikās - with whom they have enjoyment - live in the east.

It may accordingly be inferred at this stage that the term Rksa as applied to the constellation of the Saptarsis or Ursa Major originally belongs to and derives from a cultural milieu of fundamentally Indo-European character, as does also their consequent association with the northern region and their designation as

(39) e.g. W. Peek - Constellations, pp.1ff.

(40) cf. H. Chatley - Ancient Chinese Astronomy, in Asiatic Review 1938 : W.F. Meyers - Chinese Reader's Manual, p.852.

(41) Rgveda 3.7.7.

Uksanas or oxen: and that it is from such a context that the idea is derived of their representing a bear or seven bears. It is equally clear that, by the time of the composition of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa around the ninth century B.C., such a designation had been replaced by the term Saptar̥sis, and was regarded as a thing of the past. Reasons for this change may now be sought.

It has been noted that the term R̥ksa denotes both a bear and also - especially in later texts - a star or shining object. The later Purānic texts additionally refer to the designation Saptar̥cis or seven shining ones as an alternative designation of the Saptar̥sis.⁽⁴²⁾ This term, like the term R̥ksa, is derived from a Vedic root - arc - with a dual meaning: on the one hand it means to shine, while on the other hand it means also to praise. Both of these functions may indeed be seen to apply to the R̥sis, who both praise the Gods and also shine in the sky. During the nineteenth century it was suggested by several scholars⁽⁴³⁾ that the Seven Bears were originally called the Seven Shiners: and that the term λευκος or shining was subsequently replaced - at least among the Western Aryans - by the term λυκος or wolf, which came to be viewed as synonymous with the term αρκτος or bear - whereafter the Seven Stars were converted into Seven Bears. However, with reference to the Indian sources, such an explanation in effect gives no real reason for the change from Arcis to R̥ksa, nor from R̥ksa to R̥si: on the contrary, it implies that the term Arcis or shining one was the original term, whereas in the Indian sources this term does not appear as a designation of the constellation until the Purānic texts. It similarly implies that the term R̥ksa developed from the term R̥si: whereas again, in the Indian sources, the opposite would seem to be the case. Thus such an explanation for the derivation of these

(42) e.g. Brahmandā Purāna 2.3.11.29-30 : Vāyu Purāna 2.12.20-22 : see further in chapter 5.

(43) e.g. G.W. Cox - Aryan Mythology, book 2 ch.2 section 4 pp.226-227; cf. A. Lang - introd. to Grimm's Household Tales, p.xxxiv.

various terms would not seem to be valid in the case of the Indian material. It would similarly seem unlikely that the term Rkṣa was replaced by the term Rṣi due to any lack of bears in India: since at least one species of bear - the black bear - is indigenous to India. Keith⁽⁴⁴⁾ suggested that the change had occurred "Doubtless for no better reason than the similarity of Rṣi, seer, and Rkṣa, bear". Presumably by the word "similarity" in this context Keith had in mind a linguistic similarity. Yet such fundamental changes, not merely of words but of the symbols, myths and ideas embodied in such words, cannot be adequately accounted for solely on the basis of linguistic or phonetic similarity: and it might in any case be suggested that there were many other phonetically similar words which might have been chosen in preference to the term Rṣi as replacements of the term Rkṣa. Reasons for the change must accordingly be sought elsewhere.

It has been suggested and argued with reasonable certainty by several scholars that the Indian Nakṣatra system - like the Chinese Sieou and the Arabic Manāzil - is fundamentally independent of the Greek system of constellations, and probably antedates it.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Without entering upon a detailed discussion of this question, it may be inferred on this basis that, whatever the precise origins of the Nakṣatra system, it is unlikely to be derived from a specifically Indo-European cultural context. On the other hand, it is clear that by the time of the first mention of the Nakṣatra system in the rituals of the Yajurveda,⁽⁴⁶⁾ this system had been fully accepted by and integrated within the Indo-Aryan cult. Since the designation Rkṣas for Ursa Major has been seen to derive

(44) A.B. Keith - Indian Mythology, p.102.

(45) cf. W.D. Whitney - Jacobi and Tilak on the Age of the Veda, in JAOS 16 pp.82ff : A. Weber - Nakṣatra, in AKAWB 1861 pp.267ff : L. de Saussure - Origines de l'Astronomie Chinoise, in T'oung Pao series 2 vol.10 : H. Oldenberg - Nakṣatra und Sieou, in NKGWG 1909 pp.544ff : Macdonell & Keith - Vedic Index, vol.1 pp.428-430.

(46) e.g. Taittirīya Saṁhitā 1.5.1.4: 4.4.10.1-3 : Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā 1.7.2: 2.13.20 : Kāthaka Saṁhitā 8.15: 39.13 : cf. Atharvaveda 19.7.1: 19.8.1 : etc.

from a basically Indo-European cultural context, while the designation Rsis for Ursa Major does not have such Indo-European parallels, it may be suggested that the designation Rsis or Saptarsis for this constellation owes its origin - at least in part - to the same fundamentally non-Indo-European cultural context whence derives also the Naksatra system. It may accordingly be suggested that the replacement of the designation Rksas by the designation Rsis was in part due to the assimilation of the latter term from a basically non-Indo-European context into the Indo-Aryan cult.

It may at the same time be suggested that the change from Rksas to Rsis occurred partly as a result of internal developments within the Vedic tradition itself: motivated both by the assimilation of outside groups and ideas and also by the increasingly important role played by the Rsi within the social or cultural group in which the Rsi traditions were formulated and propounded. Such an importance would derive especially from the role of the Rsi as one who uttered hymns of praise or Rks to the Gods, which were subsequently handed down and "formulated into a collection or Samhitā, which was regarded as embodying the essence of sacred knowledge or Veda. Thus, if there were a "similarity" (as suggested by Keith) between the terms Rsi and Rksa, this would derive not so much from the linguistic term Rsi itself but rather in the first instance from the function of the Rsi in praising the Gods, and only in the second instance from the identity of the roots rc and arc meaning both to praise and to shine. In this respect, therefore, while the basic concept of the constellation Ursa Major as "Wise Men" or Rsis - whether under this or further equivalent designations - would have been derived largely from a basically non-Indo-European source, the associations of the constellation with the Saptarsis of the Vedic tradition would have been motivated in large measure by the important role and status of those Rsi as revealers of

Sacred knowledge - whence the "illumination" associated with such hymns or Rks in which that knowledge was revealed was in turn reflected in the concept of the "illumination" or shining nature of those who revealed such Rks. This same idea of the Rsi as one who in some sense "shines" through the illumination of sacred knowledge or through spiritual "enlightenment" is also to be found in several subsequent contexts. A passage in the Taittiriya Samhitā, for example, relates that the Gods went to Suvargaloka or the sky by means of Agni or Fire, and became the Krttikās; and it then adds that any man might also become a brilliant and shining object in the sky through worshipping the Gods and through performing sacrifice:

"yasyaitā upadhīyante suvargam eva lokam eti gacchati prakāśam
citram eva bhavati" | (47)

A similar idea may be seen to underlie the Rgvedic statements that the Saptarṣis attained an exalted status through practising and uttering Rta, and through performing tapas and vrata.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Accordingly, the most exalted status to which they might aspire would be that closest to the centre of the sky or the northern celestial pole, the "Dhruva" or fixed point of the sky: and since, during the third and second millennia B.C. the northern celestial pole is known to have been closest to the star α Draconis,⁽⁴⁹⁾ then the constellation of the Saptarṣis or Ursa Major would have been closest to this symbolic "centre" of the sky (see further discussion of this point in chapter 3). The Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra again visualises the stars as being the bodies of Rsis who have been transferred to the sky because of their good deeds:

(47) Taittiriya Samhitā 5.3.9.

(48) e.g. Rgveda 3.4.7: 3.7.7: 4.1.12-13: 10.109.1-7.

(49) cf. Macdonell & Keith - Vedic Index vol.1 p.406 + refs. :
P. Moore - Atlas of the Universe, with forward by Prof. Sir
B. Lovell, p.216.

"prajāpater ṛṣīṇām iti sargo 'yam ||

tatra ye puṇyakṛtas teṣāṃ prakṛtayah purā jvalantya upalabhyante" || (50)

Similarly one passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that when Arjuna travelled through the sky, he observed that what were seen from the earth as stars were in fact the self-illuminated bodies of Ṛṣis and others of good deeds:

"tatra rājarsayah siddhā vīrāś ca nihatā yudhi |

....

ete sukṛtinaḥ pārtha svesu dhisnyesv avasthitāḥ |
yān dr̥ṣṭavān asi vibho tārārūpāni bhūtale" || (51)

Further such references will be noted in chapter 5, in connection with the more general idea of the Saptaṛṣis as stars in the sky. It may however be noted in the present context from the above references that the idea of stars as being the brilliant and shining bodies of Ṛṣis and others is one which is present from the R̥gveda through to the later texts.

It may be concluded that the designation Saptaṛṣayah for the constellation Ursa Major in the Indian literary traditions arose most probably from a specifically Indian - as opposed to Indo-European - context: due partly to the influence and assimilation within the Indo-Aryan cult of ideas which derived from a fundamentally non-Indo-European source - and conceivably from the same non-Indo-European source whence derived also the Naksatra system - and partly also to the role and function of the Ṛṣi within the social context of the Vedic tradition. When speaking of such an essentially non-Indo-European source, which - as has been seen - differed also from both the Babylonian and Chinese traditions, one obvious place to look for such a source of ideas is to the Indus Valley Civilisation: particularly in view of the fact that several Indus seals depict seven individuals standing before a figure (?deity) in a Pīpal tree

(50) Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra 2.9.24.12-13.

(51) Mahābhārata 3.43.29-35.

to whom offerings are being made: (51a) a scene which might conceivably be interpreted with reference to the Saptarṣis. While it might thus be suggested that the Indus Valley Civilisation is the most likely source for such ideas, it must at the same time be acknowledged that such a suggestion can be neither proved nor disproved in the current state of knowledge of the culture of that civilisation. Thus while the suggestion of likelihood may be made, the question is one which will not be further pursued in the present context. It may however be further concluded here that the replacement of the term Rkṣa by the term Rṣi in respect of the constellation Ursa Major is one for which reasons must be sought not merely on grounds of linguistic similarity, but more significantly in relation to the increasingly important role which the Rṣi was coming to occupy within Indian society: a role which is reflected especially in his revelation of Rkṣ or Vedic hymns of praise to the Gods, and a role which by the Brāhmaṇa texts had secured for him a position of paramount importance - both within the social context, and also, in reflection of his enhanced status, in the sky. The latter is a topic which will be further pursued in Chapter 5.

(51a) see J. Marshall - Mohenjo Daro & the Indus Civilisation, pl.XII no.18, pl.CXVIII no.7 (London 1931) : E.J. Mackay - Further Excavations at Mohenjo Daro, pl.XCIV no.430 (Delhi 1938).

(c) Prānas.

While the concept of the Saptar̥sis as R̥ksas focuses attention primarily upon the stars in the sky and away from men on the earth, the concept of the Saptar̥sis as Prānas on the other hand concentrates attention upon man himself, and upon the nature and constitution of man. This concept is to be found from the Vedic Samhitās onwards: and the term prāna as it occurs in these texts may be variously rendered as either (particularly when used in the singular) vital essence, breath, vitality, life: or (particularly when used in the plural, as in the case of the identification with the R̥sis) the vital organs or organs of sense-perception - especially the eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth, as will be seen from the quotations in this sub-section.

A passage in the Vājasaneyi Samhitā relates that the Saptar̥sis are established in the body, and act constantly as the guardians of it:

"sapta r̥sayah pratihitāḥ śarīre sapta raksanti sadam apramādam" | (52)

More specifically, the Taittirīya Samhitā in one passage implies that the Saptar̥sis are established in the head - an identification which is pursued in subsequent contexts - while entreating that the Soma which has been drunk might rise up to the Saptar̥sis, and not fall below the navel:

"śivo me sapta r̥sīn upatisthasva mā me 'vāñ mābhīm ati gāh |
apāma somam amṛtā abhūmādarāma jyotir avidāma devān" | (53)

A passage in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana makes a similar request:

"ūrdhvas sapta r̥sīn upatisthasvendrapīto vācas pate saptar̥tvijo
'bhy ucchrayasva juṣasva lokam māvañ avagāh" || (54)

In other words, what Caland - in commenting upon this passage -

(52) Vājasaneyi Samhitā 34.55.

(53) Taittirīya Samhitā 3.2.5 : cf. Vaitāna Sūtra 19.18.

(54) Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana 1.5.5 : Jaiminīya Śrauta Sūtra 14.14-16.

described as an injunction against diarrhoea might equally be described as an entreaty that the Soma which has been drunk might produce its effect upon the head rather than upon the stomach. In such contexts it would seem reasonably clear that the Saptarsis are to be understood as being established within the body.

At this point it is convenient to draw a distinction between the ideas of the R̥gveda on the one hand, and those of the Yajurveda and similar texts on the other hand, concerning this idea of the Saptarsis as being established within the body. As has already been noted earlier, several R̥gvedic hymns refer to the Seven R̥sis or Vipras in connection with the Soma cult. One hymn for example relates that the R̥sis approached king Soma as he sat on the sacrificial camus-vessels: ⁽⁵⁵⁾ while another tells that the voices of the Saptarsis cried out to Soma. ⁽⁵⁶⁾ In further hymns the Seven Vipras are urged to hasten to the festival, ⁽⁵⁷⁾ and they are said to be generated here on earth while Soma is being pressed. ⁽⁵⁸⁾ In other words, in the R̥gveda the Saptarsis are generally thought of as being brought from heaven to earth in order to be present beside those who partake in either offering or actually drinking Soma. In the Yajurveda passages quoted above, however, the Saptarsis are no longer thought of as being separate from men: they do not need to be called from heaven to earth, since they are now conceived of as residing within men - and within the head in particular. Here in a sense the macrocosm has come to be identified with the microcosm: and the Saptarsis, who were formerly conceived of primarily as stars in the sky, are now in addition conceived of as residing within man himself. Thus the head comes to be viewed as a universe in miniature, containing as it were the entire

(55) R̥gveda 9.92.2.

(56) R̥gveda 9.103.3.

(57) R̥gveda 3.31.5.

(58) R̥gveda 4.16.3.

creation in essence and in embryonic form: and this is indeed an idea which is to be found in the Atharvaveda. One passage in that work, for example, relates that the head of Atharvan is a vessel of the Gods: it is that within which Brahman resides, and it is that from which Pavamāna-Soma sends forth the entire creation:

"mūrdhānam asya samsīvyātharvā hṛdayam ca yat |
 mastiskād ūrdhvah prairayat pavamāno 'dhi śīrsatah ||
 tad vā atharvanah śīro devakośah samubjitah |
 tat prāno abhiraksati śīro annam atho manah ||

 puram yo brahmano veda yasyah purusa ucyate ||

 prahrājamānam harinim yasasā samperivrtam |
 puram hiranyayim brahma viveśāparājitam" || (59)

Thus Brahman is here considered as residing in the centre of the head: while Prāna guards this Brahman within the head. A further passage in the Atharvaveda similarly relates that the Saptarṣis sit together in a bowl with its opening at the side and with its bottom upwards (namely the head) in which is deposited the glory of all forms, and that they become the guardians of that great one:

"tiryagbilaś camasa ūrdhvabudhnaś tasmin yaśo nihitam viśvarūpam |
 tad āsata ṛsayah sapta sākam ye asya gopā mahato bahūvuh" || (60)

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad⁽⁶¹⁾ quotes this same verse, making several minor changes and making explicit the identifications both of the cup with the head (idam tac chirah) and also of the Ṛsis with the Prānas (prānā vā ṛsayah): and it thereafter identifies each of these Ṛsis, in a form which has been previously quoted and commented upon. In this context the idea of two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and one mouth recalls again the Rgvedic hymn which speaks of six Ṛsis as twins and one as a loner:

- (59) Atharvaveda 10.2.26-33 : cf. Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad 6.
 (60) Atharvaveda 10.8.9 : cf. Nirukta 12.38.
 (61) Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 2.2.3-4.

"sūkamjānām saptatham āhur ekajam sal idyamā rsayo devajā iti" | (62)

and similarly the corresponding verse in the Atharvaveda:

"idam savitar vijānīhi sad yamā eka ekajah |
tasmin hāpitvam icchante ya esām eka ekajah" || (63)

In this latter passage, it may be said that a measure of abandonment or escape is sought - by those seeking Brahman - through the one who is alone of the seven: or in other words, in respect of the body, through the mouth or through voice or food:

"vāg evātrir vācā hy annam adyate 'ttir ha vai nāmatad yad atrir iti" | (64)

In this context there should be kept in mind references particularly in the Vedic Saṁhitās and the Brāhmanas on the one hand to chanting hymns in order to attain the world of heaven (i.e. gaining heaven through the voice), and on the other hand Upanisadic speculation as to the nature of food and breath (Brahman is food, Brahman is breath): since it may be seen that the above verse might be interpreted as making reference to both of these means of gaining some form of release, abandonment or escape.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains several references to the concept of the Saptarṣis as Prāṇas. One passage for example relates that, before the universe came into being, the Ṛsis who were the Prāṇas were kindled by Indra and created seven Puruṣas. They then decided to make these seven Puruṣas into one: and whatever glory (śrī) and vital essence (rasa) resided in those seven Puruṣas became the head (śiras) of that single Puruṣa, being called the head also because the Prāṇas resorted to (śri) it; and thereafter that Puruṣa became Prajāpati, who is Agni:

(62) Rgveda 1.164.15.

(63) Atharvaveda 10.8.5.

(64) Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 2.2.4.

"prāṇā vā ṛṣayas te yat purāsmāt sarvasmād idam icchantah
 śramena tapasārīṣams tasmād ṛṣayah || esa evendras tān esa
 prāṇān madhyata indriyenainddha ta iddhāḥ sapta nānā puruṣān
 asrjanta || ta etān sapta puruṣān ekam puruṣam akurvan ||
 atha yaitesāṃ saptānāṃ puruṣānāṃ śrīḥ | yo rasa āsit tam ūrdhvam
 samuduhams tad asya śīro 'bhavad tasmim etasmin prāṇā
 āśrayanta tasmād evaitac chiro || sa eva puruṣah prajāpatir
 abhavat | sa yo 'yam agniś cīyate" (65)

The mention in this passage of the śrī or glory residing in the head recalls the "glory of all forms" which is said in the Atharvaveda to be placed in the head of Atharvan. Further, just as the Ṛsis -- as the Prāṇas -- are here said to resort to the head of the Puruṣa who is Agni, so too they are elsewhere said to constitute and gain a share in Agni:

"etad vai yatraitam prāṇā ṛṣayo 'gre 'gnim sanaskurvams tad asmin
 etam purastād bhāgam akurvata tasmāt purastād bhāgās tad yad
 abhijuhoti ya evāsmims te prāṇā ṛṣayah purastād bhāgam akurvata" | (66)

Several further passages in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa again identify the Ṛsis with the Prāṇas, calling them also the first-born of Brahman. (67)

A passage in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa connects the Saptarṣis with the seven Prāṇas, and identifies them with the seven Indriyas or organs of sense-perception in the head -- in other words, the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and mouth:

"sapta ṛṣaya etenārdhmuvams tenarddhis tasmād etena yajanta rddhyā eva ||
 sapta śīrasi prāṇāḥ prāṇā indriyāṇāṃ indriyāṇy evaitenāpnoti" || (68)

In a similar manner Yaska comments upon the passage quoted earlier from the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā by adding that the Saptarṣis are to be identified with the six Indriyas -- which he does not list or identify --

(65) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.1.1.1-5.

(66) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.2.3.5: cf. 9.1.2.21.

(67) e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.5.3.11: 8.4.1.5: 8.4.3.7: 8.6.1.5:
 8.7.4.18-21.

(68) Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa 22.4.2-3.

together with Vidyā or knowledge as the seventh, thus recalling again the concept of "six twins and one alone":

"sapta ṛsayah pratihitāḥ śarīre sad indriyāni vidyā septamya ātmani" (69)

Yaska also adds that the Saptarsis are similarly to be identified with the seven rays of the sun:

"sapta ṛsayah pratihitāḥ śarīre raśmaya āditye" |

A passage in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, in speaking of the seven suns, also relates that the seven Prāṇas in the head are to be identified with the seven suns, as also with the seven Rtvigs and seven Hotrs:

"sapta śīrsanyāḥ prāṇāḥ | sūryā ity ācāryāḥ || saptartvijah sūryā ity ācāryāḥ | sapta hotāra rtvijah" || (70)

In this Āraṇyaka passage the identification of macrocosm and microcosm is made explicit: that is to say, the Rsis are by implication identified both with the suns in the sky and also with the Prāṇas in the body or head. The passage raises, however, a further question: since while speaking here of the seven suns -- identified with the seven Prāṇas, and thus by implication with the Saptarsis -- it also speaks of Kaśyapa as the eighth sun who sustains and gives light to the other seven:

"ārogo bhṛājah paṭarah pataṅgah | svarṇaro jyotiṣīmān vibhāṣah |
te asmaī sarve divam ātapanti | kaśyapo 'stamah |
yasmin sūryā arpitah sapta sākan || te asmaī sarve kaśyapāḥ
jyotir labhante" || (71)

It was noted in a previous sub-section that, in a passage in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, mention is made of the Saptarsis together with Voice as the eighth: although in that passage Atri is identified with the Voice, but nonetheless listed as one of the Saptarsis. (72)

(69) Nirukta 12.37 (12.4.3).

(70) Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1.7.2-6.

(71) Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1.7.1-2.

(72) Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.2.3-4.

In this Āraṇyaka passage it would seem that Kaśyapa is accorded a status which raises him above the other (seven) Ṛsis: and such a status is indeed accorded to Kaśyapa from a very early stage in the literature. In the Taittirīya Saṁhitā he is said to have been born alongside Indra and Agni from the golden waters: (73) while already in the Atharvaveda he is referred to in one passage as the seventh sun to whom the other six make appeal (74) and in a further passage in that work as he in whom the seven suns are set together, a concept which clearly prefigures that in the above Āraṇyaka passage:

"yat te candram kaśyapa rocaṇāvad yat saṁhitam puṣkalam citrabhānam
yasmin sūryā ārpitāḥ sapta sākam" || (75)

The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa -- which belongs to the Atharvaveda -- once again emphasises the status of Kaśyapa, referring to him as holding the waters of immortality on his head for a thousand years of Brahmā: a reference which might be seen to act as a prototype for such later Śaiva exploits as the descent of the Gaṅgā through the hair of Śiva, particularly since Kaśyapa is in this passage referred to as being Śiva, and which might therefore deserve detailed consideration in further contexts in connection with the origins and development of Śaiva mythology:

"kaśyapam kaśyapatuṅge bhyaṭapat dvitīyam varṣasahasraṁ
mūrdhany evāṁṛtasya dhārāṁ adhārayed brāhmaṇy astācatvāriṁśatam
varṣasahasraṇi salilasya pṛsthe śivo bhyaṭapat" | (76)

Again with reference to the exalted status of Kaśyapa, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Kaśyapa (= tortoise) is identified with the Kūrma or world-tortoise who sustains the earth and who is said to create (kṛ) beings, thereby being identified with Prajāpati -- because of which it is said that all beings are descended from

(73) Taittirīya Saṁhitā 5.6.1.

(74) Atharvaveda 8.9.7.

(75) Atharvaveda 13.3.10 : cf. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2.7.15.1-3 :
Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 22.28.10.

(76) Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.8.

"sa yat kūrmo nāma | etad vai rūpaṃ kṛtvā prajāpateḥ prajā
asṛjata yad asṛjatakerot tad yad akeroḥ tasmāt kūrmaḥ kaśyapo
vai kūrmas tasmād āhuḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ kaśyapya iti" || (77)

Similarly both in the Brāhmanas and also in such later texts as the Mahābhārata, Kaśyapa is said to have rescued the earth from the waters.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Just as he is in the above passage said to be the father of all creatures, so too in the Epic and Purānic texts Kaśyapa is famed as father of all Gods, Demons and Men⁽⁷⁹⁾ - and perhaps most notably as the father of Viṣṇu, in for example the Yamaṇa and Kṛṣṇa Avatāras.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Thus in the context of the passage quoted previously from the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, it may be suggested that the apparent confusion there between Kaśyapa as one of the Saptarṣis on the one hand, and Kaśyapa as the eighth sun in whom the other seven suns - who are by implication to be identified with the Saptarṣis as the Prāṇas - are set together on the other hand, is due in part to the then-increasing status of Kaśyapa: so that while he should properly appear in that passage as one of the seven Prāṇas, nevertheless he does not appear as one of the seven suns because he has already been raised to the rank of an eighth sun who sustains the other seven - a development foreshadowed indeed in the Atharvaveda itself. It may nonetheless be noted that in many later contexts - such as in the Sūtra texts and in the Epic and Purānic texts - Kaśyapa is included as one of the Saptarṣis in lists

(77) Śatapatha Brāhmana 7.5.1.1-7.

(78) e.g. Aitareya Brāhmana 8.21 : Śatapatha Brāhmana 13.7.1.14-15 : Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 16.13.3-4 : Mahābhārata 3.114.17-22: 12.49.56-64: 13.130.1-8: etc.

(79) e.g. Rāmāyana 3.13.6-32 : Mahābhārata 1.59.9-54: 1.60.33-35: 12.200.17-28: 12.201.8ff: 13.12.26: 13.65.21 : Harivaṃśa 3.45-93: Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.3.55ff: 2.3.4.24ff : Vāyu Purāṇa 2.5.54ff: 2.6.43ff : Matsya Purāṇa 6.1-47: 146.18-30 : Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 104.1-10 : Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.15.1ff: 1.21.1ff: etc.

(80) e.g. Mahābhārata 12.200.17-28: 12.326.75 : Harivaṃśa 45.20-45 : Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.3.117-118: 2.3.71.237-238 : Vāyu Purāṇa 1.21.47: 2.5.131: 2.34.220ff: 2.36.90-93 : Matsya Purāṇa 47.8-10: 244.41-52: etc.

of the Saptarsi group: thus suggesting that his appearance in this Āraṇyaka passage as the eighth sun-Prāna-R̥si rather than as one of the seven is a relatively isolated phenomenon.

Note may here be made of further different traditions of the R̥sis and the Prānas: in which, while R̥sis are identified with Prāna or with the Prānas, the Prānas are more generally considered to be five rather than seven in number. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa for example contains a passage which identifies the five R̥sis Atri, Jamadagni, Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja and Vasistha with the speech, eye, ear, mind and breath respectively.⁽⁸¹⁾ In this context the identification of Atri with the speech or mouth is the same as that given in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad passage quoted previously: while the identification of Vasistha with breath or Prāna may be interpreted as an attempt to emphasise the superiority of Vasistha in relation to the other R̥sis. Such an interpretation is made explicit in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, which relates a myth in which the five Prānas or organs of sense-perception dispute as to which is superior. Prajāpati instructs each to depart in turn, and accordingly the speech, eye, ear and mind each departs from and returns to the body: but when the breath starts to depart, it cannot leave the body without destroying it, and is thus shown to be superior.⁽⁸²⁾ A similar account is given also in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:⁽⁸³⁾ and taking this account in parallel to the account in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the passage as a whole may be said to be one in which Vasistha is proved superior to the R̥sis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja and Atri. It will be further noted in chapter 3 that myths emphasising the superiority of Vasistha are frequently encountered throughout these texts.

After the Sūtra texts, little attention would seem to be given to the concept of the Saptarsis as the seven Prānas, in either

(81) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 8.1.1.6 - 8.1.2.6.

(82) Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.1.6-14.

(83) Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.1.7-14.

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the Epic or the early Purānic literature. That is not to say that the concept of the seven Prānas is unknown within these texts: and indeed, one passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that in order to gain Mokṣa it is necessary to gain knowledge of both the Saptarṣis and also the seven Prānas or Vātas -- namely the "winds" or airs, which are here listed as prāna, anāna, samāna, vyāna, and udāna, together with the avāk or downward-going and the pravaha or upward-going winds:

"prānāpānau samānau ca vyanodānau ca tattvataḥ ||
 avāk caivānilam jñatvā pravaham cānilam punaḥ |
 sapta vātams tathā śeṣaṁ saptadhā vidhivat punaḥ ||
 prajāpatīn ṛṣīṁś caiva mārgāṁś ca subahūn varān |
 saptarṣīṁś ca bahūn jñatvā rājarṣīṁś ca paramtapaḥ" || (84)

Yet, even though this passage mentions both the Saptarṣis and the seven Prānas almost side by side, it does not seem inclined to equate or identify the two with one another in any way. Part of the reason for this lack of explicit identification may possibly arise from the fact that the Epic and early Purānic texts tend to recognise a different group of Ṛṣis as constituting the Saptarṣi group (see chapter 2): and thus since the Ṛṣis who are identified with the Prānas throughout the earlier texts are those whom the later texts -- including the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata -- no longer recognise as constituting the main Saptarṣi group, then the authors of these later texts may have chosen to simply ignore the tradition identifying the Saptarṣis with the Prānas, in preference to identifying the Prānas with the seven Ṛṣis whom they recognise as constituting the Saptarṣi group (namely Marīci and others). The Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas again make reference on occasions to the concept of the seven Prānas, without connecting these with the Saptarṣis: ⁽⁸⁵⁾ and when in one passage these texts do refer to the Ṛṣis in connection with the Prānas, the Ṛṣis are then those of the

(84) Mahābhārata 12.290.26-29; cf. 14.22.1-14.23.20; etc.

(85) e.g. Vāyu Purāna 1.57.69 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.29.75-76.

second main enumeration of the Saptarṣi group -- but they are listed together with five other figures, and the Prāṇas are thus not seven but twelve in number:

"tato 'srjāt pūnar brahmā rudram rosātmasambhavam |
 samkalpam caiva dharmam ca sarvesām eva parvatau ||
 so 'srjād vyavasāyam tu brahmā bhūtam sukṛtāmakam |
 samkalpāc caiva samkalpo jajñe so 'vyaktayoninah ||
 prāṇād dakṣo 'srjād vācam cakṣurbhyaṃ ca marīcinam |
 bhṛguś ca hrdayāj jajñe ṛṣiḥ salilayoninah ||
 śirasas cāṅgirēs caiva śrotṛād atris tathaiḥ ca |
 pulastyas ca tathodānād vyanāt tu pulahas tathā ||
 samānato vasisthas ca hy apānan nirmame kratum |
 ity ete brahmanah śreṣṭhah putrā vai dvādaśa smṛtāḥ ||

 prāṇajāns tu sa drṣtvā vai brahmā dvādaśa sūttvikān" | (86)

Thus although the Prāṇas are here connected with the Ṛṣis -- inasmuch as certain Ṛṣis are said to be born from Prāṇa (prāṇaja) -- the Prāṇas are not seven in number, nor are they identified either with the Saptarṣi group or with the Ṛṣis named in the above passage.

It may moreover be noted that the Ṛṣi-traditions which appear in the Epic and Purāṇic texts are concerned primarily with relating the deeds of the Ṛṣis, rather than with teaching a fundamentally metaphysical concept of the Ṛṣis within men -- as is to be found especially in the Brāhmana and Upaniṣadic texts. Thus it may be suggested that the very character of these texts -- in respect of the Ṛṣi-traditions contained therein -- tends in general to preclude such speculative metaphysical trends as occur in other contexts. It may at the same time be observed, however, that in later contexts where one might have expected a continuation of the Brāhmana and Upaniṣadic speculation identifying the Saptarṣis with the seven Prāṇas -- as most notably in the Tantric texts -- the Prāṇas are more generally considered to be five rather than seven in number --

namely prāna, apāna, vyāna, udāna, and samāna,⁽⁸⁷⁾ Such Tantric speculation may be seen in part as a continuation of the type of speculation noted above in certain Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣadic contexts⁽⁸⁸⁾ which, in identifying individual R̥sis with the Prānas, speaks of only five rather than seven R̥sis and Prānas: and in this respect it may be suggested that such early passages already demonstrate a trend to formalise the number of Prānas as five rather than seven, and thus to undermine the very concept of the Saptar̥sis as the seven Prānas - as occurs especially in the later Tantric texts.

Thus it may be concluded that the tradition which identifies the Saptar̥sis with the seven Prānas is one which is generally limited - in the literary sources presently under consideration - to the Vedic Saṃhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. In certain later Epic and Purāṇic contexts the R̥sis are on occasions connected with or said to be born from the Prānas: but in such contexts neither the R̥sis nor the Prānas are considered any longer to be seven in number. In the later traditions of the Tantric texts, the number of Prānas is most frequently given as five: thus continuing certain Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣadic speculations on the five Prānas - wherein those Prānas are identified with individual R̥sis - but no longer connecting the Prānas with the R̥sis, and in effect undermining and contradicting the earlier tradition which identifies the Saptar̥sis with the seven Prānas.

(87) e.g. J. Woodroffe - Introduction to Tantra Shastra, pp.30, 43.

(88) e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 8.1.1.6-8.1.2.6 : Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.1.6-15 : Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.1.7-14.

(d) Other Designations.

The earlier texts contain a number of additional terms which are used to designate the Saptarṣi group. One such term is the "Seven Praisers" or Kārus - a term fully consistent with the role of the Ṛsis as praisers of the Gods, as noted in previous sub-sections; and in one hymn the speaker seeks to generate the seven Kārus on earth as the libation is being drunk at the sacrifice:

"kavir na ninyam vidathāni sādhan vrsā yat sekam vipipāno arcāt |
diva itthā jījanat sapta kārūn eṣṇā ciccakrur veyuṣā gr̥nantah" || (89)

A further term which would appear to be used of the Saptarṣis in connection with the sacrificial cult is the seven Hotrs, as is to be found in several different contexts. Thus for example, while the seven Vipras are elsewhere urged to hasten to the sacrifice, (91) one hymn urges the seven Hotrs in similar manner to take their place for the sacrifice:

"ā no barhiḥ sadhamāde br̥haddivi devām īle sādāyā sapta hotr̥m" | (92)

A further hymn refers to the seven Hotrs as they through whom Manu kindled Agni and offered the first invocation:

"yebhyo hotr̥m prathamam āyeje manuh samiddhāgnir manasū sapta
hotrb̥hiḥ" | (93)

While these references may be interpreted in respect of the seven Hotrs or Ṛsis in the sky, who are thus requested to come from the sky to attend the sacrifice, a further passage speaks of the Saptarṣis as the seven Rtvigs - another association with the rituals

(89) R̥gveda 4.16.3.

(91) e.g. R̥gveda 3.31.5.

(92) R̥gveda 10.35.10.

(93) R̥gveda 10.63.7.

of the sacrificial cult - and refers to them as such as being in the body. In this passage, the Soma which has been drunk is entreated to go upwards (in the body) to the seven Ṛsis or seven Rtvigs (in the head):

"ūrdhvas sapta ṛsīn upatisthasvendrapīto vācaspatē saptartvijo
'bhy ucchrayasva jusasva lokam māvañ avagāh" || (94)

The passage has already been commented upon in a previous sub-section. In the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka the identification of the terms seven Hotṛs, seven Rtvigs, seven Sūryas or suns, and seven Prānas is explicitly made:

"prāno jīvanīndriyajīvāni | sapta śīrṣanyāḥ prāñāḥ | sūryā
ity ācāryāḥ || saptartvijāḥ sūryā ity ācāryāḥ || sapta
hotāra rtvijāḥ | devā ādityā ye sapta | tebhīḥ somābhirakṣana
iti" || (95)

It will be noted in this passage that the Saptarṣis, as the seven Suns, are also identified as Gods. Further instances of this identification are to be found in the Ṛgveda, and will be noted below.

The term Pitr - in the sense of father or ancestor - is another term which is in places associated with the Saptarṣis. One Ṛgvedic hymn relates that the Saptarṣis, "Our Fathers", were present when Daurgaha was being bound:

"asmākam atra pitaras ta āsan sapta ṛsayo daurgahe badhyamāne" || (96)

Another hymn relates that in former times "Our Fathers", the Navagvas and the Saptarṣis, invigorated Indra through their song:

"tam u nah pūrve pitaro navagvāḥ sapta viprāso abhi vājayantaḥ" || (97)

A passage in the Atharvaveda names the Ṛsis Viśvāmitra, Jemadagni, Vasistha, Bharadvāja, Gotama and Vamadeva as Pitr:

(94) Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa 1.5.5.

(95) Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1.7.2-5.

(96) Ṛgveda 4.42.8.

(97) Ṛgveda 6.22.2.

"viśvānitra jamadagne vasistha bharadvāja gotama vāmadeva |
śardir no atrir agrabhīn nemobhīh susamśāśah pitaro mṛdatā nah" (98)

Other passages draw a distinction between human and divine Pitrs. A R̥gvedic hymn for example relates that the human (manuṣya) R̥sis, "Our Fathers of old", gained success when sacrifice was first created: and that the seven heavenly (daiyya) R̥sis returned with stomas, metres and rules of conduct for the sacrifice:

"cākṛpre tena r̥sayo manuṣyā yajñe jāte pitaro nah parāne |
....
sahastorāḥ sahaçchandasa āvṛtaḥ sahapramā r̥sayah sapta daiyyāḥ" (99)

The sense of cākṛpre tena might perhaps best be interpreted as meaning that the human R̥sis either shared in, succeeded through, invented or set in order the sacrifice (to which reference has been made in the preceding verses of this hymn, particularly in respect of the originating of the sacrifice): and consequently that it was through the performance of sacrifice that these first R̥sis became daiyya, thereafter returning to give to men the rules for the conduct of sacrifice. Such an interpretation would be fully in accord with a great many further passages: which speak, for example, of the R̥sis (and the Gods) as having gained the world of heaven (Svargaloka and similar) through the performance of sacrifice, as instructing men in the proper performance of rituals, and as being daiyya or divasutras.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Thus the passage may be interpreted as relating the means - namely sacrifice - by which the first seven human R̥sis attained the status of being seven daiyya or heavenly R̥sis:

(98) Atharvaveda 18.3.16.

(99) R̥gveda 10.130.6-7 : Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā 34.49.

(100) e.g. R̥gveda 3.53.7: 4.2.15: 10.62.4 : Taittirīya Saṁhitā 2.6.3.2-4: 5.2.8.4-5: 5.3.9: 5.4.2: 6.2.6: 6.3.4: 7.1.4 : Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 1.16: 4.17: 6.34-35: Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 1.224: 2.115-117: 2.122-124: 3.187-188: 3.216 : Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 39.6 : Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa 16.12.1-4: 25.16.2 : Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3.9.21.1 : Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.6.2.1-4: 3.5.1.13-23: etc.

hence also as providing an explanation for the status of the Rsis as both human Pitrs and also divine figures in the sky. The term daivya may be taken to denote "Sons of the Devas" or "Sons of Heaven": and in line with such a divine origin there may be cited a Rgvedic verse which relates that the seven Vipras were born from mother Usas:

"adhā mātur usasah sapta viprā jāyemahi prathamā vedhaso nṛṇā" | (101)

It will be noted that this passage also speaks of the seven Vipras as being the first virtuous or creative ones among men - that is to say, the first men who became vedhas, a term which may be taken in the sense of "fully accomplished". Another hymn relates that the seven priyas or Friends were born from Agni: and it then tells of how these human ones, "Our Fathers", strove for Rta:

"sparho yuvā vapuṣyo vibhāvā sapta priyāso 'jansyanta vṛsne ||
asmākam atra pitaro manuṣyā abhi pra sedur rtaṁ āsu ānāh" | (102)

Other contexts further relate that Agni possesses seven Rsis and seven Hotrs, just as he possesses seven tongues and similar:

"sapta te agne samidhah sapta jihvāḥ sapta rsayah sapta dhāma priyāni |
sapta hotrā saptadhā tvā yajanti sapta yonirā pīnasvā ghrtena" || (103)

Once again with reference to divine birth, Viśvāmitra is in one hymn referred to as devaja or born of the Gods:

"mahā^v rsir devajā devajūto 'stabhnāt sindhum anavam nṛcaksāḥ |
viśvāmitro yad avahat sudāsam apriyāyata kuśikebhir indrah" || (104)

Similar references to the Rsis as being born of the Gods have been noted in several earlier contexts, in the case of the Rgvedic verse - and its Atharvaveda variant - speaking of six Rsis as devaja twins and one as ekaja:

(101) Rgveda 4.2.15.

(102) Rgveda 4.1.12-13.

(103) e.g. Taittiriya Samhitā 1.5.3 : Vājasaneyi Samhitā 17.79 :
Maitrāyanī Samhitā 1.6.2.

(104) Rgveda 3.53.9.

"sākaṅjanām saptatham āhur ekajam sal idyamā rsayo devajā iti" | (105)

While such passages speak of the Ṛsis as being born of the Gods, in certain further passages the Saptarṣis would themselves appear to be termed Devas or Gods. One Ṛgvedic hymn for example relates that:

"adhvaryabhiḥ pañcabhiḥ sapte viprāḥ priyam rakṣante nihitam padam veh
prāncō madantya ukṣano ajuryā devā devānām amu hi vrataḥ guh" || (106)

The interpretation of this passage has been discussed already in sub-sections (a) and (b) above: and it may additionally be noted in this context that the meaning of "the Gods observe the vratas of the Gods" may be interpreted as "those Gods (or heavenly ones, namely the seven Vipras just mentioned) observe the vratas ordained by the Gods". A further hymn again appears to speak of the Saptarṣis as Devas, in relating that in former times they sat down in tapas to discuss the question of whether Soma should return the wife of Brhaspati to him:

"devā etasyām avedanta pūrve sapta rsayas tapase ye niśeduh" | (107)

It is again possible that a similar interpretation is to be made in the case of a hymn in the Atharvaveda, which relates that in former times the Ṛsis sat in attendance upon (una-niśeduh) dīksā and found the world of heaven (Svar): and which then adds the wish that the Gods - or those Gods, namely the Ṛsis - might together incline that same goal towards the speaker:

"bhadram icchantā rsayah svar vidas tapo dīksām upaniśedur agre |
tato rāstram balam ojaś ca jātam tad asmai devā upasannamantu" || (108)

A corresponding variant verse is to be found also in the Taittirīya Samhitā:

(105) Ṛgveda 1.164.15 : Atharvaveda 9.9.16 : cp. Atharvaveda 10.8.5.

(106) Ṛgveda 3.7.7.

(107) Ṛgveda 10.109.1-7.

(108) Atharvaveda 19.41 (= complete hymn).

"bhadrāṃ paśyanta upasēdur agre tapo dīksāṃ ṛṣayah suvar vidah |
tataḥ kṣatram balam ojaś ca jātam tad asmai devā abhiscannantu" || (109)

In contrast again to these passages which speak of the divine status of the Ṛsis, a further hymn refers to Atri and Bharadvāja as human Ṛsis whom Agni helped:

"agnir devo devānām abhavat purohito 'gnim manusyaṃ ṛṣayah sanīdhire |
....
agnir atrim bharadvājam gaviṣṭhīrom prāvannah kanvam trasadasyum
āhava" | (110)

Taking these references as a whole, there may be observed certain differences of ideas expressed in these early passages as to whether the Saptarṣis should be accorded a human or a divine status. This is indeed a question which remains a topic of some importance throughout the literary traditions of the Saptarṣis. Thus on the one hand they are viewed as men who perform various deeds upon the earth, who act as Purohitas to various kings, who are seduced by courtesans and Ansarases; while on the other hand they are viewed firstly as men who attain the world of the Gods through the performance of sacrifice, through the chanting of hymns, or through tapas and other ascetic practices -- and secondly as being transformed into stars in the sky, into the essential essence of all living things (Prāṇa), and as the creators and orderers of the universe. It may accordingly be noted in the present context that this dual role of the Saptarṣis as both human and divine figures is present from the very earliest literary sources, namely from the R̥gveda itself.

One further term which is used to designate the Saptarṣis in these earlier texts is Bhūtakṛts, meaning literally "Makers of Being". The term Bhūtakṛt may be regarded as a precursor of the term Prajāpati or "Lord of Beings" as applied to the Saptarṣis in the later literature. The term Prajāpati is used in the early texts

(109) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.7.4.3 : Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 3.11.9.

(110) R̥veda 10.150.4-5.

to designate primarily a single creator-figure, as opposed to the group of seven Ṛsis: and the notion of there being more than one Prajāpati is an idea which is somewhat alien to the early texts, and which fully evolves only in the later texts - namely in the Epics and Purānas. Nonetheless the underlying idea of the Saptarṣis as Bhūtakṛts, which makes its appearance in the Atharvaveda but is then set aside in the subsequent texts until the Epics, would seem to find its continuity in the closely-allied idea of the Saptarṣis as Prajāpatis or Lords of Creation (see further in chapter 2). As Bhūtakṛts, the Saptarṣis are said to churn Agni:

"agne jāyasvāditir nāthiteyam brahmaudanam pacati putrakāmā |
sapta ṛsayo bhūtakṛtas te tvā manthantu prajayā saheha ||

....

sapta ṛsayo bhūtakṛtas te tvājījanann asyai rayim sarvavīraṇ ni yaccha" || (111)

A second verse calls them also makers of the sacrificial ladle

(sruc):

"aditer hastām srucam etām dvitīyām sapta ṛsayo bhūtakṛto yām akr̥van" || (112)

Another passage relates that in former times the seven Bhūtakṛt Ṛsis sang out for cattle, and performed sattra, yañña and tapas:

"yasyām pūrve bhūtakṛtarsayo gā udārcuh |
sapta sattreṇa vedhaso yajñena tapasā saha" || (113)

It will be noted that the same term Vedhas is used here for the Saptarṣis as has been noted in previous passages - as for example where the seven Vipras, as Vedhasas, are said to be born from mother Usas. (114)

The term Bhutakṛt is not to be found associated with the Saptarṣis in the Brāhmaṇa and subsequent texts: nor are the Saptarṣis termed Prajāpatis until the Epic and Purānic texts. Several passages

(111) Atharvaveda 11.1.1-3.

(112) Atharvaveda 11.1.24.

(113) Atharvaveda 12.1.39.

(114) R̥gveda 4.2.15.

in the Brāhmanas relate that individual Ṛsis were born from Prajāpati -- as for example Bhṛgu and Āṅgiras, who are said to have been born when the seed of Prajāpati fell into the sacrificial fire.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ In such passages the Ṛsis are clearly distinguished and set apart from Prajāpati. Similarly a passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā relates that when Prajāpati beheld the Virāj, he created both past and future with it and then hid it from the Ṛsis: but Jamadagni discovered it through tapas, and created various desires (prśnīn kāmān).⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Here again there is a clear distinction evident between Prajāpati and the Ṛsis. In the Brāhmaṇa texts various sāmans and praūgas are identified with Prajāpati, or are said to have been revealed by Prajāpati to the Ṛsis: and subsequently, two Brāhmaṇa passages speak of one of the Ṛsis as being Prajāpati. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, in speaking of the Aśvamedha, instructs that the horse should be appeased with verses or hymns by Jamadagni: since by doing so, the Aśvamedha sacrifice is supplied with its own deity -- both Jamadagni and the Aśvamedha being Prajāpati.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ The Kausītaki Brāhmaṇa similarly instructs at one point that the praūga of Vasistha should be recited: since Vasistha is Prajāpati, and it is in Prajāpati that one attains all desires.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ These two passages might accordingly be interpreted as an attempt to identify one or another of the Ṛsis with Prajāpati. Yet it must be noted that they are relatively isolated examples: and that they make no attempt to identify all seven Ṛsis as Prajāpati, or as Prajāpatis. A similar process is evident in the case of the Ṛsi Kaśyapa. The Atharvaveda, which refers to the Saptarṣis as Bhūtakṛts, also speaks of both Kaśyapa and Prajāpati in such close proximity that it is possible to interpret the two as being identical or synonymous with

(115) e.g. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 3.34 : Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 3.263 : Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.5.1.1-8.

(116) Taittirīya Samhitā 3.3.5.

(117) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 13.2.2.14.

(118) Kausītaki Brāhmaṇa 25.2: 26.15.

one another. In one passage the speaker is said to be covered with Prajāpati's brahman, with Kaśyapa's light and splendour:

"prajāpater āvrto brahmanā varmanāhaṃ kaśyapasya jyotiṣā varcasā ca" | (119)

Another passage relates that Time creates Prajāpati and Kaśyapa:

"kālah prajā asṛjata kālo 'gre prajāpatim |
svayambhūh kaśyapaḥ kālāt tapaḥ kālād ajāyata" || (120)

It will be noted that in the latter of these passages both Prajāpati and Kaśyapa - or Prajāpati as Kaśyapa - are allotted a common birth, namely from Time: and there is no question of Kaśyapa being born from Prajāpati. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is said moreover that Prajāpati took the form of a tortoise - kūrma - and thereby created - akarot - offspring: and since Kaśyapa (= tortoise) is identical with the kūrma, therefore all offspring are said to be descended from Kaśyapa, who is thus by implication identified with Prajāpati:

"sa yat kūrmo nāma | etad vai rūpaṃ kṛtvā prajāpatih prajā
asṛjata yad asṛjatakarot tad yad akarot tasmāt kūrmaḥ kaśyapo
vai kūrmas tasmād bhūh sarvāḥ prajāḥ kaśyapya iti" || (121)

The idea of Kaśyapa as father of all creation is prominent in the Epic and Purānic literature: where he appears as father of all Gods, Demons and Men, as has already been commented upon in the last sub-section. Yet such an idea is not prominent in the Brāhmaṇa and other earlier texts: and the idea of Kaśyapa as (a or the) Prajāpati is not an idea which is generally mentioned in these texts.

One further passage in the earlier texts which ascribed the term Prajāpati to one of the Saptarṣis occurs in the Maitri Upaniṣad, which contains a lengthy account of the teachings given by Kratu Prajāpati to the Valakhilyas.⁽¹²²⁾ It will be noted that

(119) Atharvaveda 17.1.27.

(120) Atharvaveda 19.53.10.

(121) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.5.1.1-6.

(122) Maitri Upaniṣad 2.3 - 4.6.

in this context the term Prajāpati is applied to one of the Rsis who appears only in the second or later main enumeration of the Saptarsi group (see Chapter 2): and who in the earlier literature is not generally represented in personified form. This in itself would tend to suggest that the Upaniṣad is of a relatively late date in comparison with the other Upaniṣads: and the same conclusion may be reached through further considerations, notably since the Upaniṣad shows evidence of both Buddhist and Sāṃkhya influence.⁽¹²³⁾ Thus the ascription of the term Prajāpati to the Rsi Kratu cannot be taken as an instance of the ascription of this term to one of the Rsis within the earlier texts and prior to the Epic and Purānic literature.

It may accordingly be concluded that the term Prajāpati in the earlier literature is used to denote only a single creator-figure: that the term is generally not used to designate one of the Saptarsis, except on relatively isolated occasions: and that the term is not used to designate all of the Saptarsis, which would thus imply the existence of seven Prajāpatis - as occurs in the Epic and Purānic texts.

It has been suggested that the term Bhūtakṛt as used of the Saptarsis in the Atharvaveda may be interpreted as expressing the same concept or idea as is conveyed by the use of the term Prajāpati for the Saptarsis in the Epic and Purānic texts: namely the idea of their being "Creators of Being" and "Lords of Creation". The reason for the apparent fall from favour of the idea of the Saptarsis as "Makers of Being" in the Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra texts, and for its subsequent reappearance in the Epic and Purānic texts, may possibly be traced to a fundamental difference of theological and metaphysical outlook between these various classes of literature, as represented particularly in the different meanings ascribed by

(123) see e.g. discussion in A.B. Keith - History of Sanskrit Literature, pp.194-196.

each to the term Prajāpati. The Brāhmana texts hold that there is but a single creator-figure or Prajāpati, who is the originator of all being: hence while an individual Rsi might on occasions be declared to be identical with - or to be an incarnated form of - this single figure, it would nonetheless be theologically incorrect for these texts to declare that there might be more than one Prajāpati. This could only be effected when the term Prajāpati no longer retained the exclusive connotation of designating the sole ultimate source of all being: and the Rsis as a group - who are never held to be those who create the universe ex nihilo, but rather those who complete the work of creation which has been set in motion by Brahmā - might only be termed Prajāpatis when this term was no longer applied exclusively to he who creates the universe ex nihilo. Thus the theological outlook of the Brāhmana and similar texts presupposes that there is but one Prajāpati: while it is generally only in the later literature that the task of completing creation is ascribed to the Rsis, as a result of which they are then themselves collectively termed Prajāpatis. It may therefore be suggested that the Brāhmana and Sūtra texts do not refer to the Rsis collectively as (seven) Prajāpatis since to do so would have been theologically alien to the outlook of those texts: while the designations of Bhūtakrts and Prajāpatis as applied collectively to the Saptarsi group in the Atharvaveda and then in the Epic and Purānic texts represent a type of theological outlook which is somewhat at variance with that of the Brāhmanas and Sūtras. It may further be suggested that the use of the terms Bhūtakrt and Prajāpati as applied collectively to the Saptarsi group may be taken to denote a degree of continuity in the idea of the Saptarsis as "Lords of Creation": a continuity which was maintained from the authors of the Atharvaveda to those of the Epic and Purānic texts, among groups and in cultural circles which did not share in the type of theological outlook which is presented in the Brāhmana and Sūtra texts.

Section 4 : Alternative Names of Individual Rsis.

Before proceeding to examine the lists and traditions of the Saptarṣi group in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts, it is useful to look briefly at some of the more common variant names for individual Rṣis in the Saptarṣi group which occur in both the early and the later texts, and which must be taken into account when one examines the lists and traditions of the Saptarṣis.

(a) Kaśyapa.

The Rṣi Kaśyapa is said in certain contexts to be known also by the name Ariṣṭanemi - as is related for example by a passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata:

"marīcch kaśyapaḥ putras tasya dve nāmanī śrute |
ariṣṭanemir ity ekaṃ kaśyapety aparaṃ viduh" || (124)

Elsewhere, however, Ariṣṭanemi is termed a son of Kaśyapa. For example, while Garuda or Tārksya is considered as and usually termed a son of Kaśyapa, (125) a passage in the Vana Parvan implies that certain Haihaya princes went to the Āśrama of Tārksya who is also called Ariṣṭanemi:

"jagruś cāriṣṭanemes te tārksyasyāśraman aṅjasa" || (126)

A passage in the Ādi Parvan similarly relates that both Tārksya and Ariṣṭanemi were among the sons born to Kaśyapa by Vinatā:

"tārksyaś cāriṣṭanemiś ca tathaiva garudārunau" || (127)

A passage in the Rāmāyana also lists both Kaśyapa and Ariṣṭanemi separately in a list of Prajāpatis: (128) and a similar separation of the two names is to be found again in a passage in the Brahmānda.

(124) Mahābhārata 12.201.8.

(125) see e.g. chapters 1-60 of the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata.

(126) Mahābhārata 3.182.8.

(127) Mahābhārata 1.59.39.

(128) Rāmāyana 3.13.6-32.

Purāna. (129) A passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna further relates that Kaśyapa, who became the son of Marīci, is also to be known as Kāśyapa (literally "son" or "descendant" of Kaśyapa):

"kaśyapas tasya putro 'bhūt kāśyapo nāma nāmatah" || (130)

Despite the inconsistencies between these and other texts, it is evident that the three terms Kaśyapa, Kāśyapa and Ariṣṭanemi have by the Mahābhārata come to be associated in some measure with one another: even though the name Ariṣṭanemi is not associated or identified with Kaśyapa in the earlier texts, as might otherwise have been expected in for example the Gotra and Pravara sections of the Śrauta Sūtra texts. Hence each of these alternative names must be taken into account - in both the early and the later texts - when one examines the traditions of the Rṣi Kaśyapa.

(b) Vasistha.

Vasistha is in certain contexts said to be called also by the name Āpava: as is related for example in a passage in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata:

"vasiṣṭho nāma sa manih khyāta āpava ity uta" || (131)

The same passage is repeated also in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas. (132) Another variant form of the name Vasistha is to be found especially in the later texts, and rarely occurs prior to the Epic literature. This is the form Vaśiṣṭha: and a passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas offers an explanation through the derivation of the name Vaśiṣṭha from the noun vaśin, denoting one who has mastery over his passions:

(129) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.53-54.

(130) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 104.3.

(131) Mahābhārata 1.93.5.

(132) Vāyu Purāna 2.32.43-44 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.69.44.

"vasumadhyāt samutpanno vaśī ca vasumān svayam |
vaśiṣṭha itī tattvajñānīḥ procyate brahmavādibhiḥ" || (134)

Although the explanation -- rather like certain comparable Brāhmaṇa etymologies -- might appear somewhat improbable, it is reasonably evident even from simply contrasting the earlier and later textual material that the form Vasīṣṭha is the earlier of the two forms, while the form Vaśiṣṭha is a later -- especially Epic and Purāṇic -- variant.

(c) Atri.

The Rsi Atri is also referred to by the name of Saptavadhri, particularly in connection with one myth -- which first occurs in the R̥gveda -- wherein he is rescued from a pit or a fire by the Aśvins.⁽¹³⁵⁾ He would also appear to be referred to by the name of Guṅgu, in a passage in the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa which was discussed in the first section of this chapter.⁽¹³⁶⁾

(d) Bharadvāja.

In the Brhaddevatā, Bharadvāja is said to be known also by the name of Vidathin:⁽¹³⁷⁾ and he is also called Vitatha in a passage in the Matsya Purāṇa:

"tatas tu vitatho nāma bharadvājo nr̥po 'bhavat" || (138)

On the other hand the Harivamśa relates that the name Vitatha refers rather to a son of Bharadvāja.⁽¹³⁹⁾ It is nonetheless evident that this name must be taken into account in examining the traditions of the Rsi Bharadvāja.

(134) Brāhmaṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.1.46 : Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.46-47.

(135) R̥gveda 10.39.9: 5.73.6 : Brhaddevatā 5.82-86.

(136) Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.8.

(137) Brhaddevatā 5.102-103.

(138) Matsya Purāṇa 40.32-35.

(139) Harivamśa 23.49-53.

(c) Gotama.

While the early texts on all but a few occasions refer to this Rsi by the name Gotama, certain late-Brāhmaṇa and subsequent texts -- as for example the Gopātha Brāhmaṇa -- alternate between the forms Gotama and Gautama: the latter properly denoting a "son" or "descendant" of Gotama. Several of the later texts, as for example the Mahābhārata, make it clear that a certain Gautama Śaradvat is intended by this designation as the Rsi who occupies a place in one main list of the Saptaṛsi group. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ A myth in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata introduces a further complication by speaking of Medhātithi -- who in earlier Vedic and subsequent texts is a figure distinct from Gotama and classified as a descendant of Kanva -- as identical with Gautama the husband of Ahalyā: the two terms Gautama and Medhātithi alternating within the myth. ⁽¹⁴¹⁾ A still further complication is introduced by the fact that Dīrghatamas -- who in several contexts appears as the father of Gautama ⁽¹⁴²⁾ -- is himself in places referred to as Gautama. ⁽¹⁴³⁾ A passage in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that Dīrghatamas begot Gautama and other sons: and that then, after journeying down the Gaṅgā to the realm of king Bali, he begot Kāksīvat and other sons. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ Yet a passage in the Sabhā Parvan relates that it was "Gautama" who begot Kāksīvat and other sons:

"Sūdrāyāṃ gautamo yatra mahātāmā samśitavratāḥ |
auśīnaryāṃ ajanayat kākṣīvadīṃ sutān ṛṣiḥ" || (145)

A further passage in the Śānti Parvan offers an explanation, by saying that Dīrghatamas "became" Gautama upon being cured of his blindness after repeating the name Keśava over and over again:

(140) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.57.88-99: 1.120.2-21: 5.54.47-48: 5.163.20-21.

(141) Mahābhārata 12.258.1-59.

(142) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.93.17-33.

(143) e.g. ibid : Brhaddevatā 4.11-25 : Matsya Purāna 48.32-39 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.33-37 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.33-94.

(144) Mahābhārata 1.98.6-33.

(145) Mahābhārata 2.19.5.

"ānupūrvyena vidhinā keśaveti punah punah |
sa cakṣusmān samabhavat gautamaś cābhavat punah" || (146)

The Matsya, Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas all similarly relate that Dīrghatamas became known as Gautama after being cured of his blindness:

"gobhyāhate tamasi vai gautamas tu tato 'bhavat" | (147)

"gavā dīrghatamaḥ so 'tha gautamaḥ samapadyata" || (148)

The Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas further demonstrate acceptance of this identification, and also connect it with the designation Śaradvat: terming the Ṛṣi who appears as one of the Saptarṣis in the Manvantara lists for the Vaivasvata Manvantara "Autathya Gautama Śaradvat".⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ The term "Autathya" - "son of Utathya" - refers to the birth of Dīrghatamas from the union of Brhaspati and Manatā the wife of Utathya: whence Dīrghatamas is himself referred to in certain contexts as Autathya or Aucathya.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ It may thus be seen that the three further terms Śaradvat, Medhātithi and Dīrghatamas must be taken into account in examining the traditions of the Ṛṣi Gautama: while it may also be recognised that, while the form Gotama is the original designation of this Ṛṣi, this is largely replaced from the Epics onwards by the form Gautama.

(f) Other Alternative Names.

Alternative names for the other Ṛṣis in each of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group are not commonly found: although variant forms of such names are on occasions met with, as for example in the common variant Agasti for Agastya which may be found especially in the Brāhmana and Sūtra texts, notably in the Gotra and Pravara

(146) Mahābhārata 12.328.50.

(147) Matsya Purāna 48.84.

(148) Vāyu Purāna 2.37.92 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.94.

(149) Vāyu Purāna 2.3.24-28 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.38.23.

(150) e.g. Brhaddevatā 3.142-150 : Mahābhārata 1.98.6-16.

sections of the Śrauta Sūtras. It should also be recognised that certain Rsis are on occasions referred to merely by a family or Gotra name. Such occurs for example in the case of Viśvāmitra, who is frequently termed simply Kauśika or Gādhija: similarly in the case of Jamadagni, who is often termed simply Bhārgava or R̥cīkaputra. Bharadvāja is sometimes termed simply Āngirasa - a designation more usually applied to Brhaspati: while Kaśyapa is very frequently referred to as simply Mārīca. On a slightly different level, but still with reference to parentage in giving an alternative name, Wasistha is on occasions referred to merely by the designation Maitrāvaruna - a designation, referring to the myth of his birth from the seed of Mitra-Varuna, which he also shares with the Rsi Agastya. (151)

Thus it may be seen that all such alternative names and variant forms of names must be fully taken into account when one examines the traditions of these Rsis and the lists of various Rsis.

(151) cf. Rgveda 7.33.10-11 : Nirukta 5.13-14 : Brhaddevatā 5.143-160 : Rāmāyana 7.55.19-7.57.21 : Mahābhārata 12.291.7ff: 13.143.18 : Matsya Purāna 61.18-53 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.5.1ff : etc.

CHAPTER 2 : The Later Lists of the Saptarsi Group.

Section 1 : Introduction.

(a) The Two Main Lists of the Saptarsi Group.

The Epic and early Purānic texts know in general of two main lists or enumerations of the Saptarsi group: and before examining such lists in detail, it is first useful to give a general outline of the difference between the two main lists of the group.

The first main list of the Saptarsi group is that which has already been noted in examining the earlier texts in Chapter 1: namely that consisting of the Rsis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Dharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa. It will be noted that in the later texts the earlier form Gotama is consistently superseded by the form Gautama - meaning literally "son" or "descendent" of Gotama. This is a change which is already in evidence in certain of the earlier texts, and which was commented upon at the end of the last Chapter.

The second main list of the Saptarsi group contains certain Rsis who are unknown to - or at least unmentioned by - the authors of the earlier literature: and yet who in the Epic and Purānic texts have assumed an importance far greater than that held by the Rsis in the first main list of the group. This second main list of the Saptarsi group consists of the Rsis Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha: and it may thus be seen that Atri and Vasistha are the only Rsis who appear in both of the main lists of the group.

One more or less constant feature with both lists is the actual order in which the individual Rsis appear in relation to one another within the groups. This is particularly the case in respect of the second of these lists, where - apart from an occasional change in position between Atri and Aṅgiras, the above

order is most frequently followed. In respect of the first list, the Rsi-members do on occasions appear in a different order: yet they frequently nonetheless retain a "pair-formation", comparable to the "twin" formation already noted in the earlier literature. Thus Viśvāmitra appears alongside Jamadagni, Bharadvāja alongside Gautama: while Vasistha appears alongside either Kaśyapa or Atri - leaving either Kaśyapa or Atri as the "lone" or unpaired Rsi.⁽¹⁾

(1) e.g. Mahābhārata 7.164.86-89: 12.201.27ff: 13.94.2ff.

(b) Further Designations of the Saptarsi Group.

The Epic and early Purānic texts in places list the same group of Ṛsis who constitute the Saptarsi group under different appellations or designations. These come under two main headings: namely the Prajāpatis and the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

The Prajāpatis are usually six or seven in number, and occasionally also nine or ten: and they then invariably consist of the same group of Ṛsis as the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. There additionally occur further groups of seventeen and twenty-one Prajāpatis, which include the six or seven just mentioned.

The Mind-born Sons of Brahmā - a phrase which is intended to render such terms as brahmano manasāh sutāh, manasā jātāh, brahmanah utrā manasāh, sapta manasāh, sapta brahmanah and similar forms - are sometimes six but more often seven in number: while this number is also increased on occasions to eight, nine and ten, particularly in the early Purānic texts. The group consists primarily of most or all of those Ṛsis who appear in the second main list of the Saptarsi group: namely that consisting of the Ṛsis Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha.

The terms Seven Ṛsis, Seven Prajāpatis, and Seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā are most frequently intended to denote the same group of Ṛsis in different contexts: that is to say, they are intended to denote the Ṛsis of the Saptarsi group commencing with Marīci. The terms Seven Prajāpatis and Seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā - which are not applied to the Saptarsi group in the earlier literature - are not used except on very rare occasions in the later texts to denote the group of seven Ṛsis commencing with Viśvāmitra. This identification of the various terms is frequently made explicit - as may be seen for example from the following passages:

"prajāpatīnāṃ saṅgāṃ tu caturtho yaḥ prajāpatih |
mānaso brahmanah putrah pulastya iti viśrutah" || (2)

("This Prajāpati is the fourth of the six Prajāpatis, a Mind-born Son of Brahmā, famed as Pulastya").

"brahmanah sapta putrā vai mahātmanah svayambhuvah ||
marīcir atryaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahah kratuh |
vasisthaś ca mahābhāgah sadṛśā vai svayambhuva ||
sapta brahmana ity ete purāṇe niścayam gatāh |
ata ūrdhvam pravakṣyāmi sarvān eva prajāpatīn" || (3)

("These are called the seven Sons of Brahmā I shall next describe all the Prajāpatis" - ff. description of Marīci, Atri, etc.).

"marīcir atrir bhagavān aṅgirah pulahah kratuh |
pulastyaś ca vasisthaś ca saptaite brahmanah sutāh ||
uttarasyaṃ diśi tathā rājan saptarsayah sthitāh" | (4)

(".... these are the seven Sons of Brahmā: they are established in the northern region as the Saptarsis").

"(births of Marīci, Kratu, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Vasistha:)
ity ete brahmanah putrā mānasāḥ saḥ maharsayah" || (5)

("These are the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, the six Maharsis").

Thus it may be seen that each of these further designations of the group must be taken into account when one examines the composition and development of the various lists of Ṛsis who are either termed or identified with the Saptarsis: and they will accordingly be examined during the course of the following sections.

(2) Rāmāyana 5.21.4-7.

(3) Mahābhārata 12.201.3-5.

note: in the first half of śloka 5, the above form is given in 31 MSS out of a total of 36 MSS used for the BORI Critical Edition. The remaining 5 MSS contain the variant reading 'esa' in place of 'ete' (= Śāradā + 3 Kashmiri + 1 Devanāgarī); while 4 of these also contain the variant 'niścayo gatāh' (= Śāradā + 3 Kashmiri). The editors of the BORI CE incorporate the readings 'esa' and 'niścayo gatāh' in their text; yet the form cited above would appear to be better attested, and is accordingly adopted here; see also pp.102-3 and 127 below on parallel passages in the Harivaṃśa and in the early Purāṇic texts.

(4) Harivaṃśa 7.7-8.

(5) Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.47 ; Brahmānda Purāṇa 2.3.1.47.

Section 2 : Enumerations of the Saptarsi Group.

(a) The Rāmāyana.

In presenting enumerations of the Rsis, the Rāmāyana draws a clear distinction between the Saptarsis on the one hand - a title which it reserves for that group of Rsis, commencing with Viśvāmitra, who are termed the Saptarsis in the earlier texts - and the Prajāpatis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā on the other hand. The latter groups consist of the Rsis in the list commencing with Marīci: and these are not referred to in this work as the Saptarsis. Thus for example in the Uttara Kānda - a relatively late part of the work - there is given a list of those Munis who come to honour Rāma after he has defeated the Rākṣasas and regained his kingdom, among whom are listed the Rsis of the first main group:

"vasisthaḥ kaśyapo 'thātrir viśvāmitroḥ sagautamaḥ ||
jamadagnir bharadvājas te 'pi saptarsayas tathā" | (6)

Distinct from these Saptarsis, a passage in the Sundara Kānda mentions that Pulastya is the fourth of the six Prajāpatis, and a Mind-born Son of Brahmā:

"prajāpatīnāṃ ṣaṇṇāṃ tu caturtho yaḥ prajāpatih |
mānaso brahmanah putrah pulastya iti viśrutah" || (7)

The passage suggests that the six Prajāpatis are identical with the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: while it also draws a clear distinction between these and the seven Rsis. The passage further suggests that the order of enumeration of these six Rsis had already become formalised in a fairly definitive manner, with Pulastya as the fourth in the group of six - thus according with the form in which the group is usually listed in subsequent contexts, namely as Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu: with Vasistha as the seventh in the subsequently-developed form of the group in

(6) Rāmāyana 7.1.1-6.

(7) Rāmāyana 5.21.4-7.

the Mahābhārata and the early Purānic texts (see below).

The Rāmāyana contains several further more general lists of Rsis - as most notably a larger group of sixteen Prajāpatis, including the six just mentioned: but it does not give further lists of the Saptarsis as a group, wherein such Rsis are actually termed the Saptarsis. The more general lists of Rsis will be examined in Section 3.

(b) The Mahābhārata.

i. The R̥sis of the first main list of the Saptar̥si group -- namely those commencing with Viśvāmitra, as in the earlier texts -- are well-known in the Mahābhārata. A passage in the Ādi Parvan relates that, at the birth of Arjuna, the seven Mahars̥is assembled to pay homage to him -- namely the seven of the first main list; and the passage then lists certain other R̥sis who came to pay homage, including Marīci, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu -- thus in effect listing all twelve of the R̥sis who appear in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptar̥si group, but reserving the title of Saptar̥sis for those of the first main list:

"prajānān patayah sarve sapta caiva maharsayah ||
 bharadvajah kaśyapo gautamaś ca viśvāmitro jamadagnir vasisthah |
 yaś codito bhāskare 'bhūt pranaste so 'py atrātrir bhagavañ ājagāna ||
 marīcir aṅgirāś caiva pulastyah pulahah kratuh |
 dakṣah prajāpatiś caiva gandharvāpsarasas tathā" || (8)

So too in the Droṇa Parvan it is related that, when Droṇa was on the point of committing Adharma by exterminating all the Ksatriyas, the R̥sis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Vasistha, Kaśyapa and Atri come to discourse with him and to take him to Brahmaloka -- accompanied by the Bhṛguś, the Aṅgirases, the Vālakhilyas and other groups.⁽⁹⁾ Thus here again the group of seven R̥sis commencing with Viśvāmitra is distinguished from any other group of R̥sis. In a similar manner the Anuśāsana Parvan contains in one passage a myth of Vṛṣādarbhi and the Saptar̥si; wherein the Saptar̥si are once again those of the first main list, and are enumerated in order of appearance as Kaśyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Viśvāmitra, and Jamadagni.⁽¹⁰⁾

A passage in the Āśvamedhika Parvan relates that a certain

(8) Mahābhārata 1.114.40-42.

(9) Mahābhārata 7.164.86-89.

(10) Mahābhārata 13.94.2ff.

group of Ṛsis went with Brhaspati to the abode of Brahmā in order to question him - these Ṛsis being Bharadvāja, Gautama, Bhārgava, Vasistha, Kāśyapa, Viśvāmitra, and Atri:

"upaganyarsayah pūrvam jighāsantah perasparam |
brhaspatibharadvājau gautamo bhārgavas tathā ||
vasisthah kāśyapaś caiva viśvāmitro 'trir eva ca |
mārgān sarvān parikramya pariśrāntāh svakarmabhih ||
ṛsim āṅgirasam vṛddham puraskṛtya tu te dvijāh |
dadṛśur brahmabhavane brahmānam vītakalmasam" || (11)

In this passage the term Bhārgava may almost certainly be taken to denote Jamadagni Bhārgava: a usage of the Gotra name which is frequently employed in further contexts. (12) It may thus be seen that the list of Ṛsis in this passage is once again that which constitutes the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, together with Brhaspati Āṅgirasa who acts as spokesman for the seven.

Thus certain parts of the Mahābhārata - as indicated by the above passages - clearly recognise the Saptarṣi group as consisting of those Ṛsis - commencing with Viśvāmitra - who constitute the Saptarṣi group in the earlier texts, as seen in Chapter I.

ii. The Śānti Parvan, however, appears to draw a clear distinction between this group of Ṛsis on the one hand, and the formalised Saptarṣi group on the other hand which it in one passage identifies with the group of seven Prajāpatis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā commencing with Marīci - the former of whom are said to dwell in the north, and the latter in the east:

(11) Mahābhārata 14.35.15ff.

(12) e.g. Mahābhārata 3.115.9-30; 12.49.1ff; 13.4.1ff; etc.
cf. also references to Rāma as Jāmadagnya or simply Bhārgava.

"brahmanah sapta putra vai mahātmanah svayambhuvah ||
marīcir atyaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahah kratuh |
vasiṣṭhaś ca mahābhāgah sadrśā vai svayambhuva ||
sapta brahmāna ity ete purāṇe niścayan gatah |
ata ūrdhvam pravakṣyāmi sarvaṅ eva prajāpatin ||

....

trailokyabhāvanās tāta prācyāṃ saptarṣayas tathā ||

....

ātreyas ca vasiṣṭhaś ca kaśyapaś ca mahān ṛṣih |
gautamaḥ sabharadvājo viśvāmitro 'tha kauśikah ||
tathaiva putro bhagavān ṛcīkasya mahātmanah |
jamadagniś ca saptaita udīcīm diśam āśritāh" || (14)

The regional association of the various groups of Ṛṣis is a topic which will be discussed in Chapter 3. It is evident from the above passage that the author - while listing the Saptarṣis as those in the group commencing with Marīci, who are said to live in the east - does not wish to ascribe the appellation of Saptarṣis to that group of seven who are subsequently referred to as living in the north: namely the group of seven commencing with Viśvāmitra, who in the earlier texts are referred to as the Saptarṣi group.

A similar clear distinction between the two groups of Ṛṣis is drawn within the Vana Parvan, in the version given there of the myth in which the Saptarṣis reject their wives after suspecting them of having been seduced by Agni. In the myth, Svāhā impersonates in turn each of the six wives of the seven Ṛṣis - excluding the chaste Arundhatī - and in that guise makes love to Agni: and the first wife whom she impersonates is Śivā the wife of Aṅgiras:

"Śivā bhāryā tv aṅgirasah śīlarūpeḡṇānvitā |
tasyāḥ sā prathamam rūpaṃ kṛtvā devī janādhipa" || (15)

By implication, therefore, the Saptarṣis whose wives are impersonated by Svāhā must include as one of their members the Ṛṣi Aṅgiras: and it may thus be inferred that the Saptarṣi group which is referred to

(14) Mahābhārata 12.201.2ff.

(15) Mahābhārata 3.214.1ff.

in this myth must be that consisting of the Ṛsis Marīci, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasistha - as opposed to the group commencing with Viśvāmitra. Such an inference would indeed appear to be confirmed within the myth itself: since it is subsequently said that Viśvāmitra witnessed the impersonations of Svāhā and knew the wives of the Saptarṣis to be innocent, whereupon he attempted to mediate between the Saptarṣis and their wives - yet nonetheless the Saptarṣis abandoned their wives:

"atha saptarṣayah śrutvā jātam putram mahaujasam |
 tatyajuh sat tadā patnīr vinā devīm arundhatīm ||
 sadbhir eva tadā jātam āhus tadvanavāsinaḥ |
 saptarṣīn āha ca svāhā mama putro 'yam ity uta |
 aham jāne naitad evam iti rājan punaḥ punaḥ ||
 viśvāmitras tu kṛtvestīm saptarṣīnām mahāmuniḥ |
 pāvakaḥ kāmasantaptam adṛstah pṛsthato 'nvagāt |
 tat tena nikhilam sarvam avebuddham yathātatham ||
 viśvāmitras tu prathamaḥ kuṁāraḥ śaraṇam gataḥ |

 anvajanāc ca svāhāyā rūpānyatvam mahāmuniḥ |
 abroviḥ ca munīn sarvān nāparādhyanti vai striyaḥ |
 śrutvā tu tattvatas tasmāt te patnīh sarvato 'tyajan" || (16)

Thus Viśvāmitra in this passage acts as an outsider to the group of Saptarṣis who abandon their wives: and there is clearly no question of the wife of Viśvāmitra being one of those who is abandoned, since it is Viśvāmitra himself who protests the innocence of the wives. It may accordingly be concluded that the Saptarṣi group referred to in this myth does not consist of the Ṛsis commencing with Viśvāmitra, but consists rather of the Ṛsis commencing with Marīci.

iii. Before turning to examine in greater detail the further references in the Mahābhārata to this Saptarṣi group, it is first

instructive to examine certain references to the six *Rsis* who are listed in various contexts as being identical with the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. For it would seem that this group of six *Rsis* was in fact the predecessor of the subsequent group of seven *Rsis* commencing with Marīci: and that this same group becomes still further expanded in the early Purānic texts to include nine and ten *Rsis*.

Comparable to the previously-noted tradition in the Rāmāyana - wherein it is said that there are six Prajāpatis who are called Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, of whom Pulastya is the fourth - the Ādi Parvan gives two separate lists of the six *Rsis* who are known as Mind-born Sons of Brahmā:

"brahmano mānesāḥ putrā viditāḥ saḥ maharṣayah |
marīciḥ atryaṅgirasau pulastyaḥ pulahaḥ kratuh" || (17)

"marīciḥ aṅgirā atriḥ pulastyaḥ pulahaḥ kratuh |
sad ete brahmanāḥ putrā vīryavanto maharṣayah" || (18)

The second of these passages proceeds to relate that Dakṣa was born from the right toe of Brahmā, and Dakṣa's wife from the left toe of Brahmā: and that Manu was another son of Brahmā. Such references are noteworthy particularly insofar as both Dakṣa and Manu subsequently appear in certain contexts within the group of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. A further passage in the Vana Parvan again speaks of the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, adding that Dakṣa is the seventh member of this group:

"yaḥ ākur brahmanāḥ putrān mānesān daksasaptarīn |
tesāḥ api mahāmeruḥ sthānam śivam anāmayaḥ ||
atraiva pratitisthanti punar atredayanti ca |
sapta devarṣayas tāta vasisthapramukhāḥ sadā" || (19)

Although the passage does not list the other Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, it may be inferred that these are the six previously mentioned

(17) Mahābhārata 1.59.10.

(18) Mahābhārata 1.60.4.

(19) Mahābhārata 3.160.14-15.

above -- namely Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu -- to whom Dakṣa is here added as the seventh. Thus, by drawing an apparent distinction between this group of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā on the one hand and the group of seven Devarṣis headed by Vasistha on the other hand, the passage provides evidence that, at the time of the composition of this text, the two groups of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā and Saptarṣis has not yet come to be fully identified with one another. Nevertheless there is evidently an attempt being made in this passage to increase the number of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā from six to seven: and thereby to bring the group in line with the group of Saptarṣis -- which is effected in this passage through the addition of Dakṣa, but in other passages, as will be seen below, through the addition of Vasistha.

One further passage in this same Vana Parvan refers to the Rsi Aṅgiras as "brahmano yas trtiyas tu putrah"⁽²⁰⁾ -- just as the Rāmāyana referred to Pulastya as the fourth son of Brahmā. This once again suggests that, by the time of the composition of this text, the members of this group of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā constituted a definitively formulated and ordered enumeration: namely in the order Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu.

A further passage -- this time in the Anuśāsana Parvan -- similarly draws a distinction between this group of six Rsis on the one hand, and further Rsis -- including Vasistha, Bhṛgu and Dakṣa -- on the other hand: in relating that, standing before Mahādeva, Viṣṇu observed the Rsis:

"marīcir aṅgirē atriḥ pulastyah pulahah kratuh ||
manavaḥ sapta somaś ca atharvā sabrhaspatiḥ |
bhṛgur dakṣaḥ kaśyapaś ca vasisthah kāśya eva ca" || (21)

Thus in this passage the same six Rsis are again grouped together --

(20) Mahābhārata 3.208.1.

(21) Mahābhārata 13.15.20-21.

with this time a change in the ordering of Atri and Aṅgiras within the group - and are associated with - but nonetheless separated from - certain other Ṛsis, notably Vasistha, Bhṛgu and Dakṣa.

iv. It is in the Śānti Parvan that the Saptarṣis come to be explicitly equated with the (now) seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. One passage, recalling that previously quoted from the Vana Parvan, relates the birth of six Mind-born Sons together with Dakṣa as the seventh:

"brahmā tu sarje putrān mānasān dakṣasaptanān |
marīcim atryaṅgirasau pulastyaṃ pulahaṃ kṛatūṃ" || (22)

Yet it then continues to relate the birth of Dakṣa from the toe of Brahmā:

"aṅguṣṭhād asṛjad brahmā marīcer api pūrvaḥ |
so 'bhavad bharataśreṣṭha dakṣo nāma prajāpatiḥ" || (23)

There would thus seem to be some confusion as to whether Dakṣa is born from the mind or the toe of Brahmā. However, the very next chapter of this Parvan gives a list of seven Ṛsis - who are called both Prajāpatīs and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā - which excludes Dakṣa and replaces him with Vasistha:

"prajānāṃ patayo ye sma dikṣu pratyekaśah smṛtāḥ ||
....
brahmanah sapta putrā vai mānātmanah svayambhuvah ||
marīcir atryaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahah kṛatuh |
vasisthas ca mahābhāḡah sadṛśā vai svayambhuvā ||
sapta brahmāna ity ete purāṇe niścayaṃ gatāḥ" | (24)

Thus in this context the number of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā has been increased from six to seven: and Vasistha now appears as the seventh member of the group.

A further passage in this Parvan refers to the seven Mind-born

(22) Mahābhārata 12.290.17.

(23) Mahābhārata 12.290.19.

(24) Mahābhārata 12.201.2ff.

Sons who were created for the purpose of propagation:

"marīcir aṅgirās cātrih pulastyah pulahoh kratuh |
vasiṣṭha iti saptaite mānasā nirmitā hi vai ||
ete vedavido mukhya vedācāryās ca kalpitāh |
pravṛttidharmināś caiva prajāpatyena kalpitāh" || (25)

Here once again the order of Atri and Aṅgiras has been reversed from that in which they more usually appear (with Aṅgiras as brahmano yas trīyas tu putraḥ (26)): yet the identity of the seven is clearly established in a form which subsequently remains constant in the early Purāṇic literature.

Two further passages from the Śānti Parvan may be referred to in the present context. These are of interest for two separate reasons: firstly because they implicitly accept Vasīṣṭha as a member of the group of seven: and secondly because they already demonstrate a tendency to increase the number of the group from seven to eight, through including Manu as the eighth member. The first of these passages further implies that this group of seven Rsis - who are called here the Prakṛti elements - are also to be identified as the Saptarṣis:

"ye hi te munayah khyātāh sapta citraśikhandīnah |
tair ekamatibhir bhūtvā yat proktaḥ śāstram uttamam ||
marīcir atryaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahoh kratuh |
vasiṣṭhaś ca mahātejā ete citraśikhandīnah ||
sapta prakṛtayo hy etās tathā svāyambhuvo 'stamah" || (27)

The second passage again reverses the order of Atri and Aṅgiras, but otherwise retains the same implications as that just quoted:

"marīcir aṅgirās cātrih pulastyah pulahoh kratuh |
vasiṣṭhaś ca mahātmā vai manuh svāyambhuvas tathā |
jñeyah prakṛtayo 'stau tā yāsu lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitāh" || (28)

(25) Mahābhārata 12.327.61-62.

(26) Mahābhārata 3.208.1.

(27) Mahābhārata 12.322.26-28.

(28) Mahābhārata 12.327.20.

v. It may thus be concluded that the Mahābhārata itself bears witness to an amalgamation of various traditions in respect of the lists of Ṛsis. In particular, the Saptarṣi group of the earlier literature - namely that group commencing with Viśvāmitra - is acknowledged as the Saptarṣi group especially in the (chronologically) earlier Parvans of the Mahābhārata (in accordance with the general Chronology of the Textual Material given in the Introduction): but in the later Parvans - and especially in the Śānti Parvan - that group of seven Ṛsis comes gradually to be superseded by a different group of Ṛsis. This latter group of Ṛsis is at first termed the six Prajāpatis and the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, and is first encountered in the Rāmāyana as a definitive group: the number of Ṛsis in the group is subsequently expanded to seven, and as such these Ṛsis come to be identified as the Saptarṣis, and to take the place of that group of Ṛsis who are termed the Saptarṣis throughout the earlier literature. The later Parvans of the Mahābhārata - especially the Śānti Parvan - also demonstrate a tendency to expand this group still further, through the addition of an eighth Ṛsi: and this is a tendency which is more fully pursued in the early Purānic texts, as may next be examined.

(c) The Harivaṅśa.

i. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that, in the Harivaṅśa and in the early Purāṇic texts, the group of Ṛsis listed in the earlier texts as constituting the Saptarṣi group - namely the group commencing with Viśvāmitra - occupy a minor if not altogether insignificant role as the Saptarṣi group in comparison with the group of Ṛsis commencing with Marīci. The appearance of the former group of seven Ṛsis - namely that commencing with Viśvāmitra - under the actual designation of the Saptarṣis is attested only in connection with the Manvantara lists, where they invariably appear as the Saptarṣis of the seventh or Vaivasvata Manvantara - an occurrence which will be examined in detail in Chapter 4. But as far as the Purāṇic authors are concerned, the Saptarṣis are essentially those of the second main list previously examined - namely Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, together with Vasistha as the seventh. Once again - as was noted in the case of the Mahābhārata - they are most frequently listed in that same order: and a passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa confirms this order, in referring to Atri as the second son of Brahmā in the group of seven:

"tataḥ kāle bahutiṭhe dvitīyo brahmanah sutaḥ |
svabhāryam bhagavān atrir anasūyān apaśyate." || (29)

Just as in the Mahābhārata the Ṛsis Atri and Aṅgiras are on certain occasions listed in that order, and on other occasions in the reverse order - the positions of both within the group being nonetheless consistently second and third - so too, while the above passage regards Atri as the second son of Brahmā (and hence by implication Aṅgiras as the third), a rival passage in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas relates that Atri is the third in the list of

Prajāpatī:

"atrer vaṃśam pravakṣyāmi tṛtīyasya prajāpateḥ" | (30)

Thus Aṅgīras is by implication considered here as the second Prajāpati and son of Brahmā, and Atri as the third: an order which has been seen to occur also in several contexts in the Mahābhārata.

ii. The Harivaṃśa explicitly equates the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā with the Saptarṣis in several contexts, as for example in the following:

"pūrvam yatra tu brahmarṣīn utpannān sapta mānasān |
putratve kalpayāmāsa svayan eva pitamahāḥ" || (31)

The actual list of these seven Mind-born (Brahma-)Rsis is given in a number of different passages, and is generally in the same order as is found elsewhere:

"marīcin atryaṅgīrasaṃ pulastyaṃ pulahaṃ kratuṃ |
vasiṣṭhaṃ ca mahātejāḥ so 'srjat sapta mānasān ||
sapta brahmāṇa ity ete purāṇe niścayaṃ gatāḥ" | (32)

This particular passage is of considerable importance for establishing a relative chronology between these various texts.

It has already been seen that a similar list - with slight variations - is given also in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata: where the final śloka is also quoted as above:

"sapta brahmāṇa ity ete purāṇe niścayaṃ gatāḥ" | (33)

Subsequent Purānic texts, however, expand this group of Mind-born sons of Brahmā through the addition of Bhṛgu and Dakṣa: and thus, since the group now contains nine members, this final śloka now reads:

- (30) Vāyu Purāṇa 2.9.67 : Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.8.73.
(31) Harivaṃśa 3.96.
(32) Harivaṃśa 1.29-30.
(33) Mahābhārata 12.201.2ff.

"nava brahmāṇa ity ete purāṇe niścayaṃ gataḥ" |

This alteration is to be found - within the texts presently being considered - in the Vāyu,⁽³⁴⁾ Brahmānda,⁽³⁵⁾ Mārkaṇḍeya,⁽³⁶⁾ and Viṣṇu⁽³⁷⁾ Purāṇas: the Matsya Purāṇa expands the group to ten members, with the further addition of Manu, and does not quote this śloka.⁽³⁸⁾ The implications of the expansion of this group from seven to nine and ten members will be considered in Section 3.

Another passage in the Harivaṃśa again emphasises the identity of the (seven) Mind-born Sons of Brahmā with the Saptarṣis: locating this group of Ṛsis in the northern region (the implications of which will be examined in Chapter 3), and also placing the Ṛsis in a different order, with Pulastya placed sixth rather than fourth:

"marīcir atrir bhagavān aṅgirāḥ pulahaḥ kratuh |
pulastyaś ca vasisthaś ca saptaitē brahmaṇaḥ sutāḥ ||
uttarasyāṃ diśi tathā rājan saptarṣayah sthitāḥ" | (39)

Another variant ordering occurs in a further passage, in which Sanatkumāra is speaking to Mārkaṇḍeya and tells him of his seven younger brothers who are sons of Brahmā:

"ye tv anye brahmaṇaḥ putrā yaviyāṃsas tu te mama |
bhrātarāḥ sapta dardharsā yeṣāṃ vaṃśāḥ pratisthitāḥ ||
kratur vasisthaḥ pulahaḥ pulastyo 'tris tathāṅgirāḥ |
trīṅ lokān dhārayantīman devadānavapūjitāḥ" || (40)

The passage as it is quoted here is that given in the reconstituted text of the Critical Edition (BORI). Yet it would seem to be clearly defective: for the text itself speaks explicitly of the seven Sons of Brahmā, while the version presented by the compilers of the Critical Edition lists only six Ṛsis. On the basis of the previously-examined lists, it might be suggested that if this were

(34) Vāyu Purāṇa 1.9.63.

(35) Brahmānda Purāṇa 1.1.5.71: 1.2.9.19.

(36) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 50.6.

(37) Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.7.6.

(38) Matsya Purāṇa 145.90-91.

(39) Harivaṃśa 7.7-8.

(40) Harivaṃśa 12.13-14.

indeed to be a group of only six Sons of Brahmā - as appears also in certain Epic contexts - then it should include Marīci, and exclude Vasistha: in accordance with the other groups of six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā previously examined. The fact that this is not the case suggests, therefore, that there is a discrepancy in the reconstituted text of the Critical Edition.

The Critical Edition lists two textual variants to the above passage. The first of these replaces the second part of the second śloka ("trīṅ lokān . . .") by the following:

"marīcis tu tathā vidvān devagandharvasevitāḥ" || (41)

The second variant replaces the second of the ślokas given in the above passage by the following:

"marīcir atrir bhagavān pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
aṅgirāś ca vasisthaś ca saptaite brahmaṇah sutāḥ" || (42)

This second variant appears in three Southern Grantha recensions, all undated, and in one Southern Telugu version dated 1839. It would not, therefore, appear to be well-attested. The first variant is considerably better attested: it appears in the only extant Śāradā version ("seems to be at least 500 years old"): in two allied Devanāgarī versions, one dated 1625, the other undated: in the Devanāgarī versions of Nīlakanṭha, dated 1733 and 1757: and in three further Devanāgarī versions, two of which are undated while the third is dated 1550. There are two earlier manuscripts referred to by the compilers of the Critical Edition (and presumably followed by them in the above passage): one dated 1445 (Ñ3), the other dated 1446 (D1). Yet if one accepts their own assessment of the Śāradā version as being at least 500 years old (c.1450?), then it would seem that the evidence for both readings is equally well attested. Yet since the text itself would appear

(41) *240, to Harivamśa 12.13-14.

(42) *239, to Harivamśa 12.13-14.

to demand that seven - rather than six - Rsis should be listed, then it may be suggested that the "variant" passage *240 should be accepted as an integral part of the original text, rather than be relegated to a variant footnote as has been done in the Critical Edition. Thus the passage as a whole should preferably read:

"ye tv anye brahmanah putrā yaviyāmsas tu te mama |
 bhrātarah sopta durdharsā yesām vamsāḥ pratisthitāḥ ||
 kratur vasisthah pulahaḥ pulastyo 'tris tathāṅgirāḥ |
 marīcis tu tathā vidvān devagandharvascvitāḥ" ||

Accordingly these seven Rsis are once again the six who are listed in Epic contexts as the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, together with Vasistha as the seventh.

(d) The Early Purānic Texts.

The early Purānic texts - a phrase which is intended to denote those texts whose date of composition may be ascribed most probably to within the first half of the first millenium A.D., as discussed in the Introduction - exhibit in places a marked inconsistency in listing either the Saptarṣis or the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: and they frequently give clear evidence of variant textual traditions. Thus for example one passage which appears in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas gives a list of seven Ṛsis, in which Bhṛgu has apparently been added to the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, but has been listed conjointly with Aṅgiras to give the appearance of denoting a single Ṛsi "Bhṛgvaṅgiras" - thereby retaining the number of Ṛsis as seven:

"bhṛgvaṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
atris caiva vasiṣṭhaś ca sapta svāyambhuve 'ntare" || (43)

However, a further passage in the Brahmānda Purāna gives this same list of Ṛsis, but this time states that they are eight in number - thus distinguishing between Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras:

"bhṛgvaṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
atris caiva vasiṣṭhaś ca hy astau te brahmanah satāh" || (44)

Such passages may be taken to indicate an attempt to incorporate Bhṛgu within the Saptarṣi group: which results in the latter context with the acknowledgement that eight separate Ṛsis are listed - and thus with the expansion of the group of Ṛsis from seven to eight members. It may be noted that the latter of these passages has in fact been speaking in preceding ślokas of the Saptarṣis, and of the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: and thus the passage, when read as a whole, demonstrates an explicitly ambiguous and self-contradictory character which may be taken as an indication

(43) Vāyu Purāna 1.31.16-17 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.13.103.

(44) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.21.

that Bhṛgu has in effect been added to the group of Saptarṣis and seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, probably at a stage subsequent to the composition of the first part of the passage:

"svāyambhuve 'ntare pūrvam saptāsan ye maharṣayah |
caksuṣasyāntare 'tīte prāpte vaive svate punah ||

....

bhūyah saptarṣayas tv evam utpannāḥ sapta mānasāḥ |

(the question is then asked:

katham saptarṣayah pūrvam utpannāḥ sapta mānasāḥ |

and in the course of reply it is said:)

ṛsayo jajñire dīrghe dvitīyam iti nah śrutam ||

bhṛgvaṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyaḥ pulahaḥ kratuh |

atris caiva vasisthaś ca hy astau te brahmanah sutāḥ" || (45)

Several texts of the Vāyu Purāna give in this passage the form Bhṛguraṅgirā in place of Bhṛgvaṅgirā: thus clearly demonstrating that, although the passage has been speaking of the seven Ṛsis and the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, in the actual enumeration it lists eight Ṛsis - this time acknowledging the fact that it has listed eight, and thereby formulating a new group of eight Mind-born Sons of Brahmā with the addition of Bhṛgu to the other seven.

A similar type of variant tradition occurs again in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, where Dakṣa replies to the request of his daughter Satī that she be allowed to marry Śiva:

"brahmīsthāś ca tapīsthāś ca mahāyogāḥ sudharmikāḥ |
guṇaiś caivādhikāḥ ślāghyāḥ sarve te tryambakāt sati ||
vasistho 'trih pulastyaś ca hy aṅgirāḥ pulahaḥ kratuh |
bhṛgur marīciś ca tathā śreṣṭhā jānātaro mama" || (46)

Since in other contexts it is the Saptarṣis who act as go-betweens in arranging the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī-Satī,⁽⁴⁷⁾ it would appear that in this context Bhṛgu has once again been added to the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, thereby

(45) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.1-21 : Vāyu Purāna 2.4.8-22.

(46) Vāyu Purāna 1.30.47-48 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.13.52-54.

(47) e.g. Matsya Purāna 154.311-425 : Kālidāsa - Kumārasambhava 6.3-95.

giving once again a total of eight Ṛsis.

The Vāyu Purāna gives in one passage a totally variant tradition in listing the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā:

"bhṛḡuḥ aṅgīrasaḥ dakṣaḥ pulastyaḥ pulahaḥ kratuḥ |
vasiṣṭhaḥ ca mahātejāḥ saṣṭe sapta mānasān" || (48)

The addition of both Dhṛḡu and Dakṣa in this context -- and their inclusion within the group of seven, replacing Marīci and Atri -- witnesses to an increasing tendency both to associate these Ṛsis with the original group of seven and also to include them under the heading of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: even though, as has been noted in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata, Dakṣa is more commonly said to be born from the toe rather than from the mind of Brahmā. It will be seen in Section 3 that in further context Dhṛḡu and Dakṣa are on occasions listed in addition to the other seven Ṛsis, thereby creating groups of nine or ten Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

In a section common to the Vāyu,⁽⁴⁹⁾ Brahmānda,⁽⁵⁰⁾ Mārkaṇḍeya,⁽⁵¹⁾ and Viṣṇu⁽⁵²⁾ Purānas the Vamśas or lists of descendants of various Ṛsis are expounded at some length. These will be further discussed in Chapter 3: but it may be noted here that the Ṛsis concerned whose Vamśas are enumerated are eight in number -- and in order of enumeration they are Dhṛḡu, Marīci, Aṅgīras, Vasiṣṭha, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya, and Kratu. Thus in this context the Ṛsi Dhṛḡu has once again been added to the list of seven Ṛsis, who otherwise appear elsewhere as the group of Saptarṣis and seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

A passage which appears in both the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas again lists the Ganas or groups of descendants of various

(48) Vāyu Purāna 1.25.30.

(49) Vāyu Purāna 1.28.1-30.

(50) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.1-36.

(51) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.14-26.

(52) Viṣṇu Purāna 1.10.6-14.

Ṛsis: and the Ṛsis to whom reference is here made are -- in order of listing -- Marīci, Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Vasistha, and Atri:

"utpādītā ṛṣiganāḥ sapta lokesu viśrutāḥ ||

(note: Brahmānda reads ajeyāś ca ganāḥ sapta sapta lokesu viśrutāḥ) ||
 marīcā bhārgavaś caiva tathāivāṅgirasō 'pare |
 paulastyāḥ paulahaś caiva vāsisthāś caiva viśrutāḥ |
 ātreyaś ca ganāḥ proktā pitṛnām lokaviśrutāḥ" || (53)

In this passage it would thus appear that Bhṛgu has now been assimilated within the group of seven: and that, in doing so, he has taken the place of Kratu who is omitted from the list. It is elsewhere said of Kratu that his offspring -- namely the sixty thousand Vālakhilyas -- had no wives or offspring, but remained ūrdhvaratas or ascetic:

"kratoḥ kratusamān putrān vijajñe sammatih śubhān |
 tesām na bhāryā putre vā sarve te ūrdhvaratasah ||
 tāni śaṣṭisahasrāṇi vālakhilyā iti śrutāḥ" | (54)

This would accordingly seem a plausible explanation for why the Gana of Kratu should be omitted from the above list of the Ganas of the various Ṛsis -- thereby allowing that of Bhṛgu, previously an outsider to the group of seven, to take its place. Comparable to these passages, the Matsya Purāna contains an account of the births of seven Ṛsis from Brahmā: these seven Ṛsis being listed as Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Atri, Marīci, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Vasistha. (55) Here once again Bhṛgu would appear to have usurped the place of Kratu: since in other contexts, as was seen earlier, Kratu is most usually included in the lists of sons begotten by Brahmā.

(53) Vāyu Purāna 2.4.49-50 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.49-51.

(54) e.g. Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.36-37 : Vāyu Purāna 1.28.30 : cf. Mahābhārata 1.60.9 etc.

(55) Matsya Purāna 125.8-11.

By way of contrast, the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purāṇas give an account of the births of the Ṛsis Dhṛgu, Śukra and Aṅgiras: and they then subsequently recount the births of the Ṛsis Merīci, Kratu, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Vasistha. In this context, Atri is termed the third in this latter group of six Ṛsis:

"oḥam tṛtīya ity arthas tasmād atriḥ sa kīrtyate" |

and the six Ṛsis are called Maharṣis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā:

"ity ete brahmanah putra mānasāḥ saṁ maharṣayah" || (57)

This list of six is clearly at variance with the earlier groups of six Ṛsis and Mind-born Sons of Brahmā noted previously in the Epic texts: wherein Aṅgiras is included among, and Vasistha excluded from, the six. The above passage would seem to presuppose the inclusion of Vasistha in the group of Mind-born Sons: at the same time attempting to harmonise this inclusion with certain further traditions, deriving especially from the Brāhmana texts, which relate the births of certain Ṛsis - including Aṅgiras - from the fire into which the seed of Prajāpati-Brahmā is poured, rather than from the mind of Brahmā. Thus for example certain Brāhmana texts relate the birth of Aṅgiras: (58) others relate that of Dhṛgu: (59) and others relate the births of both of these Ṛsis, with on occasions the addition of a third Ṛsi - sometimes Atri, (60) sometimes Brihaspati, (61) or sometimes Atharvan. (62) In a similar manner the Anuśāsana Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates in one passage the births of first Dhṛgu, Aṅgiras and Kavi-Śukra from the sacrificial fire:

(57) Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.34-48 : Brahmānda Purāṇa 2.3.1.34-48.

(58) e.g. Jainiṇīya Brāhmana 3.283 : Śatapatha Brāhmana 4.5.1.8.

(59) e.g. Pañcaviṅśa Brāhmana 18.9.1-2.

(60) e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmana 1.4.5.13 : Brhaddevatā 5.97-101 : Nirukta 3.17.

(61) e.g. Aitareya Brāhmana 3.34.

(62) e.g. Gopatha Brāhmana 1.1.1-9.

"bhṛgity eva bhṛguḥ pūrvam aṅgārebhyo 'ṅgirābhavat |
aṅgārasamśrayāc caiva kavir ity aparo 'bhavat" || (63)

The passage then continues to relate the births of subsequent Ṛsis -- namely Marīci, the Vālakhilyas (usually considered as sons of Kratu), and Atri. The first three Ṛsis are then singled out: and it is related that Bhṛgu was adopted by Varuṇa, Aṅgiras by Agni, and Kavi-Śukra by Brahmā.⁽⁶⁴⁾ It may accordingly be inferred that the passage quoted previously from the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas continues this same tradition -- found from the Brāhmaṇa texts onwards -- of recounting the exalted births of the Ṛsis Aṅgiras, Bhṛgu, and also Śukra-Kavi, from the sacrificial fire into which the seed of Prajāpati-Brahmā has been poured: while the passage also attempts to combine this with a further tradition -- found from the Rāmāyana onwards -- of recounting the births of the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. Moreover, since the Ṛsi Aṅgiras -- who is usually termed one of the six Mind-born Sons -- has already been listed in the passage as one of the three Ṛsis born from the sacrificial fire, the passage therefore substitutes the Ṛsi Vasistha in his place in the list of Mind-born Sons: a Ṛsi who, as has been seen, becomes associated with this group of six Ṛsis from the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata, joining it as the seventh member.

Again by way of contrast with such traditions, a passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna recounts a version of the myth of Dhruva who -- after he has left the city in order to pursue a life of asceticism -- questions the Saptarṣis whom he meets in the forests. This passage retains the "original" or standard list of Saptarṣis, as was noted earlier especially in the later parts of the Mahābhārata and in certain Purānic passages (notably also in the Purānic Manvantara lists, which will be examined in Chapter 4): while the order of enumeration changes only in the cases of Pulaha and Kratu. Thus

(63) Mahābhārata 13.85.15ff.

(64) Mahābhārata 13.85.32-34.

the seven Ṛsis appear in order of enumeration as Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Kratu, Pulaha, and Vasistha.⁽⁶⁵⁾

One further passage may be referred to in the present context in examining the various lists of the Saptarsi group. This occurs in the Vāyu,⁽⁶⁶⁾ Brahmānda,⁽⁶⁷⁾ Matsya,⁽⁶⁸⁾ and Viṣṇu⁽⁶⁹⁾ Purānas: and it consists of a list of those Ṛsis who occupy the chariot of Sūrya during each of the twelve months of the year. The Viṣṇu Purāna alone enumerates each of the Ṛsis and months individually: while the other three Purānas list both the Ṛsis and the months in pairs. In order of appearance, these Ṛsis are: Pulastya and Pulaha; Atri and Vasistha; Aṅgiras and Bhṛgu; Bharadvāja and Gautama; Kaśyapa and Kratu; Jamadagni and Viśvāmitra. Slight variations occur between the texts: thus for example in the Viṣṇu Purāna the order of Bharadvāja and Gautama is reversed, and Kāśyapa Tārksya appears in place of Kaśyapa. It may be noted that the pair-formation which was commented upon previously continues to be followed in this passage: thus Viśvāmitra appears alongside Jamadagni, Bharadvāja alongside Gautama, Vasistha alongside Atri -- and also Aṅgiras alongside Bhṛgu, as occurs from the Vedic texts onwards. A further noteworthy point is that, with one exception, all twelve of the Ṛsis who appear in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group are enumerated in this context. The one exception is in the case of the Ṛsi Marīci, who does not appear in this passage: and it is again a further indication of the increasing importance of the Ṛsi Bhṛgu -- and of the possible textual manipulation of Bhargava redactors (see Chapter 3) -- that Marici has been replaced in this list by the Ṛsi Bhṛgu, as has been seen to occur also in further contexts.⁽⁷⁰⁾

(65) Viṣṇu Purāna 1.11.29-56.

(66) Vāyu Purāna 1.52.2-20.

(67) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.23.2-20.

(68) Matsya Purāna 126.3-24.

(69) Viṣṇu Purāna 2.10.1-22.

(70) e.g. Vāyu Purāna 1.25.80.

It may thus be concluded that, despite the several overt inconsistencies exhibited by these texts, the Purānic texts in general accept and recognise the basic list of the Saptarṣi group as that consisting of the six Ṛsis Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu, together with the addition of Vasīṣṭha as the seventh Ṛsi. It is also apparent that certain passages in these texts additionally demonstrate a tendency to assimilate certain other Ṛsis - most notably the Ṛsi Bhr̥gu - within this group of seven. In doing so, these texts follow a trend which is already evident within the Mahābhārata to minimise the importance of the Saptarṣi group commencing with Viśvāmitra - who are termed the Saptarṣis throughout the earlier literature - and to emphasise that of the group of Ṛsis commencing with Marīci. This latter group first appears in the Epic texts as a group of six Ṛsis, who are called the Prajāpatis or the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: and their number is then expanded to seven, thus corresponding in number to the Saptarṣi group by which term they are thereafter designated. Subsequent attempts - in both the Epic and the early Purānic texts - to assimilate further Ṛsis within this group lead on the one hand to relatively isolated variant lists of Saptarṣis,⁽⁷¹⁾ and on the other hand to expanded versions of the group - which will be examined in the following section - which encompass eight, nine or ten members, who are then generally termed the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

(71) e.g. Vāyu Purāna 1.25.80.

(c) The Astronomical Texts.

Further light is thrown upon the constitution of the Saptarsi group by the astronomical texts which fall within the final centuries of the period presently being considered. Although neither the *Sūrya Siddhānta* nor the works of *Āryabhaṭa* contain any lists of the Saptarsi group, such a list is given in the *Brhatsamhitā* of *Varāhamihira*. As would be expected, *Varāhamihira* deals with the Saptarsis as being identified with the seven stars of Ursa Major: and in one passage he speaks both of the Saptarsi group and also of the positions of the Saptarsis relative to one another. Thus he enumerates each of the stars or Saptarsis, commencing with *Marīci* at the eastern end, next to whom is *Vasistha*, followed in order by *Āṅgiras*, *Atri*, *Pulastya*, *Pulaha*, and *Kratu* - with *Arundhatī* next to *Vasistha*:

"saikāvalīva rājati sasitotpalamālinī sahāseva |
nāthavatiṣa ca dig yaiḥ kauberī septabhīr munibhiḥ ||
dhruvanāyakoḥpeśān narinarttīvottarā bhramadhbhiḥ ca |
yaiś cāram aham teṣāṃ kathayisyē vrddhagargamatāt ||

....

pūrve bhāge bhagavān marīcir apare sthito vasistho 'smāt |
tasyāṅgiras tato 'tris tasyāsannāḥ pulastyaś ca ||
pulahāḥ kratuḥ iti bhagavān āsamā anulramena pūrvādyāḥ |
tatra vasistham munivaram upāśritārundhatī sādhvī" || (72)

It may be seen that this list of the Saptarsis is the same as that noted already in the Epic and early Purānic texts which constitutes the second main list of the Saptarsi group.

In astronomical terms, *Arundhatī* - the wife of the *Rsi* *Vasistha* - is identified with *Alcor*, the small star (almost invisible to the naked eye) close beside ζ Ursa Major. A passage in the *Ādi Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* offers an explanation for her being sometimes visible and sometimes invisible, saying that this is because she once insulted her husband *Vasistha*:

"arundhatī paryośaṅkad vasistham r̥sisattanam ||
 viśuddhabhāven atyantam sadā priyahite ratam |
 saptar̥simadhyagam vīram avamene ca tam munim ||
 apadhyānena sā tena dhūnārūnasamaprabhā |
 lakṣyālakṣyā nābhirūpā nimittam iva lakṣyate" || (73)

It was similarly seen in the last Chapter that a passage in the Hiraṇyakośin Gr̥hya Sūtra, which gives a list of the Saptar̥sis (of the first main list of the group), places Arundhatī between Vasistha and Kaśyapa⁽⁷⁴⁾— thus corresponding to a position between Vasistha and Marīci in the above list of Varāhamihira. This is on the one hand an indication that Marīci in the second list has in a sense taken over the position formerly occupied by Kaśyapa in the first list: the latter of whom is throughout the Epic and Purānic texts termed the son of Marīci. It may also be observed that, in astronomical terms, Vasistha as the husband of Arundhatī must of necessity be identified with the star ζ Ursa Major adjoining the star Alcor: and therefore that he must appear in a penultimate position within the group of seven R̥sis. In the first main list of the Saptar̥si group, Vasistha does indeed appear in such a penultimate position: the standard enumeration of that group being, as was seen in the last chapter, in the order Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa. Yet it has been noted that in the formulation of the second main list of the Saptar̥si group, Vasistha is a relative late-comer: he does not appear in the earlier group of six R̥sis, and when he is added to that group as the seventh R̥si he usually appears as the final member of that group. Thus the standard enumeration of the second group has been seen to be in the order Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha. Hence Varāhamihira has in the above passage been obliged to alter the otherwise standard order of enumeration of these seven R̥sis, in order to accord with their astronomical

(73) Mahābhārata 1.224.27-31.

(74) Hiraṇyakośin Gr̥hya Sūtra 2.8.19.1-6.

significance - and to place Vasistha in a penultimate, rather than in a final position within the group. It may accordingly be inferred that the origins of this second main list of the Saptarsi group do not arise from an astronomical basis: and that the list does not owe its origin to any form of alternative or secondary tradition arising solely from astronomical considerations - namely from the identification of the Saptarsis with the seven stars of Ursa Major. Such a conclusion would in any case appear to be implied by the fact that this particular group of Rsis would seem to have been originally only six in number: while it is only at a later stage - notably in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata - that their number is expanded to seven, whereafter they are termed the Saptarsis.

(f) Conclusion.

It is possible to conclude at this stage that, between the Hiranyakeśin Grhya Sūtra on the one hand - which, as indicated in the Introduction, may be ascribed in composition to perhaps c.300 B.E. - and the works of Varāhamihira on the other hand - around A.D. 550 - the standard enumeration of the Saptarṣi group was altered, insofar as its appearance in the literary sources is concerned. Whereas the group had formerly - before and within the former of these texts - been enumerated as consisting of the Ṛsis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa, by the latter of these texts it is standardly enumerated as consisting of the Ṛsis Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha. Moreover, such an alteration may be said to have occurred most probably not later than the earliest sections of the Harivaṁśa and of the Purānic texts: since these texts take little notice of the first of these groups as constituting the Saptarṣi group, but recognise instead the second as being the Saptarṣi group. Such an alteration is also likely to have occurred prior to the writings of Kālidāsa, and hence probably prior to the Gupta period: for Kālidāsa mentions the Ṛsi Aṅgiras as a member of the Saptarṣi group,⁽⁷⁵⁾ and since Aṅgiras appears only in the second main list of the group, Kālidāsa thus by implication refers to the Ṛsis of the second main list as constituting the Saptarṣi group. On the other hand, such an alteration in the tradition of enumerating the group is likely to have occurred not earlier than the late Kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyana: since it has been seen that these list only the first of these groups as constituting the Saptarṣi group, while nonetheless the latter group of six Ṛsis whose number becomes subsequently increased to seven and who then constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. It may be acknowledged that the

(75) Kumārasambhava 6.65.

traditions presented in these various texts may have overlapped chronologically, with different traditions being presented contemporaneously in different texts. Yet it would nonetheless appear possible to discern a reasonably unitary developmental pattern evolving between each of these various texts, which would in itself suggest a chronological development of the traditions. In this respect the Mahābhārata would appear to span both of the main traditions of enumeration: inasmuch as it accepts the Rsis of both of the two main lists as representing the Saptarsi group, although in especially the later Śānti Parvan it would appear to accept only the latter of the two groups as constituting the standard group of Saptarsis. Thus in attempting to establish a relative textual chronology for the change between these two main lists of the Saptarsi group, it may be said that the origins of the change are discernible in the Rāmāyana: that the change is already under way in the Mahābhārata, and more especially in the later Parvas of that work; and that the change has been fully effected in the Harivaṃśa and in the early Purānic texts.

Relating this conclusion to the approximate chronology of these texts as discussed in the Introduction, the likelihood may at this stage be expressed that such a change between the two main lists of the Saptarsi group occurs in the literary traditions during the post-Maurya and pre-Gupta period: and more specifically probably after c.100 B.C. (i.e. later than the late kāṇḍas of the Rāmāyana), before c.A.D. 300 (i.e. before the late Parvas of the Mahābhārata, and before Kālidāsa), and most probably not later than c.A.D. 100-200 (i.e. not later than the earliest sections of the Harivaṃśa and the early Purānic texts). The question of the chronology of the change between the two main lists of the Saptarsi group is one to which further reference will be made in subsequent Chapters.

Section 3 : Further Designations of the Saptarṣi Group.

This section is intended to examine those lists or enumerations of Ṛsis which include most or all of the Ṛsis who are elsewhere included in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group: particularly where such lists are not referred to as constituting lists of the Saptarṣi group, and also where they include further Ṛsis.

Certain expanded forms of the Saptarṣi group have already been noted in the previous Section. Thus for example the Ṛsi Bhṛgu has been seen to be added to the lists of the Saptarṣi group on several occasions - sometimes replacing a Ṛsi within the group, and sometimes appearing as an eighth Ṛsi. On other occasions further Ṛsis have been seen to be added to the lists of the Saptarṣi group, as in the case of two lists in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata which speak of the eight Prakṛti elements from which - or from whom - the universe arose: wherein Manu Svayambhuva is added to the list of the seven Ṛsis of the second main enumeration of the Saptarṣi group.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Further lists and groupings may be examined under two main headings: namely those of the Prajanātis and the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

(76) Mahābhārata 12.322.26ff : 12.327.29ff.

(a) The Prajāpatīs.

As was indicated in the Introduction to this Chapter, the Prajāpatīs are most frequently listed as being either six or seven in number, synonymous and identical with the six or seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā -- who in turn come to be identified as the Saptarṣis. Although this group remains of central importance throughout the Epic and early Purāṇic texts, other lists of Prajāpatīs are also given in certain contexts. Thus for example a passage in the Aranya Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana gives a list of seventeen Prajāpatīs:

"pūrvakāle mahābāho ye prajāpatayo 'bhaven |
 tān me nigadataḥ sarvān āditaḥ śṛṇu rāghava ||
 kardamaḥ prathamāś tesāṃ vikṛtas tadānantaram |
 śeṣāś ca samśrayāś caiva bahuputraś ca vīryavān ||
 sthanur marīcīr atrīś ca kratuś caiva mahābalaḥ |
 pulastyāś cāṅgirāś caiva pracetāḥ pulahaś tathā ||
 dakṣo vivasvān aparo 'ristanemiś ca rāghava |
 kaśyapaś ca mahātejāś tesāṃ āsīc ca paścimāḥ" || (77)

Apart from this general list of a number of Prajāpatīs -- which may be noted to include the six Ṛṣis who are elsewhere called also the six Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, but to exclude Vasīṣṭha -- a further passage in the Sundara Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana mentions a definitive group of six Prajāpatīs -- called also Mind-born Sons of Brahmā -- the fourth of whom is Pulastya:

"prajāpatīnāṃ saṅgāṃ tu caturtho yaḥ prajāpatiḥ |
 mānaso brahmaṇaḥ putraḥ pulastya itī viśrutaḥ" || (78)

It is evident that already in this context the (six) Prajāpatīs are associated with and identified with the (six) Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. Similarly in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata there occurs a list of a definitive group of seven Prajāpatīs, who are termed also the Saptarṣis and the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā:

(77) Rāmāyana 3.13.6-9.

(78) Rāmāyana 5.21.6.

"prajānām patayo ye sma dikṣu pratyekaśah smṛtāḥ ||

....

brahmanah sapta putrā vai mahātmanah svayambhuvah ||
marīcir atryaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
vasisthaś ca mahābhāgah sadṛśā vai svayambhuvā ||
sapta brahmāna ity ete purāṇe niścayam gatāḥ |
ata ūrdhvam pravakṣyāmi sarvān eva prajāpatīn" || (79)

Elsewhere in this same Parvan, however, there is also listed a definitive group of twenty-one Prajāpatīs -- including the seven who elsewhere constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group:

"brahmā sthānur manur dakṣo bhṛgur dharmas tapo damah |
marīcir aṅgirātriś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh ||
vasisthah paramesthī ca vivasvān soma eva ca |
kardamaś cāpi yah proktaḥ krodho vikṛita eva ca ||
ekavimśatir utpannās te prajāpatayah smṛtāḥ" | (80)

It may be seen that there exist a great many disparities between this lengthened list of Prajāpatīs and that quoted above from the Rāmāyaṇa. A passage in the Vāyu Purāṇa also contains an extended list of Prajāpatīs which, while listing certain of those who appear in one or both of the above-quoted extended lists (notably the seven who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group), nevertheless differs considerably from both of the other extended lists in respect of the further figures included in the list as Prajāpatīs:

"prajāpatīn lokanamaskṛtāms tathā svayambhurudraprobhṛtīn mahēśvarān |
bhṛgum marīcim paramesthinam manuaḥ rojas tamo dharmam athāpi kośyapam ||
vasisthadakṣātripulastyakardaman rucim vivasvantam athāpi ca kratum |
manin tathaiṅgirasam prajāpatim prajāpatim mūrddhnaḥ pulahañ ca bhāvataḥ" || (81)

The character of this passage is more in the manner of a mere collection of names than of a definitively ordered list: and there would appear to be no clearly established tradition of a definitive group of Prajāpatīs indicated by any of the above-quoted extended enumerations.

(79) Mahābhārata 12.201.2ff.

(80) Mahābhārata 12.321.33-35.

(81) Vāyu Purāṇa 1.3.2-3.

Two passages in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas do, however, contain a further list of Prajāpatis which would appear to be a less isolated phenomenon than any of the preceding extended lists. The passages give a list of nine Prajāpatis: and the second of the passages also speaks of them as having formerly been born as Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, as having raised offspring, and as having then resorted to Janaloka - a reference to the Manvantara traditions of the Saptarṣis, which will be examined in Chapter 4. The nine Prajāpatis who are listed are in effect the seven Ṛṣis who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group: but with the replacement of Atri by Kaśyapa, and then with the addition of Bhṛgu and Dakṣa to the group:

"marīciḥ kaśyapo dakṣas tathā svāyambhuvo 'ṅgirah |
bhṛguh pulastyah pulahaḥ kratur ityevamādayah ||
prajānām patayah sarve vartante tatra tair saha" | (82)

"marīciḥ kaśyapo dakṣo vasisthaś cāṅgirā bhṛguh |
pulastyah pulahaś caiva kratur ityevamādayah ||
pūrvam te samprasūyante brahmaṇo mānasā iha |
tataḥ prajāḥ pratisthāpya janam evāśrayanti te" || (83)

Comparing the two parallel passages, it would seem that the designation Svāyambhuva in the first passage represents an alternative designation for the Ṛṣi Vasistha in the second passage. This may be said to afford evidence of an attempt to emphasise the status of this Ṛṣi, by singling him out as a (special) son of Svayambhu-Brahmā: and further examples of this type will be examined in Chapter 3. The above group of nine Prajāpatis would thus appear to be a developed form of the groups of six and seven Prajāpatis already noted. It will however be observed that, in such groups of six and seven Prajāpatis, Atri is invariably included within those groups: and similarly a further passage in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda

(82) Vāyu Purāna 2.39.34-36 : Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.2.32-34.

(83) Vāyu Purāna 2.39.49-51 : Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.2.47-49.

Purānas gives a list of six Prajāpatīs, including Atri, who are also called Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. The passage first describes the births of the Ṛsis Marīci, Kratu, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha and Vasistha:

"marīciḥ prathamāḥ tatra marīcibhyaḥ samutthitāḥ |
 kratau tasmin suto jājñe yatas tasmāt sa vai kratuḥ ||
 ahaṃ tṛtīya ity arthas tasmād atriḥ sa kīrtyate |
 keśaiś ca niśitair bhūtaḥ pulastyaś tena sa smṛtaḥ ||
 keśair lambaiḥ samudbhūtaś tasmāt tu pulahaḥ smṛtaḥ |
 vasumadhyāt samutpanno vasuṃ vāsudhāśrayaḥ ||
 vaśiṣṭha itī tattvajñaiḥ procyate brahmavādibhiḥ |
 ity ete brahmaṇaḥ putra mānasāḥ saṃ maharṣayaḥ ||
 lokasya santānakarāś tair imā vardhitāḥ prajāḥ |
 prajāpataya ity evaṃ paṭhyante brahmaṇaḥ sutāḥ" || (84)

Just as Atri is in this passage called the third of the Prajāpatīs, so too in a further passage in both of these Purānas he is again referred to as the third Prajāpati:

"atrer vaṃśam pravakṣyāmi tṛtīyasya prajāpateḥ" | (85)

There would thus appear to be a firmly-established tradition of including Atri within the lists of Prajāpatīs - particularly as the third Prajāpati: and thus the exclusion of Atri from the previously-quoted list of nine Prajāpatīs would appear to be a relatively isolated occurrence.

A list of ten Prajāpatīs is also to be found in the Mānava Dharma Śāstra, wherein the Ṛsis are those of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group together with Pracetas, Bhr̥gu and Nārada:

"ahaṃ prajāḥ sirsksus tu tapas taptvā suduścaram |
 patīn prajānām arjuna maharṣīn ādito daśa ||
 marīcim atryaṅgirasam pulastyaṃ pulahaṃ kratum |
 pracetasam vaśiṣṭham ca bhr̥gum nāradam eva ca" || (86)

Although the Ṛsis in this passage are not called Mind-born Sons of

(84) Vāyu Purāna 2.4.43-48 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.43-48.

(85) Vāyu Purāna 2.9.67 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.8.73.

(86) Mānava Dharma Śāstra 1.34-35.

Brahmā, it will be noted in the next sub-section that this list of ten Ṛsis which includes Pracetas, Bhṛgu and Nārada in addition to the seven of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group - all of whom are here called Prajāpatis - corresponds to a further list of ten Mind-born Sons of Brahmā which is to be found in the Matsya Purāna⁽⁸⁷⁾ but not in any of the other early Purānic texts. The appearance of Pracetas and Nārada in such a list is a relatively rare occurrence: and the above correspondence might therefore be taken as affording possible evidence of a tradition which is common to both the Mānava Dharma Śāstra and the Matsya Purāna, but which is not shared by any of the other early Purānic texts. The list in the Matsya Purāna will be further examined in the following sub-section.

It may thus be seen that certain distinct groups of six, seven, nine and ten Ṛsis are in places listed as being Prajāpatis: and that these Prajāpatis are frequently also termed Mind-born Sons of Brahmā - a designation under which these lists of Ṛsis may next be examined.

(87) Matsya Purāna 3.5-8: 102.19.

(b) The Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.

i. The term "Mind-born Sons of Brahmā" is - as indicated in the Introduction to this Chapter - intended to render such terms as brahmano mānasāḥ sutāḥ, mānasā jātāḥ, brahmanāḥ putrā mānasāḥ and similar forms. The concept of Ṛsis as being born of the Mind of Brahmā - as opposed to being born from parts of his body or from his seed - is one which is generally presented only from the Epic texts onwards. In the earlier texts, certain passages speak of individual Ṛsis as being born from Prajāpati-Brahmā: particularly in the case of the Ṛsis Bhṛgu and Angiras, whose birth takes place after the seed of Prajāpati has been sprinkled over the sacrificial fire.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Such passages frequently recur in a similar form in the Epic and early Purānic texts.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The Saptarṣis as a group are not however said in the earlier texts to have been born in this way: not are any of the Ṛsis in the Saptarṣi group called Mind-born Sons. A passage in the Viṣṇu Dharma Śāstra refers to the creation of the Saptarṣis by Brahmā:⁽⁹⁰⁾ and similarly a passage in the Mānava Dharma Śāstra - which was quoted at the end of the last sub-section - refers to the creation of ten Ṛsis or Prajāpatis by Brahmā.⁽⁹¹⁾ Yet neither of these passages speaks of the Ṛsis as being Mind-born Sons.

In the Rāmāyana, individual Ṛsis - such as Marīci⁽⁹²⁾ and Vasistha⁽⁹³⁾ - are on occasions referred to as being Sons of Brahmā, but not specifically as Mind-born Sons. Such does however occur in the case of the Ṛsi Pulastya, who - in addition to being called a son of Brahmā - is in one passage termed the fourth of the six

(88) e.g. Aitareya Brāhmana 3.34 : Śatapatha Brāhmana 1.4.5.13: 4.5.1.8 : Jaiminīya Brāhmana 3.263 : Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana 18.9.1-2 : Gopatha Brāhmana 1.1.1-9 : Bṛhaddevatā 5.97-101 : Nirukta 3.17.

(89) e.g. Mahābhārata 13.85.15ff : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.34-46 : Vāyu Purāna 2.4.34-47 : Matsya Purāna 195.8-16.

(90) Viṣṇu Dharma Śāstra 1.16.

(91) Mānava Dharma Śāstra 1.34-35.

(92) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.69.17ff: 2.102.3ff.

(93) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.53.7: 1.55.13: 7.55.18: 7.59.4ff.

Prajāpatī, and also a Mind-born Son of Brahmā:

"prajāpatīnām sannām tu caturtho yah prajāpatih |
manaso brahmanah putrah pulastya iti visrutah" || (94)

Similarly in one passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata Pulastya is referred to as being the favourite Mind-born Son of Prajāpati Svayambhu:

"pitāmaho rāvanasya sāksād devah prajāpatih |
svayambhūh sarvalokānām prabhūh sraṣṭā mahātapaḥ ||
pulastyo nama tasyāsīn manaso dayitah sutah" | (95)

It might be inferred from such passages that since Pulastya - who is here referred to as being a Mind-born Son - appears only in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, therefore the Mind-born Sons as a whole might similarly be primarily those of the second main list: and such an inference does in fact turn out to be the case, as may be seen in examining the lists of those who are termed the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. It may also be noted that, in addition to such a group of Ṛsis being termed Mind-born Sons, individual Ṛsis are also on occasions given the same designation in the Mahābhārata and in the early Purānic texts - as in the case of Pulastya in the above passages, and as also for example in the case of Vasistha:

"yam manasam vai pravedanti putram pitāmahasyottamabuddhiyuktam |
vasistham agryam tapaso nidhānam yaś cāpi sūryam vyetiricya bhāti" || (96)

ii. In the Mahābhārata and the early Purānic texts, the Mind-born Sons are variously listed as being either six, seven, eight, nine or ten in number. A reasonably clear developmental and evolutionary pattern would appear to emerge, wherein the number of Ṛsis who are included in the group of Mind-born Sons is first given as six - as

(94) Rāmāyana 5.21.6.

(95) Mahābhārata 3.258.11-12.

(96) Mahābhārata 12.337.47: cf. 1.164.1-14 etc.

in the Nānāyana passage quoted previously - and is then expanded to seven, and then again especially to nine and ten - the latter development appearing especially in the early Purānic texts. A clear illustration of such a process of development is provided by a passage which appears in the Mahābhārata, in the Harivaṃśa, and in the Vāyu, Brahmānda, Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas. In each of these texts a list of Mind-born Sons is given, followed by the statement that they are called the brahmāna "in the Purāna" - or according to ancient tradition - and that they have gone to niścayan - namely to certainty, or to a fixed place. In the first two of these texts, these Mind-born Ṛsis are seven in number - identical with the Saptarṣis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group:

"(list of Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasistha:)
sapta brahmāna ity ete purāne niścayan gataḥ" | (97)

In all the early Purānic texts mentioned above, however, the Ṛsis are listed as being nine in number - namely the seven as before, together with Bhṛgu and Dakṣa; and following the enumeration of these nine Ṛsis there appears the half-śloka:

"nava brahmāna ity ete purāne niścayan gataḥ" | (98)

In both sets of passages these Ṛsis are referred to as being Mind-born Sons. It would accordingly seem evident that the latter passage - which lists nine Ṛsis - represents a development of the tradition, and gives a list of Mind-born Sons which has been expanded from that found in the former passage.

A passage in the Bhīṣma Parvan of the Mahābhārata speaks of the Saptarṣis-as also of the four Manus - as being Mind-born Sons, without actually listing them:

(97) Mahābhārata 12.201.1ff : Harivaṃśa 1.28-30.

(98) Vāyu Purāna 1.9.61-63 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.1.5.69-71 : 1.2.9.18-19 :
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 50.1-7 : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.7.3-6.

"maharsayah sapta pūrve catvāro manavas tathā |
madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ" || (99)

Two passages in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata -- which were quoted in the previous section -- give a list of six Ṛsis who are called Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: wherein the Ṛsis are Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ A passage in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas -- also quoted previously -- similarly gives a list of six Ṛsis who are called Mind-born Sons: but this passage replaces Aṅgiras in the above list by Vasistha.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Both of these lists of Mind-born Sons may therefore be seen as variants of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group: which has been seen to include both Aṅgiras and Vasistha in order to make a total of seven Ṛsis. Such a list of seven Ṛsis is given for example in two passages in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata: wherein the Mind-born Sons are those who appear in and constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group.⁽¹⁰²⁾ This same identification of the seven Mind-born Sons with the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group is to be found again in three further passages in the Harivaṃśa.⁽¹⁰³⁾

In other contexts, different identities are given to those who are called the Mind-born Sons. A further two passages in the Mahābhārata -- in the Vana and Śānti Parvans -- omit Vasistha from the group of seven, and insert Dakṣa in his place:⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ while a further passage in the Vāyu Purāṇa omits both Marīci and Atri, and inserts both Dhṛgu and Dakṣa in their place:

"bhṛgum aṅgirasam dakṣam pulastyaṃ pulahaṃ kratum |
vasisthaṃ ca mahatejāḥ sarje sapta mānasān" || (105)

(99) Mahābhārata 6.32.6.

(100) Mahābhārata 1.59.19-11 : 1.60.1-4.

(101) Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.43-48 : Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.1.43-48.

(102) Mahābhārata 12.201.1ff : 12.327.61ff.

(103) Harivaṃśa 3.96 : 7.7-8 : 12.13-14.

(104) Mahābhārata 3.160.14-15 : 12.200.17ff.

(105) Vāyu Purāṇa 1.25.30.

One passage in the Matsya Purāna again gives a list of seven Sons of Brahmā, which this time excludes Kratu and inserts Bhṛgu in his place.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ It may be noted that all of these passages speak of the Mind-born Sons as being seven in number: and that the latter implies that Bhṛgu is recognised as being one of the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. As was noted in the last section, a somewhat ambiguous passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas refers first to the Saptarṣis as being the seven Mind-born Sons, and then proceeds to list eight Ṛsis - namely the seven who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, together once again with Bhṛgu - adding thereafter that they are the eight Sons of Brahmā:

"bhūyah saptarṣayas tv evam utpannāḥ sapta mānasāḥ |

 ṛsayo jajāire dīrghe dvitīyam iti nah śrutam ||
 bhṛgvaṅgira marīciś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
 atriś caiva vasiṣṭhaś ca hy aṣṭau te brahmaṇaḥ sutāḥ" || (107)

It may reasonably be inferred that this passage affords evidence of a development in the tradition of listing the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: whereby the group of Mind-born Sons becomes in such contexts expanded from seven to eight members, with the inclusion of Bhṛgu - just as these two texts, together with the Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purānas, have already been seen to list the Mind-born Sons in further contexts as being nine in number, with the inclusion of both Bhṛgu and Dakṣa.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

A passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna relates that the seven Mind-born Ṛsis of Brahmā took the Vedas from him, while his Mind-born Munis took the Purānas: and it then adds that Cyavana took the Purāna from Bhṛgu, and declared it to the Brahmins:

(106) Matsya Purāna 195.8-11.

(107) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.1-21 : Vāyu Purāna 2.4.8-22.

(108) Vāyu Purāna 1.9.61-63 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.1.5.69-71 : 1.2.9.18-19 :
 Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 50.1-7 Y Viṣṇu Purāna 1.7.3-6 : also cf.
 Vāyu Purāna 2.39.49-51 : Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.2.47-49.

"vedān̄ saptars̄sayas̄ tasmāj̄ jagr̄hus̄ tasya mānasāh̄ |
 purāṇam̄ jagr̄hus̄ cōdyā munayas̄ tasya mānasāh̄ ||
 bhrḡoḥ̄ sakaśāc̄ cyavanas̄ tenoktañ̄ ca dvijanmanām̄" | (109)

Thus Bhrgu is evidently not thought of in this context as being one of the seven Mind-born R̄sis: but he is nevertheless termed a Mind-born Muni, who received the Purāṇa rather than the Veda from Brahmā and handed it down to Cyavana and others.

The passages which have been noted so far contain lists of between six and nine Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. Further passages in the Matsya Purāṇa give three lists of ten Mind-born Sons. In one of those passages -- which appears also in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purāṇas -- the R̄sis are the seven of the second main enumeration of the Saptarsi group, together with Bhrgu, Dakṣa and Manu:

"bhrḡur̄ marīc̄ir̄ atriś̄ ca hy aṅgirāḥ̄ pulakaḥ̄ kratuh̄ |
 manur̄ dakṣo vasisthaś̄ ca pulastyaś̄ cāpi te daśa ||
 brahmano mānasā hy ete utpannāḥ̄ svayamīśvarāḥ̄" | (110)

The inclusion of Manu in such a group alongside the other R̄sis is of infrequent occurrence in these texts: one context where this has been noted is in a passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata, which lists the eight Prakṛti elements as being identical with the Saptarsis of the second main list of the group together with Manu -- but which does not refer to them as being Mind-born Sons of Brahmā.⁽¹¹¹⁾ The other two passages in the Matsya Purāṇa which list ten Mind-born Sons again include the seven R̄sis of the second main enumeration of the Saptarsi group, together this time with Bhrgu, Pracetas and Nārada:

"marīc̄ir̄ abhavat pūrvam̄ tato 'trir̄ bhagovān̄ r̄siḥ̄ |
 aṅgirāś̄ cābhavat̄ paścāt̄ pulastyas̄ tadanantaram̄ ||
 tataḥ̄ pulahanāmā vai tataḥ̄ kratur̄ ajāyata |
 pracetaś̄ ca tataḥ̄ putro vasisthaś̄ cābhavat̄ punaḥ̄ ||

(109) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 45.23-24.

(110) Matsya Purāṇa 145.90-91 : Vāyu Purāṇa 1.59.88 : Brahmānda Purāṇa 1.2:32.96.

(111) Mahābhārata 12.327.29ff : cf. 12.322.26ff.

101.

putro bhṛḡur abhūt tadvan nārada 'py acirād abhūt |
daśemān mānasān brahmā munīn putrān ajījanat" || (112)

The inclusion of Pracetas and Nārada in this context within the group of Mind-born Sons is again of infrequent occurrence among the texts being presently considered. As was seen in the last sub-section, the three Ṛsis Pracetas, Bhṛḡu and Nārada are also listed in the Mānava Dharma Śāstra⁽¹¹³⁾ together with the other seven Ṛsis as above - as constituting a group of ten Ṛsis and Prajāpatī: but these are not called Mind-born Sons in that context. By way of contrast, however, it may be seen that the inclusion of Bhṛḡu both among the group of Mind-born Sons and also within the group of seven Ṛsis is a phenomenon of more frequent occurrence in these texts.

iii. It may thus be concluded that certain tendencies are observable within these texts in respect of the development of the tradition of listing the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. In the Rāmāyana, in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata, and in one passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, a group of six Ṛsis is listed as being the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā: and this number is then expanded to seven, when the Ṛsis are those who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. Both the Mahābhārata and the Harivaṅśa in general recognise no more than seven Ṛsis as constituting the group of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā. In the early Purānic texts, however, the number of Ṛsis who are termed Mind-born Sons is expanded to eight, nine and ten: and in such expanded lists of the group, seven of the Ṛsis are invariably the seven who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. The Ṛsis Dakṣa, Pracetas, Nārada and Manu also appear in certain of these expanded lists: while the Ṛsi Bhṛḡu appears with great regularity in the majority of such lists.

(112) Matsya Purāna 3.5-8 : 102.19.

(113) Mānava Dharma Śāstra 1.34-35.

Section 4 : Conclusion.

Various conclusions have been drawn during the course of this Chapter -- notably in section 2(b)v., at the end of section 2(d), in section 2(f) and in section 3(b)iii. -- in respect of the changes and developments which occur in the lists of Ṛsis of the Saptarṣi group. For the purpose of later Chapters it is useful to summarise here in more general terms the main course of such changes and developments.

In the Rāmāyana and in certain Parvans of the Mahābhārata, that group of Ṛsis is alone called the Saptarṣis which constitutes the Saptarṣi group in the earlier literature of the Vedic Saṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras: namely the group consisting of the Ṛsis Viśvāmitra, Janadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa. However, in the Rāmāyana and in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata a further group of six Ṛsis -- who are there termed both the Prajāpatīs and the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā -- makes its appearance: and in especially the Vana and Śānti Parvans of the Mahābhārata their number is increased to seven, and they are then termed the Saptarṣis -- thereby constituting the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, consisting of the Ṛsis Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha. Thereafter in subsequent texts -- as for example in the Harivaṁśe, in the early Purāṇic texts, and in the works of Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira -- it is this group alone which is generally referred to as the Saptarṣi group.

In both the Mahābhārata and the early Purāṇic texts, a further tendency is evident to associate certain other Ṛsis with -- and on occasions to incorporate such Ṛsis within -- the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group: the most notable instance being in the case of the Ṛsi Dhṛgu. This in turn gives rise in the early Purāṇic texts to the listing of the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā as being either eight, nine or ten in number: and in such lists,

the R̥si who is most frequently to be found added to the group of seven is once again the R̥si Bhrgu.

As has been suggested during the course of the Chapter - notably in section 2(f) - the main period of such a change within the literary sources between the two main lists of the Saptarsi group may be said to be post-Maurya and pre-Gupta: and it may most probably be ascribed in approximate terms to the period between c.100 B.C. and c.A.D. 200.

CHAPTER 3 : Gotra and Regional Factors operative in the Formulation
of the Second Main List of the Saptarsi Group.

Section 1 : Introduction.

The main purpose of this Chapter is to attempt to discern some of the main factors which have had a bearing upon the change in the identities of the Rsis in the Saptarsi group which occurs between the two main lists of that group - namely on the one hand the list commencing with Viśvānitra, and on the other hand the list commencing with Karīci, as examined in the preceding two Chapters. This will be done by examining two sets of factors which are apparent within the Saptarsi traditions. The first of these factors is that of Gotra influence: that is to say, the influences arising from and reflecting the interests and influence of a particular Brahmin group, as demonstrated especially in the formulation of the Gotra organisation and in the traditionally-outlined family or kinship relationships which are said to exist between individual Rsis who appear in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group. The second of these factors is that of Regional association and influences: that is to say, the influences which may be seen to arise from the association of the Saptarsis - both individually and as a group - with a particular region or geographical locality.

By examining these two sets of factors, it is possible to discern certain causes which may be said to account in part for the change in the identities of the Rsis who are included in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarsi groups and thereby to throw further light upon the course of development of the Saptarsi traditions.

Section 2 : Gotra Factors.

(a) The General Nature of the Gotra Organisation.

General studies of the Gotra organisation have been undertaken by a number of previous writers, notably by Brough: (1) and while it is not the purpose of this thesis to enter upon a detailed examination of the nature of that organisation, it is nonetheless instructive to summarise some of the general characteristics which are relevant to the present investigation.

One of the main roles of the Saptar̥sis within the context of Indian social organisation is that whereby they are regarded as being the founders of the seven main Gotras or ancestral lineages of the Āryan people. The origins of the Gotra organisation have been discerned by Brough and others as being already present in embryonic form in the R̥gveda: wherein the "hymn-families" to whom composition of the hymns is attributed are not so much families as clans, and the direct ancestors of the main Gotras which are listed and set out in detail in especially the Sūtra texts. (2) The Gotra organisation - as it is presented particularly in the Śrauta Sūtra texts - is based upon the principle of tracing patrilineal descent back to a common R̥si ancestor: marriage is generally prohibited

(1) J. Brough - Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara: ibid - Early History of the Gotras, in JRAS 1946 pp.41ff.

(2) cf. Brough - Early Brahmanical System p.xiii. Brough and Benveniste have also suggested that the original meaning of the term ari denotes not so much "enemy" as "that part of the tribe into which a man can marry": whence the term arya would denote offspring of aris, or "descendants of legitimate marriage unions". According to this suggestion, therefore, the term Ārya would be seen as being closely related to the idea of purity of descent: the form of such descent being formally regulated, by the time of the Sūtra texts, through the tracing of descent from one of the Saptar̥sis. According to this suggestion, therefore, the concept of being an Ārya would have come to be synonymous with the idea of tracing descent from one of the Saptar̥sis. On individual R̥sis as fathers of the race, cf. e.g. R̥gveda 1.139.9; cf. Brough - Early Brahmanical System..., p.xiv : E. Benveniste - Study of Indo-European Vocabulary.

within Gotras, and the organisation is further consolidated through the largely complementary Pravara organisation which sets forth lists of many additional Rsis who are also held to be the remote ancestors of families. The principal aim of both Gotra and Pravara lists is to limit the choice of marriage partners: and except in a few cases - notably in those of the Bhrgus and Angirases - it is laid down that a wife must come not only from a different Gotra from that of her husband, but that she must also have a Pravara which contains a minimal number of Rsi-names which coincide with those of her husband's Pravara. Although this organisation was intended to perform the function of regulating all marriage alliances, from the time of the Sūtra texts onwards it is laid down that the Ksatriya and the Vaiśya should take the Gotra and Pravara of their Purohita - thus suggesting that by this stage the organisation was operated and directed primarily by Brahmins:

"ksatriyānām vaiśyānām ca purohitapravaro bhavati" || (3)

"purohitapravaro vā syād ācāryapravaro vā rājanya |
ctenaiva tu pravarena vaiśyapravaro vyākhyātaḥ" || (4)

"purohitapravarāv eva rājanyavaiśyau syātām" || (5)

"sapurohitapravarās tv evam nyāyena." || (6)

The Gotra organisation, which incorporated the Pravara lists, may in this respect be termed one of the defining characteristics of Brahmin society: inasmuch as all who regarded themselves as full members of that society would have sought to trace their ancestry and descent from one of the "original" seven main families, each of which was considered to have been founded by and to be descended from one of the Seven Rsis. Since almost all information concerning the Gotra organisation at this period is to be found in texts which were composed by - or

(3) Vaikhānasa Sūtra, pravara-praśna v.8.

(4) Mānava Śrauta Sūtra 11.8.10.12.

(5) Mānava Śrauta Sūtra 11.8.10.13ff.

(6) Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 24.10.13ff.

whose composition was greatly influenced by -- Brahmins, these texts accordingly view the organisation from the standpoint of Brahmins: and it is consequently impossible to say with any certainty whether Ksatriyas or Vaiśyas in reality also claimed descent from particular family Gotras rather than from the Gotras of their family priests -- or indeed whether they were generally concerned to trace such descent in any manner.

Many Indian scholars have regarded the Rsis as being fundamentally historical individuals, who lived at a definite time in the past: while Western scholars have generally tended to take the opposite view, regarding them as fictional or mythological figures. From the standpoint of the present study, it is somewhat immaterial -- as Brough has also concluded (7) -- whether the Rsis named in the Gotra and Pravara lists were historical or fictional figures, or whether they were really the ancestors of the families who claimed descent from them. For the important point -- particularly in the present context -- is that, from at least the time of the Śrauta Sūtra texts, these Rsis were thought of as being the ancestors of such families: particularly by those who claimed to be descendants of one or another of the Seven "original" Rsis.

(7) cf. Brough -- Early Brahmanical System pp.20f.

(b) Lists of the Saptarṣis as Founders of Lineages.

i. The Sūtra Texts.

This field has already been surveyed by Brough and others: and it is therefore only necessary to summarise the conclusions reached by him, and to draw further conclusions appropriate for the present context.

The earliest - and indeed the principal - expositions of the Gotra and Pravara organisations are to be found in the Sūtra texts: more specifically in the Āśvalāyana, Āpastamba, Hiranyakeśin, Baudhāyana, Mānava and Vaikhānasa Śrauta Sūtras.⁽⁸⁾ An account is also to be found in the Pravara-pariśista of the White Yajurveda:⁽⁹⁾ but Brough has characterised this as being a fairly recent plagiarism of the Mānava text with extensive interpolations,⁽¹⁰⁾ and its value in the present context is therefore somewhat limited. It is not necessary to consider these lists in every detail in the present context: since the concern lies primarily at present not with the Rsi-descendants within each Gotra and Pravara list but rather with the seven Rsis who are regarded as being the founders of each of the seven main Gotras. This is a point on which all of these texts concur. In setting forth the lists for the different Gotras, each of these texts agrees in listing seven main Gotras: namely the Bhārgava, the Āngirasa, the Ātreya, the Vaiśvāmītra or Kauśika, the Kāśyapa, the Vasīṣṭha, and the Āgastya Gotras. The only difference between these texts lies in the slightly different order in which each of these main Gotras is listed. The first two

(8) cf. Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra 12.1-15 : Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 24.5-10 : Hiranyakeśin Śrauta Sūtra ASS 8.714ff : Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra, pariśista : Mānava Śrauta Sūtra 11.8.1-10 : Vaikhānasa Sūtra, pravara-praśna.

(9) cf. A. Weber - Die Handschriften und Verzeichnisse der Königl. Bibliothek zu Berlin, vol.1 no.271 (Weber 13.8).

(10) cf. Brough - Early Brahmanical System p.50.

of these seven main Gotras both contain major subdivisions. The Bhārgavas are subdivided into the Jāmadagnya-Bhārgavas and the Kevala-Bhārgavas ("just Bhārgavas", "Bhārgavas alone"): while the Āṅgirasas are subdivided into the Gautama-Āṅgirasas, the Bhāradvāja-Āṅgirasas, and the Kevala-Āṅgirasas. Thus, in the context of social organisation, the seven main Gotras are said to have been founded by Seven Ṛsis: but these Ṛsis are Bhṛgu, Āṅgiras, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Kaśyapa, Vasistha, and Agastya. The Gotra lists may therefore be said to constitute a variant list of the Saptarṣi group: wherein Bhṛgu and Agastya - although excluded from both of the main lists examined in the preceding two Chapters - are included within the group, while Jamadagni, Gautama and Bharadvāja - while still being represented within the group, just as they appear in the first main list of the Saptarṣi group - are excluded from the list of Seven Ṛsis in the Gotra organisation through being said to be descended from the Ṛsis Bhṛgu or Āṅgiras. This in itself would seem a somewhat artificial arrangement: indicating either that the (Kevala-) Bhārgavas and Āṅgirasas were subdivided into further clans at a time following that of the initial commencement of this organisation, or else that this is merely a reclassification of the organisation designed both to include these groups and also to include the Āgastyas by rearranging the Seven Ṛsis of the first or earlier list of the group (as in Chapter 1) so as to effectively "swallow-up" three of the perhaps smaller clans - namely the Jāmadagnyas, the Gautamas and the Bhāradvājas - by subordinating them to the further groups - namely to the Bhārgavas and the Āṅgirasas. It is noteworthy in this respect that in the Ṛgveda and in the Brāhmaṇa texts the Jāmadagnyas are not said to be descended from Bhṛgu: nor are the Gautamas or Bhāradvājas said to be descended from Āṅgiras. The idea of their descent from these Ṛsis would therefore appear to be one which arises only at this later stage of development in the literary texts -

namely in the Sūtra texts. It may be suggested that this idea is one which arises at least in part due to what the Brahmin authors of the Śrauta Sūtra texts sought to view and express as the increasing importance of the Bhārgavas and Āṅgīrasas, and the relatively decreasing importance of the Jāmadagnyas, Gautamas and Bhāradvājas: as is reflected in the ordering of these clans by the Brahmin authors of the Gotra and Pravara sections of these texts. It is again noteworthy that the second main list of the Saptarṣi group - as given especially in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts, and as discussed in Chapter 2 - omits the three Ṛsis Jamadagni, Gautama and Bharadvāja: while it includes Āṅgīras, together with three Ṛsis said in places to be related to or descended from Agastya (see below) - namely Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu - and it also demonstrates a tendency to attempt to include Bhṛgu within the Saptarṣi group. It may therefore be suggested that this phenomenon of the change between the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group is related in some measure to the change evident in the Śrauta Sūtra texts in the lists of the Saptarṣis who are held to be the founders of the seven main Gotras: and this in turn suggests that the change is due in part to considerations which arise from the sphere of inter-clan marriage and Brahmin lineages which is the principal concern of the Gotra organisation. In this respect the list of Saptarṣis regarded as the founders of the seven main Gotras in the Śrauta Sūtra texts may be regarded as an intermediary form between the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group which were examined in the preceding two Chapters: just as indeed the Śrauta Sūtra texts are generally accepted as being chronologically intermediate between the Vedic Samhitās and the Brāhmaṇas on the one hand, and the Epic and early Purāṇic texts on the other hand.

A curious inconsistency occurs within the Gotra lists in the Śrauta Sūtra texts. On the one hand the seven main Gotras are listed

as above - namely as having been founded by the Ṛsis Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Kaśyapa, Vasistha, and Agastya. On the other hand; however, these same Gotra-sections of the Sūtra texts frequently contain the statement that the Saptarṣis are the seven of the first main list of the group - as examined in Chapter I - together with Agastya as the eighth:

"viśvāmitro jamadagnir bharadvājo 'tha gotamah |
 atrir vasisthah kaśyapa ity ete sapta ṛsayah ||
 tesāṃ saptarṣīṇāṃ agastyāstamānāṃ yad apatyam tad gotram ity ucyate" ||

(11)

This inconsistency is never adequately explained within these texts.

Yet it may be suggested that these texts attempt to retain that list of the Saptarṣi group which had gained general currency by the time of their composition - namely the list commencing with Viśvāmitra, as in the above quotation - while at the same time relating this list to the relative importance with which each clan or Gotra was viewed by the Brahmin promoters of the Gotra organisation at the time when these Śrauta Sūtra texts were composed, namely during the latter part of the first millenium B.C.: wherein the importance of the Bhārgava, Aṅgirasa and Āgastya Gotras was being emphasised by such Brahmin authors at the expense of the Jāmadagnya, Gautama and Dhāradvāja Gotras. Thus whatever the reasons for the formulation of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, it may be suggested that the Brahmin authors of the Śrauta Sūtra texts attempted to bring this list more into line with what they sought to establish as the relative importance of each of the clans claiming descent from one or another of the Ṛsis. The changes thus brought about in the Śrauta Sūtra lists are then in turn reflected in the formulation in the Epic and early Purānic texts of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group: such changes being brought about due partly to the influence of the Brahmin members of different Gotras who traced their own descent from a particular Ṛsi, and who

(11) e.g. Parisiṣṭa to Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra, to Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra 12.15, etc.

desired -- and were in a position to demand -- a greater recognition for their Rsi-ancestor. Examples of such influence on the part of Brahmins of particular Gotras within the Rsi traditions will be further examined in sub-section (d) below.

ii. The Epic and Early Purānic Texts.

In his study of the Gotra organisation, Brough took into account the Gotra lists in the Matsya Purāna, but he would not appear to have noted a more general phenomenon which occurs in all the early Purānic texts: namely the listing of Rsi-Vamśas.

Two passages in the Mahābhārata may first be referred to, which seek to emphasise the importance of certain Gotras at the expense of others. In the first of these passages, it is said that only four Gotras originally came into being -- namely those of Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Vasistha, and Bhṛgu: the others having come into being subsequently due to the effects of Karma:

"mūlagotrāni catvāri samutpannāni pāṛthiva |
 aṅgirāḥ kaśyapaś caiva vasistho bhṛgur eva ca ||
 karmato 'nyāni gotrāni samutpannāni pāṛthiva |
 nāmadheyāni tapasō tāni ca grahaṇam satām" || (12)

The second passage relates that the most important Gotras are those of Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras, while the entire creation is always filled by the descendants of Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras and Kavi-Śukra:

"tadā sa varuṇaḥ khyāto bhṛguḥ prasavakarmakṛt |
 āgneyas tv aṅgirāḥ śrīman kavir brāhmo mahāyaśāḥ |
 bhārgavaṅgirasau loke lokasamtānalakṣaṇau ||
 ete vipravarāḥ sarve prajānām patayas trayah |
 sarvaṃ samtānam eteṣām idam ity upadhāraya" || (13)

Both of these passages may be seen in one respect as attempts to emphasise and reinforce the importance of these Gotras: such attempts

(12) Mahābhārata 12.285.17-18.

(13) Mahābhārata 13.85.34-36.

being made due at least in part to the influence of the Brahmin members of those particular Gotras. It should be kept in mind that the authors of these various texts would themselves have traced their own descent from one of the Seven Rsis: hence any such emphasis within these texts upon the importance of a particular Gotra or Rsi may be due in some measure to the desire of the authors of the text to emphasise the status of the Gotra represented by that Rsi. Explicit examples of such a process will be examined in sub-section (d) below.

On a more general level, both the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas relate in one passage that the worlds are entirely filled through the Rsi-Vaṁśas:

"rsivāṁśaprasaṅgena vyākulatvāt tathaiva ca" || (14)

These same two texts in a further passage single out the Kāśyapa, Vasiṣṭha, Bhārgava, Āṅgīrasa and Ātreya Gotras as containing Brahmavādin Rsis - while it is said that the Gotras of Dharma, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Kāśyapa and others are said in contrast to contain Devarsis:

"kaśyapesu vasiṣṭhesu tathā bhrgvaṅgiro 'trisu ||
 pañcasv etesu jāyante gotresu brahmavādinah |
 yasmād rsanti brahmāṇam tena brahmarsayah smrtāh ||
 dharmasyātha pulastyasya kratoś ca pulahasya ca |
 pratyūśasya prabhāsasya kaśyapasya tathā punah ||
 devarsayah sutās tesām nāmatas tān nibodhata" | (15)

All of the early Purānic texts being considered in this study contain detailed accounts of the descendants of the main Rsis. There occur several notable similarities and divergences between each of these accounts: and as in the case of the Gotra lists in the Śrauta Sūtra texts, it is not necessary in the present context to examine the identities of every Rsi who is said to be descended

(14) Vāyu Purāna 1.57.38 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.29.43.

(15) Vāyu Purāna 1.61.81-83 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.35.90-93.

from one of the main Ṛsis, since the present concern rests rather with the identities of those who are said to be the main Ṛsis.

A passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna⁽¹⁶⁾ lists the descendants of the Ṛsis Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya (one of whose sons is said to be Agastya), Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha: thus this list of seven corresponds to the seven who appear in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. A parallel passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna⁽¹⁷⁾ - which is found also in a different form in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas⁽¹⁸⁾ - lists the descendants of these seven Ṛsis and also of Bhṛgu: thereby in effect attempting to add Bhṛgu to the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. As was seen in Chapter 2, a similar process is evident also in the straightforward lists of the Saptarṣi group within these texts: where Bhṛgu is frequently listed alongside the other seven Ṛsis, sometimes conjointly with Aṅgiras in the form Bhṛgvaṅgiras. Another passage in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas, however, again lists the descendants of seven Ṛsis: but these Ṛsis are Marīci, Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Vasistha, and Atri.⁽¹⁹⁾ In this context, therefore, Bhṛgu has in effect been assimilated within the group of Seven Ṛsis, while Kratu has been excluded from the group. Yet another passage which appears in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas⁽²⁰⁾ lists the descendants of Seven Ṛsis: where the Ṛsis are Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Viśvāmitra, and Agastya. It will be observed that these Seven Ṛsis are identical with the seven who are listed in the Śrauta Sūtra texts as being the founders of the seven main Gotras. The Matsya Purāna in two separate passages⁽²¹⁾ lists the descendants of Seven Ṛsis: and in both of

(16) Viṣṇu Purāna 1.10.6-14.

(17) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.14-26.

(18) Vāyu Purāna 1.28.1ff : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.1ff.

(19) Vāyu Purāna 2.4.47ff : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.42ff.

(20) Vāyu Purāna 1.59.92-116 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.32.100-120.

(21) Matsya Purāna 145.81-118 : 195.1-202.14.

these, the Ṛsis are Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Viśvāmitra, and Agastya - namely once again the Seven Ṛsis listed in the Śrauta Sūtra texts as being the founders of the seven main Gotras. The second of these passages also explains that the Ṛsis Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu are known as Āgastyas - since they adopted sons of Agastya, whereafter their descendants came to be known as Āgastyas⁽²²⁾ (see next sub-section). It may further be noted that the Manvantara lists of Saptarṣis which are given in the Vāyu and Brahmandā Purānas⁽²³⁾ incorporate Gotra names for the members of each Saptarṣi group in the different Manvantaras: wherein the Seven Ṛsis from whom each of the Ṛsis in the different Saptarṣi groups are thought to be descended are Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Pulastya, and Pulaha.

It would appear possible to discern an approximate pattern of development in these lists of Ṛsi-Vamśas in the early Purānic texts. Those which are generally regarded as the earlier of these texts (see Introduction) - notably the Matsya Purāna, and also parts of the Vāyu and Brahmandā Purānas - list the Vamśas of those same Seven Ṛsis who are listed also in the Śrauta Sūtra texts as being the founders of the seven main Gotras - namely Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Atri, Vasistha, Viśvāmitra, and Agastya. The Vāyu and Brahmandā Purānas replace Viśvāmitra and Agastya in the above list by Pulastya and Pulaha in the context of the Manvantara lists of Saptarṣis: and in further contexts these two Purānas also list the Vamśas of the Seven Ṛsis who constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group - namely Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha: sometimes with, and sometimes without, the addition of Bhṛgu. The Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purānas list the Vamśas of only this second group of Ṛsis: the former text also adding Bhṛgu to the seven, the latter text omitting Bhṛgu from the seven.

(22) Matsya Purāna 202.7-14.

(23) Vāyu Purāna 2.1.15-66; 2.38.9-116 : Brahmandā Purāna 1.2.36.17-78; 3.4.1.9-114. See also Chapter 4.

This pattern of development in the formulation of the R̥si-Vam̥śas is thus very closely parallel to - and may indeed be said to constitute a further example of - the pattern of development which leads to the formulation of the second main list of the Saptar̥si group: wherein the list of the members of this group, which has already been seen to be in the process of alteration in the Śrauta Sūtra texts from the first main list of the group (as in Chapter 1), becomes completely transformed within these early Purāṇic texts into the second main list of the Saptar̥si group. Since this process of development occurs within the context of the listing of R̥si-Vam̥śas, and within the context of the Gotra organisation, it may reasonably be suggested that at least one major reason for the change between the two main lists of the Saptar̥si group arises from influences from within the Gotra organisation itself - namely from the influence of members of a particular Gotra seeking to emphasise the importance or status of one or another particular R̥si or R̥si-Gotra at the expense of others. It may once again be inferred that the list of Seven R̥sis who appear as the founders of lineages in the Śrauta Sūtra texts - as also in passages in the Matsya, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas - within the context of the Gotra organisation constitutes an intermediate list between the first main list of the Saptar̥si group on the one hand (as in Chapter 1) and the second main list of the Saptar̥si group on the other hand (as in Chapter 2).

This process of change and development in the identities of the individual R̥sis within the group of Saptar̥sis may also be examined at a slightly different level: through an investigation of those references which speak of the family and similar relationships which are said to exist between the various R̥sis whose status changes between the two main lists of the Saptar̥si group - most notably in the cases of those R̥sis who are included in one list but excluded from the other.

(c) Relationships between the Main Rsis.i. Atri and Vasistha.

Atri and Vasistha are the only Rsis who appear in both of the main lists of the Saptarṣi group. Their Gotras are also listed independently of all the other Gptras.

In a similar manner, both Atri and Vasistha are quite independent of - and not said to be related in any way to - any of the other Rsis in either of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group. A slight qualification to this statement should be made in the case of Vasistha, who is said in certain contexts to share a common birth with the Rsi Agastya (who, as has already been seen, is closely connected with although not actually included within the Saptarṣi group) when the seed of Mitra-Varuna fell into a pot.⁽²⁴⁾ No instance is however given in which either Atri or Vasistha is said to be born from, or to give birth to, any of the other Rsis in either of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group.

ii. Bhṛgu - Jamadagni - Viśvāmitra.

As was seen earlier, in the Śrauta Sūtra texts the Jāmadagnya Gotra is listed as a sub-division of the Bhārgava Gotra, while the Vaiśvāmitra or Kauśika Gotra is listed independently of the other Gotras. Also, Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni appear only in the first of the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group, while Bhṛgu appears on occasions in only the second of the two main lists.

In several Parvans of the Mahābhārata - and again in several of the early Purānic texts - there is related a myth which connects the births of both Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni with Bhṛgu. The myth may be summarised in the following form. Rciika Bhārgava obtained as

(24) e.g. Rgveda 7.33.10-13 : Nirukta 5.13-14 : Brhaddevatā 5.143-160 : Rāmāyaṇa 7.55.19 - 7.57.21 : Mahābhārata 12.291.7ff: 13.1.13.18 : Matsya Purāna 61.18-53: 201.1-39 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.5.1ff etc.

his wife Satyavatī the daughter of Gādhi Kauśika. Bhṛgu told Satyavatī that, in order to obtain a son, she and her mother should both take a bath, embrace respectively an Udumbara and an Aśvattha tree, and drink Camu containing respectively rice and milk, in order to obtain the desired types of son (a Brahmin for Satyavatī, a Kṣatriya for her mother). Satyavatī and her mother performed these ceremonies as instructed by her father-in-law Bhṛgu: but each embraced the wrong tree and drank from the wrong Camu vessel. When Bhṛgu returned, he told Satyavatī that there would be born to her a son who, though a Brahmin, would be fit to be a Kṣatriya: while her mother would bear a son who, though a Kṣatriya, would be fit to be a Brahmin. Upon entreaty, Satyavatī obtained the wish from Bhṛgu that this should occur to her grandson rather than to her son: and accordingly she bore Jamadagni, whose son was the warrior Paraśurāma -- while her mother gave birth to Viśvāmitra, who renounced his Kṣatriyahood and became a Brahmin. ⁽²⁵⁾ This myth accordingly makes explicit the descent of Jamadagni from Bhṛgu -- a descent implied also by the appellation Bhārgava very frequently given to Paraśurāma. Jāmadagnya. The myth also suggests a close connection between Viśvāmitra and Bhṛgu: and one version of this myth explicitly states that it has been related in order to explain the connection between the Bhārgavas and the Kauśikas:

"etat te kathitam sarvan aśesena mayā nrpa |
bhṛgūnām kuśikanām ca prati sambandhakāraṇam" || (26)

It may accordingly be inferred that the descent of Jamadagni from Bhṛgu, although not mentioned in the Vedic texts prior to the Sūtras, has become well-accepted in the Epic texts: hence that the status of the Rsi Jamadagni was regarded as being in some sense subordinate to that of Bhṛgu. It may further be inferred that a fairly close

(25) cf. Mahābhārata 3.115.9-13: 12.49.1ff: 13.4.1ff: 13.56.1ff: Harivamśa 23.82-94 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.66.35-77 : Vāyu Purāna 2.29.64-99 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.7.1ff.

(26) Mahābhārata 13.56.19.

connection was thought to exist between the Bhārgava and Vaiśvāmītra Gotras, which in turn gave rise to the above mythical explanation of this connection: even though, once again, no such connection is mentioned in the earlier literature. It may be suggested that one of the reasons why neither Jamadagni nor Viśvāmītra appears in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group may be linked in part to the subordinate role within the Gotra system of these Ṛṣi-Gotras and of those who traced their descent from these Ṛṣis - in the view of the Brahmin proponents of the Gotra system - as compared with the role of Bhṛgu and of the Bhārgavas. In other words, it may be suggested that those claiming to be Gotra-descendants of Viśvāmītra and Jamadagni did not hold sufficient influence over the formulation of these traditions to continue to have their Ṛṣis included in the group of Saptarṣis: while the influence formerly held by the members of these Gotras had been appropriated in part by the members of the Bhārgava Gotra, who - as has been seen in the last sub-section and in Chapter 2 - were more successful in having their Ṛṣi-ancestor included in the group of Saptarṣis.

iii. Aṅgiras - Gautama - Bharadvāja.

As was seen earlier, in the Śrauta Sūtra texts both the Gautamas and the Bhāradvājas are listed as sub-divisions of the Aṅgirasa Gotra. Also, while Gautama and Bharadvāja appear only in the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, Aṅgiras appears only in the second main list of the group.

In several contexts in both the Epic and the early Purānic texts it is related that Bharadvāja was the son of Brhaspati - who was in turn the son of Aṅgiras.⁽²⁷⁾ Similarly Gautama-Dīrghatamas (see Chapter 1 section 4(e)) is in places said to be the son of Brhaspati

(27) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.121.12-18: 3.209.1-9: 13.31.22ff : Harivamśa 23.49-53 : Matsya Purāna 49.14-35 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.19.1ff : Brhaddevata 5.102-103.

and Mamata, while Bharadvāja is said to be the half-brother of Gautama-Dīrghatamas.⁽²⁸⁾ Thus the subordination of both of these Rsis to the Rsi Āṅgiras within the context of the Gotra organisation may be said also to have become generally accepted by at least the Epic texts, as reflected in such mythical accounts. In this instance it may once again be suggested that the exclusion of Gautama and Bharadvāja from the second main list of the Saptarṣi group is in part related to the inclusion therein of Āṅgiras: due in part to the subordinate role occupied by the former two Gotras - in the view of the Brahmin proponents of the Gotra organisation - as compared with the increasingly important and influential role occupied by the members of the Āṅgirasa Gotra.

iv. Marīci - Kaśyapa.

As was seen earlier, in the Śrauta Sūtra texts the Kaśyapa Gotra is listed independently of any other: while Marīci is not mentioned in the Gotra lists. Also, while Kaśyapa appears in only the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, Marīci appears in only the second main list of the group.

Throughout the Epic and early Purānic texts, Kaśyapa is on innumerable occasions termed the son of Marīci.⁽²⁹⁾ As in the preceding instances, therefore, it may be suggested that the exclusion of Kaśyapa from the second main list of the Saptarṣi group is related in some measure to the inclusion therein of Marīci. It may also be noted in this connection that, in the most frequently-encountered forms of the lists of the Saptarṣi group, both Marīci and Kaśyapa

(28) e.g. Mahābhārata 12.328.44ff : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.33-94 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.33-97 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.19.1ff : Matsya Purāna 48.32-38: 49.14-35.

(29) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.69.17: 2.102.3ff: 1.45.1ff : Mahābhārata 1.59.9ff: 1.60.33-35: 12.200.1-46: 12.201.8: 13.47.61: 13.85.15ff: 13.151.12 : Harivamśa 3.45-49: 31.100-109 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.13.78-80: 1.2.38.1: 2.3.1.113ff: 2.3.3.84-118: 2.3.4.34: 2.3.5.35: 2.3.7.463ff: 3.4.2.32-34 : Vāyu Purāna 1.30.72-73: 2.3.1: 2.4.109ff: 2.5.101: 2.6.43-44: 2.6.76: 2.8.334ff : Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 104.1-9 : etc.

are placed in an ultimate position in each of the respective lists: Kaśyapa usually being enumerated last in the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, Marīci usually being enumerated first in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. This again may be seen to suggest that the role of the one Ṛṣi in the one list has in some measure been replaced by that of the other Ṛṣi in the other list. It may further be suggested - as in the preceding instances - that this process may be taken to indicate in some measure the assimilation of influence of those regarding themselves as descendants of Kaśyapa - and as members of the Kāśyapa Gotra - by those regarding themselves as descendants of Marīci. This in turn raises a further point: since, unlike the Bhārgavas and the Āṅgīrasas - both of whom are met with already in the Ṛgveda and in subsequent texts - the Mārīcas appear within these texts only from the Rāmāyaṇa onwards. It must therefore be asked, who then were the Mārīcas whose importance may be inferred to be such that the Ṛṣi Marīci from whom they claimed descent came to be identified as the father of Kaśyapa - the latter of whom is himself famed throughout the Epic and early Purāṇic texts with the exalted status as father of all Gods, Demons and Men. This fame of the Ṛṣi Kaśyapa might otherwise be thought to have been sufficient to establish him as one of the foremost - if not indeed as the foremost - of the Ṛṣis: and it is therefore somewhat surprising in this respect to find that his place in the earlier list of the Saptarṣi group would appear to have been usurped by a Ṛṣi who is all but unknown to the authors of the earlier literature - resulting in the exclusion of Kaśyapa and the inclusion of Marīci in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group.

Both an individual Mārīca and the Mārīcas as a group are referred to in several manuscript versions of the Kiśkindha Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa as "the Sons of the Maharṣi", and are said to act as helpers of Rāma and Sugrīva.⁽³⁰⁾ In addition, an individual Mārīca

(30) Rāmāyaṇa 4.41.1, 845* : 4.41.3, 850*.

companion and helper of Rāvana, who transforms himself into a deer in order to assist Rāvana in the abduction of Sītā, and who is slain by Rāma. (31) This Mārīca is most frequently referred to as being a Rākṣasa: but one passage in the Bāla Kāṇḍa also relates that he was originally born as a Yakṣa, and was only subsequently transformed into a Rākṣasa by the curse of Agastya:

"kasya cit tv atha kālasya yaksī putram vyajāyata |
 māricam nāma durdharsam yah śāpād rākṣaso 'bhavat ||
 sunde tu vihate rāma agastyam r̥sisattamam |
 tātakā saha putrena pradharṣayitum icchati ||
 rākṣasatvam bhajasveti māricam vyājahāra sah |
 agastyah paramakruddhas tātakam api śaptavān" || (32)

It must here be acknowledged that this Mārīca is therefore by implication associated not only with Agastya but also with Pulastya - who is himself on occasions referred to as the father of Agastya (see below): since Mārīca is cursed by Agastya, and since both the Yakṣas and the Rākṣasas are most frequently said to be descended from Pulastya (33) - although in a few primarily Purāṇic passages they are also said to be sons of Kaśyapa. (34) Thus the identity of Mārīca - as indeed of Marīci and of his descendants the Mārīcas - may be further considered in connection with Pulastya.

v. Agastya - Pulastya - Pulaha - Kṛatu - Marīci.

As was seen earlier, in the Śrauta Sūtra texts the Āgastyas are listed independently of the other Gotras: while none of the other R̥sis mentioned above are listed in the Gotra lists. Also, in the earlier list of the Saptar̥si group Agastya is most frequently said to be the eighth R̥si, associated with but rarely included within

(31) especially in the Aranya Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana.

(32) Rāmāyana 1.24.8-12.

(33) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.4.6: 1.19.15ff: 5.21.4-7: 6.49.9ff: 6.68.12: 7.4.4ff: Mahābhārata 1.60.1ff: 2.28.50: 3.175.2: 3.253.11-16: 3.259.1-8: 5.107.12: 9.30.10: 12.326.87: Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.7.162ff: 2.3.8.38ff: Vāyu Purāṇa 2.8.139ff: 2.9.31ff: etc.

(34) e.g. Harivaṃśa 3.92: Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 104.1-9: Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.21.24: etc.

the group: while in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, Agastya is once again excluded from the group, but all of the other four Ṛsis are included within the group.

It may be pointed out that, astronomically, Agastya is identified with the star Canopus - as opposed to the Saptarṣis, who constitute the constellation Ursa Major. This is evident in various astronomical works, which give the position of Agastya relative to other constellations: as for example in the Sūrya Siddhānta, which states that Agastya is 80° south from the end of Gemini:

"aśītibhāgair yāmyāyām agastyo mithunāntagaḥ |
viṃśe ca mithunasyāṃśe mṛgavyādho vyavasthitaḥ" || (35)

Hence in astronomical terms it may be deemed unlikely that Agastya should be assimilated within the Saptarṣi group once his astronomical association and identity had become accepted and well-established.

A passage in the Matsya Purāna lists the Āgastyas as one of seven main Gotras: and it then adds that those born in the families of Pulastya, Paulaha and Kratu are also known as Āgastyas:

"ataḥ param agastyasya vaksye vaṃśodbhavān dvijān |
....
paulastyā paulahaś caiva kratuvāṃśabhavās tathā" || (36)

At this point in the passage the inevitable question is asked - why are these three Ṛsis included in the Āgastya Gotra?

"pulahasya pulastyasya kratoś caiva mahātmanah |
agastyasya tathā caiva katham vaṃśas tad ucyatām" || (37)

The passage thereafter continues to give an explanation of this phenomenon - to the effect that each of these three Ṛsis became dissatisfied with their own sons, and instead adopted a son of Agastya: whereafter the Paulastyas, Paulahas and Krātus became known as Āgastyas.⁽³⁸⁾ In this context, therefore, the three Ṛsis Pulastya,

(35) Sūrya Siddhānta 8.10 : cf. 9.12-15: 13.8.9 : Brhatsaṃhitā 12.1-21 : Mahāsiddhānta 10.8 : Pañcasiddhāntika 14.40-41 : etc.

(36) Matsya Purāna 202.1-2.

(37) Matsya Purāna 202.7.

(38) Matsya Purāna 202.8-13.

Pulaha and Kratu are regarded as being of subordinate importance to the Rsi Agastya, and to the Āgastya Gotra. In many other contexts, however, the importance of Agastya would appear to have been in some measure replaced by that of these other three Rsis, and of Pulastya in particular -- since Agastya is said to have been born as Dattoli, a son of Pulastya, having been known as Agastya in an earlier birth:

"prītyāṃ pulastyabhāryāyāṃ dattolis tatsuto 'bhavat |
pūrvajanmani so 'gastyah smṛtaḥ svāyambhuve 'ntare" || (39)

This would again tend to suggest a development within the tradition, whereby a Rsi -- or Rsis -- who is virtually unknown in the earlier literature gradually comes to usurp the role of another Rsi which is of some importance in the earlier literature. It will be noted that in all such cases as those which have been examined in this sub-section, this process is invariably enacted by terming one Rsi the Father of another -- even though no such relationship may be evident in the earlier literature, as for example in the cases of Marīci as the father of Kaśyapa and Bhr̥gu as the father of Jamadagni. Thereafter, once the relationship of paternity has become established, the Rsi termed "Father" is inevitably accredited with a greater status than that of his "Son", and his reputation is thereby consolidated -- as is by implication that also of those regarding themselves as the Gotra-descendants of that Rsi.

One further reference to any form of relationship between these various Rsis occurs in a passage in the Visnu Purāna, where it is said that Pulastya was the brother of Pulaha:

"samprāptaś ca tadā tatra pulastyo brahmanah sutah ||
pitamahena dattārgḥah kṛtāsanaparigraḥ |
māṃ uvāca mahābhāgo maitreya pulahāgrajah" || (40)

(39) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.22-23 : Brahmāṇḍa Purāna 1.2.11.26 : Vāyu Purāna 1.28.21 : Visnu Purāna 1.10.9.

(40) Visnu Purāna 1.1.26-27.

Thus, since this same text relates elsewhere that Agastya was born as a son of Pulastya, Pulaha is accordingly to be regarded as an uncle of Agastya in this context.

In discussing the four Rsis Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Marīci, it is to be noted that a markedly mythical element pervades the accounts of their descendants. Scarcely a single myth is related of the Rsi Pulaha throughout the texts being considered in this study: while his descendants are usually listed as the Prajāpati Kardama, and as deer, vicious toothed creatures, ghosts, serpents, piśacas, grnaras, elephants, monkeys, kinnaras, mayus, kimpurusas and similar⁽⁴¹⁾—namely primarily animals and demons of various kinds. Kratu is generally renowned as being the father of the Vālakhilyas and of the Somapas, who are said to have had neither wives nor children, preferring to be ūrdhvaretas or ascetic.⁽⁴²⁾ As has already been mentioned, Pulastya is said to be the father of both the Yaksas and the Raksasas: among whom are most notably Viśravas and Kuvera (Yaksas), and also Ravana, Vibhīšana, Kumbhakarna, Mārīca, and all of the other main Raksasa opponents of Rāma who appear both in the Rāmāyana itself and also in subsequent contexts. It is clearly not the purpose of — nor within the scope of — this study to enter upon a consideration of the possible historicity of the Rāmāyana story and of the peoples therein: nor to consider the question of whether the Raksasas depicted therein as the opponents of Rāma should be taken to represent a stylised and mythological version of the early inhabitants of southern India, as viewed by the northerners. Such possibilities should, however, be taken into account, particularly when attempting to assess the degree to which

(41) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.60.1-15 : Harivaṃśa 13.58-59 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.23: 1.2.35.94ff: 2.3.7.171ff: 2.3.8.70-71: 2.3.10.75-93 : Vāyu Purāna 1.28.18: 1.61.84ff: 2.8.198ff: 2.9.64ff: 2.11.68-69: Matsya Purāna 15.20ff : Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.14ff : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.10.6ff.

(42) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.60.1-15 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.36: 1.2.35.94ff: 1.2.36.12: 2.3.8.72: 2.3.10.52-53 : Vāyu Purāna 1.28.30: 1.61.84ff: 2.1.8-12: 2.9.66: 2.11.50-51 : Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.14ff : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.10.6ff.

any kind of social or Gotra influences may have been operative in formulating the traditions of the above-mentioned Rsis: that is to say, when attempting to decide whether the inclusion of these Rsis in the second main list of the Saptarsi group may be said to be due in part to the role or influence of those who traced their own descent from one or another of these Rsis. In the present context it may therefore simply be concluded that the inclusion of the Rsis Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu - as also in some measure Marīci - in the second main list of the Saptarsi group is in some degree connected with the role and status of the Rsi Agastya: who is himself, as has already been seen, closely connected with the first main list of the Saptarsi group, and the importance of whose Gotra-descendants is acknowledged in the Śrauta Sūtra and subsequent texts through the independent status given to the Āgastya Gotra as one of the seven main Gotras. Certain further and complementary connections between these various Rsis will be noted below in section 3, in connection with the geographical region with which each of these Rsis is associated: and further inferences will be drawn in the concluding section (section 4).

(d) Gotra Influences in the Rsi Traditions.

It has so far been suggested that the change in enumeration which occurs between the two main lists of the Saptarsi group may be in some measure accounted for on the basis of the influence of the Brahmin members of individual Gotras over the development of these traditions. In order to further illustrate the presence of this type of influence within the literary texts, a select number of passages may be cited which make explicit the fact of some form of Gotra-influence operative in the formulation of these traditions: or, more precisely, which demonstrate the attempts of members of a Rsi-Gotra to improve -- directly or indirectly -- the status of either a Rsi or a Rsi-Gotra: or to account for the status of a particular Gotra: or to undermine the status of a Rsi or of a Rsi-Gotra.

Several versions are given throughout these texts of the myth of the adoption of Śunakṣepa by Viśvāmitra. In a version in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, it is related that the fifty eldest sons of Viśvāmitra did not agree to this adoption, whereupon he cursed them: whence it is said that most of the Dasyus are descended from Viśvāmitra, these including such peoples as the Andhras, Pundras and others who live on the borders:

"ta ete 'ndhrāḥ punḍrāḥ śabarāḥ pulindā mūtibā ity udantya
bahavo bhavanti vaiśvāmitrā dasyūnām bhūyisthā" | (43)

Another version of this myth, this time in the Rāmāyana, relates the same basic story, adding that the sons were cursed to become Śvamāṃsa-bhojinas or eaters of dogs' flesh:

"tesaṃ tad vacanam śrutvā putraṇāṃ munipuṅgavaḥ |
krodhasamraktanayano vyāhartum upacakrame ||

....

śvamāṃsabhojināḥ sarve vāsisthā iva jātisu |
pūrṇam varṣasahasraṃ tu pṛthivyām anuvatsyatha" || (44)

(43) Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 7.18.

(44) Rāmāyana 1.61.14-16.

A further version in the Mahābhārata again relates that these sons were cursed to be Śvapacas or those who cook dogs:

"nābhivādayate jyestham devarātām narādhipa |
putrāḥ pañcaśataś cāpi śaptāḥ śvapacatām gataḥ" || (45)

Such references may be interpreted in one sense as attempts to account for the fact that such apparently "outcaste" groups as Dasyus or Śvapacas were nonetheless thought to be descended from Viśvāmitra, or were thought to be members of the Vaiśvāmitra or Kauśika Gotra. A similar situation is evident in the case of certain descendents of the Rsi Gotama. A passage in the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa relates that, after the death of Yavakrīta (the son of Bharadvāja according to the Epic texts⁽⁴⁶⁾), his father cursed that the descendants of Maundibha might be humbled - at which point the text adds that "these are the descendants of Gotama, who live in submission":

"tam ha tac chaśapa |
marisyaty ahāyam rājanyabandhuḥ pare ime maundibhā bhavisyantīti |
ta ete parābhūta gotamā bruvānaś caranti" || (47)

A somewhat curious passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas again makes reference to certain Vaiśvāmitras - as also to certain Āgastyas, Paulastyas and others - terming them Rākṣasa clans:

"yaksānām caiva sarvesām paulastyā ye ca rākṣasāḥ ||
āgastyavaiśvāmitrānām krūrānām brahmarākṣasām |
....
tesām aidavido rājā paulastyah savyapiṅgalah |
itare ye yajñajusās te vai rākṣoganaś trayah ||
yātudhānā brahmadhānā varttāś caiva divācarāḥ |
....
paulastyā nairrtāś caiva āgastyāḥ kauśikās tathā |
ity etāḥ sapta tesām vai jātayo rākṣasāḥ smrtāḥ" || (48)

It may again be suggested that such references are seeking in some

(45) Mahābhārata 13.3.8.

(46) e.g. Mahābhārata 3.135.7 - 3.139.24.

(47) Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 2.272.

(48) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.8.58-69 : Vāyu Purāna 2.9.52-63.

measure to account for the fact that the Goṭra-descendants of these Rsis included those regarded as "demons" or "outcastes". It may be noted here that further passages relate how, for example, individual Rsis or their descendants came to dwell or be present among such outcaste groups: as in the case of Viśvāmitra, who during a drought and famine enters a Candāla village and steals a piece of dog's flesh in order to feed his wife and son:⁽⁴⁹⁾ and again in the case of a certain Gautama who departs from Madhvadeśa to travel northwards and settle in the land of the Mlecchas, eventually becoming himself like a Mleccha - much to the disgust of his Brahmin friends.⁽⁵⁰⁾ In such cases as these it may be seen that by explaining how an individual Rsi came to live among such peoples, the myth in effect offers an explanation of why such peoples might have come to be regarded as in some sense related to or descended from that Rsi.

A passage in the Harivaṃśa relates of certain Brahmin sons of Bharadvāja that they became polluted or degraded through their transgressions - but that they will nonetheless be reborn in the land of the Kurus as foremost sons of Kuśika (i.e. as Vaiśvāmitras) and will once again become Brahmins:

"āsan pūrvayuge tāta bharadvājātmaajā dvijāḥ |
 yogadharmam anuprāpya bhrastā duścāritena vai ||

 tatas te yogavibhrastā deveṣu suciroṣitāḥ |
 jātāḥ kauśikadāyādāḥ kurukṣetre nararṣabha ||

 brāhmanyam pratilapsyanti tato bhūyah svakarmanā" || (51)

The passage may be said to attempt both to account for the degraded status of certain of the descendants of Bharadvāja, and also to suggest some connection between the descendants of Bharadvāja and those of Viśvāmitra. As has been seen in previous context, other passages also attempt to account for a connection between the descendants

(49) e.g. Mahābhārata 12.139.12ff.

(50) e.g. Mahābhārata 12.162.1ff.

(51) Harivaṃśa 14.1-7.

of Viśvāmitra and those of other Rsis: as for example in the case of the Epic and Purāṇic myth which tells of the births of Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni from Satyavatī and her mother, one version of which states explicitly that the myth is related in order to explain the connection between the descendants of Viśvāmitra and those of Bhṛgu:

"etat te kathitam sarvam aśesena mayā nrpa |
bhṛgūnām kuśikānām ca prati sambandhakarānam" || (52)

It has again been noted previously that a passage in the Jaiminiya Brāhmana contains a myth wherein Agastya follows the other Rsis to Svargaloka - whereafter it is said that, just as he was the last to go, so too the Āgastyas are outside or beyond the Kuru-Pañcālas:

"tasmād v agastayo bahirdheva kurupañcālebhyah" | (53)

Such passages as this suggest that in at least some instances the very format of a myth has been in some measure directed by an attempt to connect what is said therein not only with an individual Rsi, but also with those who claimed to be - or who were regarded as being - the descendants of that Rsi. Such attempts are made still more explicitly in certain contexts: as for example in the several versions of a myth which relates in diverse ways that Vasistha was privileged in having revealed to him a certain Brāhmana - for which reason it is said that in former times only those who were Vasisthas might become Brahmins:

"rsayo vā indram pratyakṣan napaśyantam vasisthah pratyakṣam
apaśyat so 'brevid brāhmanam te vakṣyami yathā tvatpurohitāḥ
prajāḥ prajanisyante 'tha metarebhya rsibhyo mā pravoca iti
tasma etān stonabhāgān abravīt tato vasisthapurohitāḥ prajāḥ

(52) Mahābhārata 13.56.19.

(53) Jaiminiya Brāhmana 2.221.

prājāyanta tasmād vāsistho brahmā kāryah praiva jāyate" || (54)

"purā vyāhrtīr vāsisthā eva vidus tasmād ha sma purā vāsistha eva brahmā bhavati yatas tv enā apy etarhi ya eva kaścūdhīte tato 'py etarhi ya eva kaśca brahmā bhavati sa ha vai brahmā bhavitum arhati sa vā brahmann ity āmantritah pratiśrūyād ya evam etā vyāhrtīr veda" || (55)

In a similar manner it is said in further contexts that it was for this reason that the Ikṣvākus prospered, having Vasistha as their Purohita:

"ikṣvākavo mahīpālā lebhire pṛthivīm imām |
purohitavaram prāpya vāsistham ṛsisattamanam" || (56)

Or conversely that the Bharatas prospered for this reason:

"vāsistha indram pratyakṣam apaśyat sa enam abravīd brāhmanam
te vaksyāmi yathā tvatpurohitā bharatā prajāniṣyante tato
vai vāsisthapurohitā bharatāh prājāyanta" || (57)

Just as Vasistha appears in both main lists of the Saptarsi group, and the Vāsistha Gotra remains independent of all the other Gotras, so too the pre-eminence of Vasistha as compared with the other Ṛsis is maintained in various forms throughout these texts. Several such instances have been noted in the first two Chapters: and a few further examples may be cited in demonstration of this point. The entire Ṛṣeya Upaniṣad is designed to relate how Vasistha brought enlightenment to the Ṛsis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja and Gautama, who thereafter became his pupils. Here the pre-eminent status of Vasistha is quite clearly being sought to be demonstrated, in order to establish him as being in some sense superior to the other Ṛsis. Throughout the Mahābhārata Vasistha is frequently described

(54) Taittirīya Saṁhitā 3.5.2 : cf. Gopatha Brāhmana 2.2.13 :
Sadvimśa Brāhmana 1.5.1-3 : Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana 3.5.1-3 :
Brhaddevatā 5.143-160.

(55) Śatapatha Brāhmana 12.6.1.38ff.

(56) Mahābhārata 1.164.10 : cf. Brahmānda Purāṇa 2.3.48.29-30 :
Viṣṇu Purāṇa 4.2.1ff.

(57) Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmana 15.5.24.

as being the leader of Brahm̄ins, the equal of Brahm̄ā, the foremost of the Saptar̄sis, the incarnation of Dharma and Indra, and similar: (58) and since this type of appellation is not generally accorded in such a marked degree to any of the other R̄sis, it may be inferred that such epithets are once again designed to give Vasist̄ha a pre-eminent status in comparison with the other R̄sis. In the earlier texts - and more specifically in several Br̄h̄mana passages - Jamadagni is on several occasions said to have gained success through sacrifice, on account of which his descendants flourished and became so numerous that no two descendants of Ūrva knew each other:

"jamadagnir vā akāmayata bahuh prajayā paśubhih prajāyeyeti
sa etam caturātram yajñam apaśyat tam āharat tenāyajata
tato vai sa bahuh prajayā paśubhih prajāyatāpi hāsyā dvāv
aurvau prajāyām na samjajñate" | (59)

Following from this, a passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā further relates that Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni were on one occasion quarreling with Vasist̄ha: and that Jamadagni saw the Vihavya hymn, thereby gaining the power and strength of Vasist̄ha:

"viśvāmitrajamadagnī vasist̄henāspardhetām sa etaj jamadagnir
vihavyam apaśyat tena vai sa vasist̄hasyendriyam vīryam avr̄kta" || (60)

The passage might be interpreted on one level as an indication in these earlier texts of the relative importance of Jamadagni - and of the Jamadagnya Gotra - in relation to Vasist̄ha: and it is noteworthy in this respect that similar types of myths - according to a greater status to Jamadagni than to Vasist̄ha - are not encountered in the later literature of the Epic and early Purānic texts. Such an interpretation, involving the Gotra as well as the R̄si himself, is in a further context explicitly stated by Śaunaka to be the case.

(58) e.g. Mahābhārata 5.104.1-26 : 7.5.26: 9.47.1ff: 12.122.31:
12.201.1ff: 12.327.47: 14.27.19: etc.

(59) Jaiminiya Br̄h̄mana 2.285 : cf. Taittirīya Samhitā 7.1.9 :
Pañcaviṃśa Br̄h̄mana 21.10.5-6.

(60) Taittirīya Samhitā 3.1.7.3 : cf. 5.4.11.

Śaunaka relates in one passage in the Brhaddevatā that Viśvāmitra was once deprived of consciousness by Śakti the son of Vasīṣṭha during a quarrel: but that he was revived by the Jāmadagnis. For this reason, adds Śaunaka, certain ślokas in the R̥gveda (3.53.21-24) are traditionally held to be hostile to the Vāsīṣṭhas: and any Vāsīṣṭha who listens to them acquires great guilt by doing so:

"parāś catasro yās tv atra vasīṣṭhadvesīnyah smṛtāḥ ||
 viśvāmitrena tāḥ proktā abhiśāpā iti smṛtāḥ |
 dviśaddveśās tu tāḥ proktā vidyāś caivābhicārikāḥ ||
 vasīṣṭhās tā na śṛṇvanti tad ācāryakasammatam |
 kīrtanāc chravanād vāpi mahādosaś ca jāyate" || (61)

It may thus once again be observed that in this context a tradition related of an individual R̥sis -- in this case of Vasīṣṭha -- is explicitly said to have some form of connection with or relevance to those who regarded themselves or were regarded by others as being descendants of that R̥si.

Similar types of myth are related also of other R̥sis: and most notably of the R̥si Atri. It is said for example in several contexts that, because Atri repelled the darkness of Svarbhānu and restored light to the worlds, therefore Ātreyas should be given gold as a Dakṣiṇā at the sacrifice -- and that they should receive the first Dakṣiṇā:

"tam hovāca varam vṛṇīsveti sa hovāca dakṣiṇīyā me prajā syād iti
 tasmād ātreyaḥ prathamadakṣiṇā yajñe dīyanta iti brāhmaṇam" || (62)

"svarbhānur vā āsura ādityam tamasāvidhyat tam devū na vyojānam
 te 'trim upādāvam tasyātrir bhāsenā tamo 'pāhan ||
 tasmād ātreyaḥ candreneccchanty atrir hi tasya jyotiḥ" || (63)

Thus in these instances once again it may be seen that a tradition which is related of an individual R̥sis is explicitly connected with his descendants: and this may be said to reflect in some measure

(61) Brhaddevatā 4.105-110.

(62) Gopatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.17 : cf. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 4.3.4.21.

(63) Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa 6.6.8-11.

the status or interests of those descendants of the Rsi, particularly since the extent form of many of the above passages constitutes a type of explanation or justification for the performance of a particular custom involving the descendants of a particular Rsi.

In all such cases as those quoted above in this sub-section, it may be inferred that a conscious attempt is being made in these passages - on the part of the members of one or another particular Rsi-Gotra -- to decrease, increase, or simply account for the status and rank of a particular Rsi and/or of his Gotra-descendants.

(e) Conclusion.

It may be inferred from the observations made in this section that the traditions of the Saptarṣis - both of the group and of the individual Ṛṣi-members of the group - demonstrate in places certain characteristics and features which may be taken to indicate that they have been formulated for the express purpose of accounting for the status or rank not merely of an individual Ṛṣi but also of the descendants of that Ṛṣi. In this respect it may be inferred that these traditions have been influenced in some measure or degree - and have developed due to such influence - by the Brahmin members of a particular Ṛṣi-Gotra seeking either to emphasise the status of their own Ṛṣi-ancestor, or to denigrate the status of another Ṛṣi and his descendants: such a purpose being explicitly stated as such in certain of the previously-quoted passages in the last sub-section. It may therefore be quite reasonably inferred that the changes which occur in the status of any individual Ṛṣi reflect in part and in some measure changes in the status of the descendants of that Ṛṣi: and, by extension, that the changes which occur between the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group - wherein individual Ṛṣis are for example included in the one list but excluded from the other list - reflect once again in some measure changes in the status of the descendants of such Ṛṣis as appear in either of these lists.

As was seen in sub-section (b), the most notable changes which occur between the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group relate to the omission of the Ṛṣis Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama and Kaśyapa from the second list, and to the inclusion of the Ṛṣis Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Marīci - and also in part Bhṛgu - in the second list. As was seen in sub-sections (b) and (c), such changes may in turn be related to the variant lists of the seven main Gotras which are given in the Śrauta Sūtra, Epic and early Purāṇic texts: and also to the family and other relationships which

are said in various contexts to exist between each of these individual Rsis. In this respect the omission of one Rsi may be said to be in some measure related to the inclusion of another Rsi, and vice versa: and where this occurs, it is most frequently the case that a Rsi who is included in the first main list of the Saptarsi group but excluded from the second main list is referred to in the Epic and Purānic texts as being the Son of one of the Rsis in the second main list. The very fact that such inclusions and omissions are evident in the context of the listing of Rsi-Gotras and Rsi-Vamśas suggests of itself that they are in some measure related to the changing status of the descendants of one or another Rsi: and as has been seen especially in sub-section (d), certain texts state explicitly that a myth or tradition is in places related of a Rsi or of the descendants of a Rsi precisely in order to illustrate or account for the status not only of the Rsi himself but more especially of the descendants of that Rsi. In this respect, therefore, it may be concluded at this stage that the traditions of the Saptarsis have been influenced in some measure - particularly in respect of the formulation of the second main list of the Saptarsi group - by considerations arising from the context of the Brahmin Gotra organisation: whereby the Gotra-descendants of an individual Rsi sought to establish their own status through manipulating the status ascribed either to their own Rsi-ancestor or else to other Rsis in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group - which in turn gives rise to the inclusion or omission of individual Rsis in and from either of these lists. Thus the changes which occur between the two main lists may in some measure be related to changes which were occurring in the status ascribed to each of the Rsi-Gotras, particularly by the Brahmin promoters of the Gotra organisation: and it may be pointed out that, conversely, such changes as occur in the lists may also be interpreted as helping to throw some light upon

such changes as may actually have been occurring in society during the period covered by the texts in question. This latter point is one which will be taken up again in the general conclusion of this Chapter (section 4).

Section 3 : Regional Factors.

(a) The Region of the Saptarsi Group.

1. The Earlier Literature.

In the earlier literature of the Vedic Samhitās, the Brāhmanas and the Sūtras, the region or area with which the Saptarsi group is associated is invariably the north. The Atharvaveda, for example, refers in two separate passages to the Saptarsis as acting, together with Viśvakarman, as guardians of the northern region:

"viśvakarmā mā sapta rsibhir udīcyā diśah pātu" || (64)

"viśvakarmanam te sapta rsivantam rccantu
ye māghāyava udīcyā diśo 'bhidāsān" || (65)

A similar idea is to be found also in the early Iranian tradition, where Ahura Mazda creates the Seven Stars - Haptōirngas - to be glorious and healing: and these Seven Stars were to remain on guard against the magicians of the north, who attempted to prevent the advance of Tishtrya or Sirius by hurling down hostile shooting stars. (66)

Similarly in the Hiranyakeśin Grhya Sūtra, instructions are given for setting up seats for the Saptarsis towards the north, with north-pointing darbha-grass - and for setting up that of Agastya towards the south:

"nivītina uttarata udīcīnapravane udagagrair darbhaiḥ prāgapavargāny
āsanāni kalpayanti | vasisthakaśyapayor antarāle 'rundhatyai
kalpayanti | daksinatah prēcīnapravane 'gastyāya" || (67)

This association of the Saptarsis with the northern region may be seen to be altogether predictable, presuming the association of the Saptarsis with the seven stars of Ursa Major which are closest to

(64) Atharvaveda 19.17.7.

(65) Atharvaveda 19.18.7.

(66) e.g. Sirozah 1.13: 2.13 : Yasht 20.

(67) Hiranyakeśin Grhya Sūtra 2.8.19.2-7.

Dhruva or the northern celestial pole - similarly the association of Agastya with the southern region is predictable assuming his association with the star Canopus, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter. This association of the Saptarsis with the northern celestial pole may be seen to be clearly implied by a passage in the Jaiminiya Upanisad Brāhmaṇa, which relates that the Saptarsis are located at the centre of the sky:

"atha yatraite saptarsayas tad divo madhyam" | (68)

The term madhyam may here be taken in the sense of the northern celestial pole, which constitutes the "centre" of the sky inasmuch as all other stars and constellations revolve around it: an interpretation which is stated to be the case by Varāhamihira⁽⁶⁹⁾ and others (see Chapter 5). Since the constellation of the Saptarsis is that closest to the centre-point or "pivot" of the sky, the above quotation may be seen as a poetic - if astronomically slightly imprecise - way of expressing their location. It may be pointed out here that, taken in this sense, such references do not imply an observation being made from a point directly beneath the northern celestial pole, whereby the Saptarsis are seen directly overhead - as has been suggested by Tilak⁽⁷⁰⁾ and others, thereby positing that such observations must therefore have been made at a circumpolar region; since such references are intended primarily - as interpreted by the astronomers - as indicating the region of the sky around which all the constellations and stars would appear to be turning, hence the region which appears fixed or dhruva. The northern celestial pole is generally deemed to have been represented during the period presently in question by the star Thuban or α Draconis - which is approximately mid-way between the present northern celestial pole (Polaris) and the Saptarsis or Ursa Major (see Chapter 5): hence

(68) Jaiminiya Upanisad Brāhmaṇa 4.26.12.
 (69) Brhatsamhitā 13.1-6.
 (70) e.g. B. Tilak - Arctic Home in the Vedas, p.55.

the constellation of the Saptarsis would -- at this earlier period -- have been not only perhaps the most easily recognisable constellation in the northern hemisphere, but also unquestionably that closest to what was then the northern celestial pole.

Apart from relating that the Saptarsis are at the "centre" of the sky, other passages -- as for example one in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa -- relate that they rise in the north:

"tā mithunena vyārdhyantāmī hy uttarāhi sapta ṛsaya udyanti
pura eta" | (71)

This same passage also relates that the Saptarsis were formerly called Rksas or bears:

"sapta ṛsīn u ha sma vai purarksā ity ācakṣate" | (72)

As indicated and discussed already in Chapter 1, this may in turn be used to interpret a further passage in the R̥gveda, which speaks of the Rksas as being "high" in the sky during the night -- wherein the term Rksa may be seen to denote the Saptarsis, and is accordingly interpreted as such by Śāyana and others:

"amī ya ṛksā nihitāsa uccā naktam dadṛśre kuha cid diveyuh" | (73)

Once again, it is not necessary to conclude -- with Tilak and others -- that the term uccā denotes an observation being made from a circumpolar region.

It may be noted also that in one passage in the R̥gveda the Saptarsis are referred to as the Seven Oxen who travel to the east (see also discussion of this passage in Chapter 1):

"adhvaryubhiḥ pañcabhiḥ sapta viprah̄ priyam rakṣante nihitam padam veh
prañco madanty uksano ajuryā devā devānām anu hi vratā guh" || (74)

As was noted in Chapter 1, the term "The Seven Oxen" is used to designate "The North" in many of the Latin languages -- as for example

(71) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.4.

(72) ibid.

(73) R̥gveda 1.24.10.

(74) R̥gveda 3.7.7.

in the Latin Septentriones. Thus here again it would appear that the Saptarsis are to be associated with the northern region: an association which on this basis may be said to be parallel to that in further - especially Indo-European - contexts, and an association which may be seen to be reasonably consistently followed in this earlier group of texts.

ii. The Later Literature.

In the earlier texts, the Saptarsi group which is associated with the northern region is either explicitly or implicitly that commencing with Viśvāmitra: since indeed, as was seen in Chapter 1, this is the only list of the Saptarsi group which is known within these texts. The same association between this group of Saptarsis and the northern region is evident in, for example, a passage in the Uttara Kānda of the Rāmāyana, which relates that they constantly dwell in the northern region:

"vasisthah kaśyapo 'thātrir viśvāmitroh sagautamah ||
jamadagnir bharadvājas te 'pi saptarsayas tathā |
udīcyāṃ diśi saptate nityam eva nivāsinah" || (75)

Certain Parvans of the Mahābhārata similarly retain this association. A passage in the Anuśāsana Parvan, for example, recounts the deeds of Viśvāmitra, during the course of which it is related that he constantly resorts to the northern region:

"madhye jvalati yo nityam udīcīm āśrito diśam" || (76)

The later Śānti Parvan once again affords evidence that it is in effect a bridge between the two main lists and traditions - as was suggested to be the case in Chapter 2. One passage in this Parvan lists the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā and, while explicitly equating these with the Saptarsis, nonetheless locates them in the east: and it then continues by enumerating the Rsis of the other main list of the Saptarsi group of the earlier texts - namely that commencing

(75) Rāmāyana 7.1.5-6.

(76) Mahābhārata 13.3.15.

with Viśvāmitra -- and in so doing it explicitly and perhaps purposely fails or omits to actually call them the Saptarṣis, while nevertheless locating them in the northern region:

"brahmanah sapta putrā vai mahātmanah svayambhuvah ||
marīcir atryaṅgirasau pulastyah pulahah kratuh |
vasiṣṭhaś ca mahābhāgah sadṛśā vai svayambhuva ||
sapta brahmāna ity ete purāṇe niścayam gatah |
....
trailokyabhāvanās tāta prācyām saptarṣayas tathā |
....
ātreyaś ca vasiṣṭhaś ca kaśyapaś ca mahān ṛṣih ||
gautamah sabharadvājo viśvāmitro 'tha kauśikah |
tathaive putro bhagavān ṛcīkasya mahātmanah ||
jamadagniś ca saptate udīcim diśam āśritāh" | (77)

In the Harivaṃśa a complete change is fully evident. A passage in this work enumerates the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group -- namely those commencing with Marīci -- and calls them both the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā and also the Saptarṣis -- and also states that they live in the northern region:

"marīcir atrir bhagavān aṅgirāh pulahah kratuh |
pulastyas ca vasiṣṭhaś ca saptate brahmanah sutāh ||
uttarasyām diśi tathā rājan saptarṣayah sthitāh" | (78)

The passage thus suggests that, just as this latter group of Saptarṣis has gradually -- particularly throughout the Mahābhārata -- come to replace in importance the role of the Ṛsis of the first or earlier main list of Saptarṣis, so too they have come to be located in that region which was previously occupied by the Ṛsis of the first main list of the group. Thus while the group of Ṛsis commencing with Marīci is at one stage -- in the Mahābhārata -- said to live in the eastern region, it is at a later stage -- in the Harivaṃśa -- said to live in the northern region.

It is possible to discern a still earlier location ascribed

(77) Mahābhārata 12.201.1-35.

(78) Harivaṃśa 7.7-8.

to the second main group of Saptarṣis, which is given in the Rāmāyana version of the myth of Triśaṅku.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In this myth, the attempts of Viśvāmitra to transfer Triśaṅku in bodily form to the sky are at first thwarted by Indra: but then it is said that Viśvāmitra in anger created another group of Saptarṣis in the southern region, together with another set of Nakṣatras:

"srjan daksinamārgasthān saptarṣīn aparān punah ||
nakṣatramālam aparām asrjat krodhamūrchitah" | (80)

The implications of this reference will be more fully discussed and investigated in Chapter 5. In the present context it may be noted that this new group of Saptarṣis created by Viśvāmitra is said to be located in the southern region: and, since Viśvāmitra is a member of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group - which, according to this same text, is located in the northern region - it might be inferred that this new group of Saptarṣis created in the southern region represents in effect the group commencing with Marīci, which - as has been seen in Chapter 2 - first becomes recognised in the Epic texts. In this case it may therefore be said that this latter group of Saptarṣis is first - in the Rāmāyana - said to reside in the southern region: then - in the Mahābhārata - in the eastern region: and then - in the Harivaṃśa and subsequent early Purānic texts - in the northern region, which was formerly said to be occupied by the Rṣis of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group.

At this point it should once again be borne in mind that the northern location of the Saptarṣis is demanded by their astronomical significance, whereby they are identified with the constellation Ursa Major which is closest to Dhruva or the northern celestial pole - the fixed point of the sky around which all other stars and constellations would appear to be revolving. Thus the fact that the second main list of the Saptarṣi group is first of all associated

(79) of. Rāmāyana 1.56.10 - 1.59.33.

(80) Rāmāyana 1.59.20-21.

with the southern and eastern regions, and only subsequently with the northern region, is a further indication - complementary to those noted already in Chapter 2 section 2(e) - that certain factors other than astronomical considerations have been operative in the origin, formulation and development of this second main group of Saptar̥sis. In the Harivam̥śa and in the subsequent early Purānic texts it would however appear that the second main group of Saptar̥sis has additionally come to assume not only the title of Saptar̥sis but also the astronomical significance of occupying the northern region which was formerly held by the first main Saptar̥si group. Thus, by the end of the period being considered in this study, the astronomer Varāhamihira knows only of this second main group as constituting the Saptar̥si group: and he accordingly relates that it is they who inhabit the northern region.⁽⁸¹⁾

In order to further illustrate such regional associations of the two main Saptar̥si groups - and in particular the degree to which the R̥sis of the second main list of the Saptar̥si group are associated with the southern region - it is next instructive to examine the regional traditions associated with each of the individual R̥si-members of the two main lists of the Saptar̥si group.

(81) cf. Brhatsamhitā 13.1-6.

(b) The Region of R̥sis in the Earlier Texts.

General regional data in the earlier texts - from the Vedic Samhitās to the Sūtras - have already been studied by previous writers: and it is therefore only necessary in the present context to summarise the conclusions reached by such writers, and to illustrate the degree to which the regional traditions of individual R̥sis conform to the overall regional data in these texts.

The earlier texts are centred primarily upon in the first instance the region of the Panjāb and adjacent territory (especially in the Vedic Samhitās), and in the second instance the Gaṅgā-Yamunā basin: while also demonstrating knowledge of areas further to the east, as for example of Magadha and of the eastern Gangetic region. In general terms it may be said that these texts show little knowledge of regions to the south of the Vindhya: and it is indeed this latter point which is of major interest in this context when studying the regional associations of the R̥sis. Within these earlier texts it is therefore of no surprise to find that individual R̥sis are accordingly associated with regions which are generally well-known to the authors of these texts: and the following selection of examples may be cited in order to illustrate this point.

Both in the R̥gveda and in subsequent texts, Indra is said to have crossed the Sindhu with Vasistha, and to have helped king Sudās through the Vāsisthas.⁽⁸²⁾ Both Vasistha and Viśvāmitra are spoken of as being Purohitas of king Sudās: and through him they are associated especially with the region of the Panjāb, and in particular with the rivers Vipāśā and Śutudrī.⁽⁸³⁾ Dharadvāja is said to have been the Purohita of king Divodāsa the grandfather of Sudās: ⁽⁸⁴⁾ and he is also said to have taken part in the battle of

(82) e.g. R̥gveda 7.33.3-7.

(83) e.g. R̥gveda 3.53.9-12: 7.33.3-7 : Aitareya Brāhmana 8.21 :
Jaiminīya Brāhmana 3.23-24 : Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 16.11.13-14 :
Nirukta 2.24: 9.26 : Brhaddevatā 4.105-119.

(84) e.g. R̥gveda 1.116.18: 6.31.4 : Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana 15.3.7.

the ten kings on the Sindhu with Mānusa.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Bharadvāja is additionally said to have helped kings Prastoka Srñjaya and Ābhyavartin Cayamāna.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Atri is also connected indirectly with the battle of the ten kings on the Sindhu: for he is said to have received gifts from kings Trasodasyu and Tryaruna, both of whom were Puru kings having their capital on the Sarasvatī, and the former of whom was the son of Purukutsa who was killed in that battle.⁽⁸⁷⁾

Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni are in one Brāhmana context said to have helped the Bharatas against the Ikṣvākus on the banks of the Sindhu:⁽⁸⁸⁾ while in a further context Viśvāmitra is said to have helped the Bharatas on the banks of either the Gaṅgā or the Yamunā.⁽⁸⁹⁾ According to the Aitareya Brāhmana, among the descendants of Viśvāmitra were those who lived on the borders (of "civilised society"): including such peoples as the Andhras, Pundras and others.⁽⁹⁰⁾

According to a passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmana, Gotama accompanied king Māthava Videgha eastwards from the river Sarasvatī to the river Sadānīrā: which formed the boundary between the Kosalas and Videghas, and which in former times - namely before that of king Māthava - had not been crossed by the Āryan peoples.⁽⁹¹⁾

Just as Agastya remains in these texts something of an outsider to the Saptarsi group, so too his descendants are said to live "outside" or beyond the Kuru-Pañcālas⁽⁹²⁾ - namely beyond the territory occupied by these tribes between the Panjāb and the Gaṅgā-Yamunā rivers.

(86) e.g. Brhaddevatā 5.124-142.

(87) e.g. Brhaddevatā 5.28-36.

(88) Jaiminiya Brāhmana 3.237-238.

(89) Jaiminiya Brāhmana 3.183 : cf. Pancaviṃśa Brāhmana 14.3.12-13.

(90) Aitareya Brāhmana 7.18.

(91) Śatapatha Brāhmana 1.4.1.10-20 : cf. 11.4.3.20.

(92) Jaiminiya Brāhmana 2.221.

(85) e.g. Jaiminiya Brāhmana 3.244-247.

It may therefore be observed in general terms that these individual Rsis are associated primarily in the earlier texts with regions lying especially around the main river-basins of north India: and in particular around the Panjāb and around the Gaṅgā-Yamunā and eastern Gangetic basins, in a region to the north of the Vindhya.

(c) The Region of Rsis in the Rāmāyana.

Within the Rāmāyana, the Gangetic valley and surrounding area remains an important locality insofar as the main Rsis are concerned: and frequent references are made to their dwelling in this area. Vasistha, for example, appears primarily in this work as the chief Purohita of king Daśaratha, who has his capital at Ayodhyā in the kingdom of Kosala.⁽⁹³⁾ Viśvāmitra is said to have his main dwelling on the banks of the river Kauśikī - which is a transformation of Satyavatī - close to the Himālayas:

"tato 'ham himavatpārśve vasāmi niyataḥ sukham |
bhaginyāḥ snehasamyuktāḥ kauśikyā raghunandana" || (94)

It is also related of Viśvāmitra that, while performing tapas through the desire to become a Brahmarsi or Brahmin, he travelled first to the southern region, then to Puskara in the western region, and then to the eastern region, before settling by the river Kauśikī in the northern region. From there he also journeys to visit Daśaratha in Ayodhyā, in order to request that Rāma might accompany him to slay the Rākṣasas.⁽⁹⁵⁾

Both Vasistha and Viśvāmitra are associated with several other Aiksvāka kings of Ayodhyā apart from Daśaratha: most notably with Triśaṅku,⁽⁹⁶⁾ and also in the case of Viśvāmitra with Ambarīsa at whose sacrifice Śunahṣepa is rescued and adopted by Viśvāmitra.⁽⁹⁷⁾

It is related of the Rsi Gautama that he used to dwell with Ahalyā in an Āśrama near Mithilā the capital of Videha - but later retired to the peaks of the Himālayas in order to perform tapas:

"mithilopavane tatra āśramam drśya rāghavaḥ |

....

gautamasya naraśrestha pūrvam āsīn mahātmanah |
āśramo divyasaṅkāśah surair api supūjitah ||

(93) e.g. 1.69.17-32; 2.102.3-31; (96) 1.56.10 - 1.59.33.
7.57.4-21; etc.

(94) 1.33.10.

(97) 1.60.5 - 1.61.27.

(95) 1.50.1 - 1.64.18.

sa ceha tapa ātisthad ahalyā sahitaḥ purā |

....

evam uktvā mahātejā gautamo dustacārinīm |

inam āśramam utsrjya siddhacāranasevite |

himavacchikhare ramye tapas tepe mahātapāh" || (98)

It is similarly said that king Nimi founded the city of Vaijayanta near the Āśrama of Gautama on the side of the Himavat mountain.⁽⁹⁹⁾

When Rāma sets out from Ayodhyā at the start of his banishment, he first visits the Āśrama of Bharadvāja near the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā:

"gaṅgāyamunayoh samdhau prāpatur nilayam muneh ||

rāmas tv āśramam āsādyā trāsayan mrgapakṣinah |

gatvā mahūrtam adhvānam bharadvājam upāgamat" || (100)

From there he travels to the Citrakūṭa mountain - modern Citrakūt, a short distance to the west of Allahabad - and then arrives at the Āśrama of Atri; and there he is told of how in olden times Anasūyā the wife of Atri through her tapas caused the river Jāhnavī or Gaṅgā to flow in that place:

"yayā mūlaphale srṣṭe jāhnavī ca pravartitā |

agrena tapasā yuktā niyamaiś cāpy alankṛtā" || (101)

It may thus be observed that the Āśramas or dwelling-places of all of these Rsis - namely Vasistha, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Bharadvāja and Atri - are all considered in the Rāmāyana to be predominantly in a region within or closely adjacent to the Gaṅgā-Yamunā basin.

The consecration of Rāma and his installation as king of Ayodhyā is said to have been performed by the Rsis Vasistha, Kāśyapa and Gautama - together with other Rsis who are not included in either of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group;⁽¹⁰²⁾ while another Kāśyapa, namely Rṣyaśṛṅga, is said to have married the daughter of

(98) 1.47.11-32.

(101) 2.109.10.

(99) 7.55.4-21.

(102) 6.116.55.

(100) 2.48.8-9.

the king of Aṅga, and to have visited Daśaratha in Ayodhyā where he performed an Aśvamedha sacrifice with Vasistha.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Thus although the Rsi Kaśyapa is not explicitly involved in such accounts (but see Chapter 1 section 4, on Alternative Names), it is clear that certain of his descendants are again associated with the northern region of India. Noteworthy in the Rāmāyana is the paucity of individual references to Janadagni, who appears only once as the father of Paraśurama,⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ and once in a list of Rsis who come to visit Rama after he has regained his kingdom. In this latter list, it is related that those who came from the north were the Saptarsi Vasistha, Kaśyapa, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Janadagni, and Bharadvāja -- namely those of the first main list of the Saptarsi group:

"vasisthah kaśyapo 'thātrir viśvāmitrah sagautamah ||
 jamadagnir bharadvājas te 'pi saptarsayas tathā |
 udīcyān diśi saptate nityam eva nivāsinah" || (105)

Thus it may be said that the Rsi-members of this first main list of the Saptarsi group are reasonably consistently associated -- both individually and as a group -- within the Rāmāyana with the northern region of India.

The Rsi Agastya is frequently mentioned throughout the Rāmāyana as inhabiting the southern region. He is said to have his Āśrama at Pañcavatī, near the sources of the river Godāvarī, where Rama resided during his exile;⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ and he is similarly famed as residing to the south of the Vindhyas, having induced those mountains to bow before him as he travelled to the south.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ It is near his Āśrama in the south that he is said to have devoured the Demon Vātāpi, whose name would appear to have been adopted as that of the Calukya city Vātāpi or Bādāmi in the Western Deccan.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Further

(103) 1.8.1 - 1.12.20.

(104) 1.73.16ff.

(105) 7.1.5-6.

(106) 3.12.1ff : cf. 1.3.11.

(107) 3.10.81-92 : cf. 4.51.7.

(108) 3.10.53-64.

101.

passages also relate that Agastya dwells on the summit of Mount Malaya in the southernmost section of the Western Ghats, near the rivers Kāverī and Tāmraparnī and close to the city of the Pāṇdyas.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ It is furthermore related of the Rsis who came to pay homage to Rāma at his installation as king of Ayodhyā that among those who came from the southern region were Agastya and Atri - together with other Rsis who are not included in either of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group:

"agastyo 'triś ca bhagavān sumukho vimukhas tathā ||
 ājagmus te saḥāgastyā ye śritā dakṣiṇām diśam" | (110)

The "Atri" mentioned in this context is evidently intended to be distinguished from the "Atri" mentioned as a member of the (first main) Saptarsi group in the following verses of this passage. The reference is thus of particular interest, since it will be recalled that Atri appears in both of the main lists of the Saptarsi group, rather than in only one of these lists. The passage as a whole implies that one Atri came with the other Saptarsis from the northern region, while another Atri came with Agastya from the southern region: and by associating Atri with both the southern as well as the northern region, the passage suggests once again a point which has already been proposed in section 3(a) of this Chapter - namely that the Rsis of the second main list of the Saptarsi group, as also the second main group as a whole, are associated primarily with the southern region. This is unquestionably the case with the Rsi Agastya - who was seen in section 2 to be variously referred to as the father of the Rsis Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu, and also as the son of the Rsi Pulastya: and it will be noted that all three of these Rsis appear only in the second main list of the Saptarsi group. Within the Rāmāyana, the Yakṣas - sons of Pulastya - are said to dwell near the Āśrama of Agastya;⁽¹¹¹⁾ while Agastya is also said to have cursed

(109) 4.40.15--23.

(111) 3.10.81--92.

(110) 7.1.3-4.

the Yakṣa Mārīca -- son of Marīci -- to become a Rākṣasa:

"kasya cit tv atha kālasya yakṣī putram vyaajāyata |
mārīcam nāma durdharsam yah śapād rākṣaso 'bhavat ||
sunde tu vihate rāma agastyaṃ ṛṣisattamam |
tātakā saha putreṇa pradharsayitum icchati ||
rākṣasatvam bhajasveti mārīcam vyājahāra sah |
agastyaḥ paramakruddhas tātakam api śaptavaṇ" || (112)

This Mārīca or son of Marīci is the friend and ally of the Rākṣasa Rāvana, who together with other Rākṣasas is said to reside in Laṅkā in the south: and all of these Rākṣasas -- such as Kumbhakarna, Vibhīṣana and Indrajit -- are said to be sons or descendants of Pulastya.⁽¹¹³⁾ Apart from being the ancestor of all these Rākṣasas of the southern region, Pulastya is also said to have gone to Māhismatī on the river Narmadā -- the capital of Arjuna Kārttavīrya -- in order to persuade Arjuna to release Rāvana whom he had captured.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Thus Pulastya -- together with his descendants the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas -- is evidently associated very much with the southern region, to the south of the Vindhya and including Laṅkā. It is also related of Pulastya that he performed tanus on the slopes of Meru: and that through his curse was born Viśravas, who eventually gained as his wife the daughter of Bharadvāja from whom was born Vaiśravana or Kuvera. The latter is said to have dwelt originally in Laṅkā, but to have been expelled from there by his brother Rāvana: whereafter he went north to dwell on Mount Kailāsa in the Himālaya.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

It may be suggested at this point that a similar process is operating in some measure in these instances as has been seen to be operative within the regional association of the Saptaṛṣi group as a whole: namely that they are associated in the first instance with the southern region, and then subsequently with the northern region. The latter association might be said to be due in part to a desire to associate such Ṛṣis with that region -- particularly in the Himālaya

(112) 1.24.8-12.

(114) 7.32.1 - 7.33.23.

(113) 5.21.4-7: 6.49.9-23:
6.68.12: etc.

(115) 7.2.4 - 7.17.38, etc.

188.

around the sources of the Gaṅgā, and in the region of Kurukṣetra a short distance to the south - which was considered by the authors of the earlier texts to be in a sense the most sacred of regions - as well as being the region associated with the Ṛsis of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group, whose role and importance has been seen to be gradually undermined and taken over by the Ṛsis of the second main list. Thus by associating such Ṛsis as Agastya and Pulastya with the northern region, it may be seen that this tends to further their claims to at least equal status with the Ṛsis who are otherwise usually associated in the earlier texts with the northern region - namely the Ṛsis of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group; even though, in the cases of Agastya and Pulastya, their main association remains predominantly with the southern rather than the northern region.

Just as the Demon-figure Mārīca is said to dwell in Laṅkā with Rāvaṇa and the other Rākṣasas, so too the Mārīcas are also spoken of as being the friends and allies of the monkey Sugrīva, who go to the western region in search of Sītā: travelling by implication from a region to the south of the Vindhya as far as Avanti, Surāstra, and the borders of the ocean.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Since, as has already been seen above, Mārīca is referred to as being originally a Yakṣa before he was cursed by Agastya, therefore logically the Mārīcas as a whole might also be termed Yakṣas - and thus sons of Pulastya, who is the father of both Yakṣas and Rākṣasas. The association of the Mārīcas or descendants of Marīci with the southern region might therefore be seen as complementary to the association of Pulastya himself with the southern region. In a similar manner the various relationships said to exist between the Ṛsi Agastya on the one hand and the Ṛsis Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Marīci on the other hand would again tend to complement the association of all of these Ṛsis with the southern region, particularly in view of the

clear association of Agastya with that region. Since the latter four of these Rsis all appear within the second main list of the Saptarsi group - as does also the Rsi Atri, who is said in one passage noted above to accompany Agastya from the southern region in order to pay homage to Rāma - it may be deemed reasonable to suggest that the second main list of the Saptarsi group is in some way closely connected with the southern region - that is to say, with the region generally to the south of the Vindhyas. This conclusion may be seen to complement that reached earlier through a study of the regional references to the Saptarsi group as a whole: wherein a "new" group of Saptarsis, which is first referred to in the Rāmāyana, is said to have been created by Viśvāmitra in the southern region. The validity of this conclusion may be further examined and tested by referring to the regional associations of Rsis in the Mahābhārata and in the early Purānic texts.

(d) The Region of Rsis in the Mahābhārata and the Early Purānic Texts.

The pattern of regional association which has been observed in the Rāmāyana is very largely followed also in the Mahābhārata and in the early Purānic texts. The following examples may be cited to illustrate the cases of individual Rsis who appear in one or the other of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group.

i. Viśvāmitra.

Viśvāmitra is said to have his Āśrama by the river Kauśikī or Parā,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ to which he eventually retires after having first inherited the kingdom of Kānyakubja or Kanauj from his father Gādhi.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ He is said to have favoured the country of Magadha:⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and to have a sacred river near the Vaidurya mountain in the west,⁽¹²⁰⁾ as also another Āśrama on the west bank of the Sarasvatī.⁽¹²¹⁾ He is associated with the Aiksvāka king Triśaṅku of Ayodhya,⁽¹²²⁾ and with other Aiksvāka kings.⁽¹²³⁾ It is said that Kauśika Brahmins have dwelt near Dvārakā.⁽¹²⁴⁾

ii. Jamadagni.

Jamadagni is said to have performed sacrifices at Palāśaka near the Sarasvatī and Drsadvatī rivers:⁽¹²⁵⁾ he is also said to have a Tīrtha at the confluence of the Narmadā and the ocean.⁽¹²⁶⁾ He is said to have been killed by king Arjuna Kārttavīrya Haihaya, who had his capital at Mahiṣmatī on the river Narmadā:⁽¹²⁷⁾ while Arjuna was in turn killed - along with all the Kṣatriyas - by Jamadagni's son Rāma,

(117) Mahābhārata 1.65.20-42:
1.66.1-15: 3.82.113-114:
3.85.9-12: 3.109:18-20:
13.3.10.

(118) Mahābhārata 1.165.1-44.

(119) Mahābhārata 2.19.3-11.

(120) Mahābhārata 3.87.7-12.

(121) Mahābhārata 9.39.11ff.

(122) Mahābhārata 1.65.20-42:
Harivamśa 10.1-20:
Viṣṇu Purāna 4.3.1ff:

Vāyu Purāna 2.26.84ff :
Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.63.113ff.

(123) Mahābhārata 1.106.1-1.168.25:
13.3.6ff.

(124) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 6.24-25.

(125) Mahābhārata 3.88.13-16.

(126) Matsya Purāna 194.30-35.

(127) Mahābhārata 3.116.1-18: 12.49.39ff
Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.26-30.

who thereafter went to dwell on Mount Mahendra,⁽¹²⁸⁾ probably in the eastern region of modern Orissa, or at Sūrparaka by the shores of the southern ocean.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Jamadagni's wife Renukā is said to have desired king Citraratha, king of the Gandharvas.⁽¹³⁰⁾

iii. Bharadvāja.

Bharadvāja is said to dwell at the sources of the Gaṅgā.⁽¹³¹⁾ Similarly his son Yavakrīta is said to have been killed at the Āśrama of Raibhya near that of Bharadvāja, close to the Bhrgutuṅga in the Himālaya and to the rivers Tusnī and Gaṅgā.⁽¹³²⁾ Bharadvāja is said to go to the Gaṅgā for his ablutions - which gives occasion for his cursing of Viṣṇu.⁽¹³³⁾ He is also said to have been the Purohita of king Divodāsa of Kāśī:⁽¹³⁴⁾ to have been adopted by king Bharata:⁽¹³⁵⁾ and to be the father of Drona, warrior in the Bhārata war in Kuruksetra.⁽¹³⁶⁾ Bhāradvājas are said to be peoples of northern countries,⁽¹³⁷⁾ and to have dwelt near Dvārakā.⁽¹³⁸⁾

iv. Gautama.

Gautama is said to have cast his father Dīrghatamas onto the waters of the Gaṅgā, whence he travelled downstream to found the realms of Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Pundra and Suhma:⁽¹³⁹⁾ while Gautama is said also to have resided in Girivraja, the capital of Māgadha near Gāyā, where he begot Kaksīvat and other sons.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ (cf. Chapter 1 section 4 on alternative names). Gautama is said to have protected king

(128) Mahābhārata 1.121.12-18:
3.83.14-15: 3.85.14-17:
3.117.1-10.

(129) Mahābhārata 3.86.7-11:
3.83.39-40: 12.49.56ff.

(130) Mahābhārata 3.116.5-14.

(131) Mahābhārata 1.121.3-11.

(132) Mahābhārata 3.135.7-9.

(133) Mahābhārata 12.329.42.

(134) Mahābhārata 13.31.22ff.

(135) Mahābhārata 1.88.17-19.

(136) Mahābhārata 1.57.88-96:
1.121.3-9: etc.

(137) Mārkaṅdeya Purāna 57.39.

(138) Mārkaṅdeya Purāna 6.24-25.

(139) Mahābhārata 1.98.17-33.

(140) Mahābhārata 2.19.3-11:
cf. 3.82.88-93.

Brhadhratha on the banks of the Gaṅgā:⁽¹⁴¹⁾ and also to have performed tapas for 60,000 years in his Āśrama on the Pāriyātra or western Vindhya hills.⁽¹⁴²⁾ He is said to be father of Aśvatthāman and Kṛpa, warriors in the Bhārata war in Kuruksetra:⁽¹⁴³⁾ and Gautama Brahmins are said to have dwelt in Dvārakā.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

v. Atri.

Atri is said to have had his Āśrama among the snows by the source of the river Airāvati in the Himālaya.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ He is said to have gone to Vidha to give instructions in the performance of Śrāddha rites to king Nimi:⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ and Ātreyas are said to be peoples of northern countries.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

vi. Vasistha.

Vasistha is associated with the rivers Vipāśā and Śutudri,⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ as also with the Sarasvati and Sarayū.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ He is said to have made Kuruksetra sacred by performing tapas there.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ He is associated with Triśaṅku and with other Aiksvāku kings of Ayodhyā - a city which he is himself said to have protected.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ He is also said to have had an Āśrama on the slopes of Mount Meru,⁽¹⁵²⁾ and to have cast himself in grief from the summit of Meru:⁽¹⁵³⁾ while a mountain in the Himālayas is said to bear his name,⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ and he is variously associated in further contexts with the Himālaya.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Further

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| (141) Mahābhārata 12.49.56ff. | (150) Mahābhārata 1.89.31-42. |
| (142) Mahābhārata 12.127.3ff. | (151) Mahābhārata 1.168.15-25 :
Harivaṃśa 9.88-100: 10.1-20 :
Brahmaṅḍa Purāna 2.3.63.15-177:
Vāyu Purāna 2.26.14-176. |
| (143) Mahābhārata 1.57.88-90:
1.120.3-21. | |
| (144) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 6.24-25. | (152) Mahābhārata 1.93.6. |
| (145) Matsya Purāna 119.55ff. | (153) Mahābhārata 1.166.35-43. |
| (146) Mahābhārata 13.91.18ff. | (154) Mahābhārata 1.207.2ff. |
| (147) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 57.39. | (155) Mahābhārata 3.81.155-157:
3.82.43-44: 3.130.14-16. |
| (148) Mahābhārata 1.167.1-20:
3.130.8-9: 13.3.12-13. | |
| (149) Mahābhārata 9.39.11ff:
13.140.15ff. | |

passages speak of Vasistha as the Purohita of the Bharatas,⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ and of the Aiksvākus of Ayodhya.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ He is also said to have lived and died in the eastern quarter:⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ and to have persuaded Manu to give the city of Pratisthāna on the river Godāvarī to Sudyumna.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Vāsisthas are said to live close to Mount Mahendra.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

vii. Kaśyapa.

Kaśyapa is said to have installed Varuna as lord of waters in the western region, where he himself is said also to reside.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ His sons are said to have first multiplied in the eastern region:⁽¹⁶²⁾ and Kaśyapa is famed as having incarnated himself in Mathurā as Vasudeva, the father of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa-Visṇu.⁽¹⁶³⁾ Kāśyapas are said to dwell by Mount Mahendra:⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ and it was to Mount Mahendra that Kaśyapa banished Rāma.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Kāśyapa-Dvīpa is said to be one of the seven divisions of Jambudvīpa.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ - perhaps to be identified with Kashmir.

On the basis of these references to the regions occupied by the Rsis of the first main list of the Saptarsi group, it may be seen that these Rsis are generally thought of as residing in northern regions - as opposed most notably to residing in regions to the south of the Vindhyas. Two exceptions may be noted: namely in the cases of Vasistha - who is in one context associated with the city of Pratisthāna on the Godāvarī - and Jamadagni - whose Āśrama is said

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| (156) Mahābhārata 1.89.31-42. | (161) Mahābhārata 5.108.3-18. |
| (157) Mahābhārata 1.164.1-14:
1.166.1-1.168.25:
12.75.1ff: 13.77.1ff :
Brahmāṇḍa Purāna 2.3.48.29ff:
Viṣṇu Purāna 4.2.1ff. | (162) Mahābhārata 5.106.6.
(163) Harivamśa 45.20-45 :
Matsya Purāna 47.8-10.
(164) Mahābhārata 3.115.1ff. |
| (158) Mahābhārata 5.106.13. | (165) Mahābhārata 3.117.11ff:
12.49.56ff. |
| (159) Viṣṇu Purāna 4.1.1ff. | (166) Mahābhārata 6.6.57: cf.3.13010-11. |
| (160) Mahābhārata 3.115.1-4. | |

to be in the region of the Narmada. In the case of Vasistha, his association with a region to the south of the Vindhyas may be seen as being complementary to his inclusion in the second main list of the Saptarsi group - which, as has been suggested, is itself closely connected with the southern region. In the case of Jamadagni, it may be suggested that the Jāmadagnyas tended to settle in this region of India which was, by and large, beyond the known limits of Āryan culture in the period of the earlier literature - which would in turn help to explain the relative paucity of references to the region of this Rsi in the earlier literature. It may also be noted that, within the Gotra organisation, the Jāmadagnyas became assimilated within the Bhārgava Gotra: and while Bhṛgu is closely associated with the second main list of the Saptarsi group, so too the region with which both Bhṛgu and the Bhārgavas are most closely associated included the area around Bhṛgukaccha or Broach on the river Narmadā (see below). This may in turn help to explain why Jamadagni, although associated with a region to the south of the Vindhyas in addition to a region to the north of the Vindhyas, was nonetheless excluded from the second main list of the Saptarsi group: namely because his status had been somewhat undermined by the Rsi Bhṛgu - or conversely, because the Bhārgava Gotra had expanded largely at the expense of the Jāmadagnya Gotra - so that it was the Rsi Bhṛgu, rather than Jamadagni, who became assimilated and partly included within the second main list of the Saptarsi group.

References to the regions occupied by the individual Rsi-members of the second main list may now be examined: and it may first of all be noted that such references are not to be found for the Rsis Marīci, Pulaha and Kratu within these texts. This may be largely connected with the fact that few individual myths or traditions of these Rsis are to be found within these texts, whereby they might be said to be associated with a particular region. In

the second place, as has been previously pointed out, Vasistha and Atri are the only two Rsis who appear in both of the main lists of the Saptarsi group: and since the regional references associated with these Rsis have already been summarised, the following account will accordingly deal with the remaining two members of the second main group - namely Angiras and Pulastya -- together with the Rsis Agastya and Bhrgu, both of whom have been seen to be closely associated with this second main group.

viii. Angiras.

Angiras is said to have been born at the Tirtha of Dadhici on the banks of the Sarasvati.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ He is said to dwell at Prayaga.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ and Angirases are said to dwell by Mount Mahendra.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

ix. Pulastya.

Pulastya is said to have his Āsrama at Viranagara on the banks of the river Devika.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ He is said to have visited Arjuna Haihaya in Mahismati on the river Godavari in order to secure the release of Ravana.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ and he is said to have given Kuvera lordship over Lanka, which was subsequently seized by Ravana.⁽¹⁷²⁾ Bhishma is also said to have seen him at the sources of the Gaṅga.⁽¹⁷³⁾

x. Agastya.

Agastya is said to have both an Āsrama and a mountain near Prayaga in the eastern region:⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ and to have travelled to Gayaśiras near Gaya in order to visit Dharma.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ He is said to have cursed Kuvera on the banks of the Yamuna,⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ and to have a Tirtha in the Himalaya

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| (167) Mahābhārata 3.81.163-164:
3.98.12. | (172) Mahābhārata 3.258.11-16. |
| (168) Mahābhārata 3.83.65-67. | (173) Mahābhārata 3.80.11-21. |
| (169) Mahābhārata 3.115.1-4. | (174) Mahābhārata 3.85.14-17. |
| (170) Visnu Purāna 2.15.1ff. | (175) Mahābhārata 3.93.9-12. |
| (171) Matsya Purāna 43.37-39. | (176) Mahābhārata 3.158.51-59. |

named after him.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ He is also said to have gained Lopāmudrā at the Sindhu Tīrtha on the river Sarasvatī,⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ and to have practised tapas with her at Gaṅgādvāra or Hardwar⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ where the Bhāgirathī flows past his Āśrama.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ In addition to such northern localities, the myth of the subduing of the Vindhyas is again related:⁽¹⁸¹⁾ as is also that of his devouring the demon Vātāpi, who may be connected with the Deccan city of Vātāpi or Bādāmi.⁽¹⁸²⁾ Agastya is said to have gained Lopāmudrā from the king of the Vidarbhas in the western Vindhyas:⁽¹⁸³⁾ and he is additionally said to have an Āśrama on the Vaidūrya mountain,⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ a Tīrtha in the Dravida land across the Godāvarī river,⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ and another Tīrtha in the country of the Pāṇdyas to the south.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾

xi. Bhṛgu.

Bhṛgu is said to have practised tapas on Mount Puru near Gaṅgādvāra or Hardwar, whence his Āśrama in that region came to be known as Bhṛgutūṅga.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ He is said to have a Tīrtha by the Bhāgirathī,⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ and Bhārgavas are variously said to reside in the Himavat mountains,⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ in the eastern region,⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ by Mount Mahendra,⁽¹⁹¹⁾ near Dvārakā,⁽¹⁹²⁾ by the Narmadā river,⁽¹⁹³⁾ and at Govardhana near Nasik and the sources of the river Godāvarī.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Bhṛgu is also said to have a Tīrtha at the Daśāśvamedha:⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ and Bhṛgukaccha or Broach on the north bank of the Narmadā is reputedly named after him.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

(177) Mahābhārata 1.207.2ff.

(188) Mahābhārata 3.97.35-37.

(178) Mahābhārata 3.130.5-6.

(189) Mahābhārata 1.169.11-25.

(179) Mahābhārata 3.95.11.

(190) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 57.44.

(180) Mahābhārata 3.97.32.

(191) Mahābhārata 3.115.1-4.

(181) Mahābhārata 3.102.2-15.

(192) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 6.24-25.

(182) Mahābhārata 3.94.4-3.97.15.

(193) Mahābhārata 3.121.19-21.

(183) Mahābhārata 3.94.11-27.

(194) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 57.35.

(184) Mahābhārata 3.86.12-16.

(195) Matsya Purāna 193.23-53.

(185) Mahābhārata 3.118.4.

(196) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 57.52: 58.22:
Matsya Purāna 113.50: etc.

(186) Mahābhārata 3.86.7-11.

(187) Mahābhārata 3.88.18-20:
cf. 1.207.2ff.

It may be observed that, with one or two notable exceptions, the regional pattern which was suggested to be operative in this material on the basis of references in the Rāmāyana is in general terms followed by the Mahābhārata and the early Purānic texts: whereby the Ṛsis who appear in the first main list of the Saptarṣi group are associated predominantly with a region or regions to the north of the Vindhyas, while the Ṛsis who appear in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group are associated predominantly with a region or regions to the south of the Vindhyas. One exception has already been noted and discussed in the case of Jamadagni, who although appearing in the first main list is associated especially with the Narmadā to the south of the Vindhyas: and other qualifications must be made in the cases of Atri, Vasistha and Angiras - whose inclusion within the second main list may be suggested to arise from reasons of Gotra rather than regional significance. It may nevertheless be seen that these texts tend to demonstrate certain distinct regional patterns, insofar as the different regions associated with individual Ṛsis are concerned and taking into account the necessary qualifications just mentioned: and it is therefore possible to draw certain conclusions from the material which has been surveyed in this section.

(e) Conclusion.

Taking these references as a whole, it will be observed that a definite pattern would appear to emerge overall: whereby the Rsis who appear in the first main list of the Saptarsi group are associated primarily with the northern region of India - especially with the region to the north of the Vindhyas - while the Rsis who appear in the second main list of the Saptarsi group are associated primarily with the southern region of India - or in general terms with the region to the south of the Vindhyas. This pattern may accordingly be said to conform with that previously suggested on the basis of references to the region associated with the Saptarsis as a group, in addition to that associated with each of the individual members of the group. This pattern is not exclusive: thus for example Viśvāmitra, who appears only in the first main list, is said in one passage to have performed tapas in the southern region where he also created the "new" group of Saptarsis: while Agastya and Pulastya, the latter of whom appears only in the second main list, are both said to have performed tapas in the northern region. Such references may, however, be said to form the minority of references to the region associated with such Rsis and the overall pattern would appear to suggest such a regional association of the one group with the northern region and of the other group with the southern region of India. In this connection there may again be noted a passage in the Uttara Kānda of the Rāmāyana⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ which lists Atri as a Rsi of both the northern and southern regions - or which conversely lists two Atris, one coming from the north and the other coming from the south in order to pay homage to Rāma: and it may be observed that, just as Atri is here associated with both regions, so too he is included in both main lists of the Saptarsi group - one of which, as has been suggested, is associated predominantly with the northern region, and the other with the southern region.

(197) Rāmāyana 7.1.1-6.

This passage thus again tends to suggest the recognition - on the part of the authors of this text - of two different groups of Saptar̥ṣi: a recognition which is implied also in the further passages which relate, for example, the creation by Viśvāmitra of a "new" or second Saptar̥ṣi group in the southern region.

It may be noted that, while the R̥ṣi of the first main Saptar̥ṣi group are generally referred to individually in these texts as residing in the northern region, such does not tend to be the case to such an exclusive extent with the R̥ṣi of the second main Saptar̥ṣi group. It is certainly the case with the R̥ṣi Marīci, Atri and Pulastya: yet it is not so much the case with the other members of this group, insofar as references to individual R̥ṣi are concerned. Pulaha and Kratu are rarely referred to in these texts on an individual basis: yet it may be observed that they are nonetheless said in certain contexts to be sons of Agastya - and thus it may be inferred that they are in some way similarly associated with the southern rather than the northern region. On the other hand, however, Aṅgiras and Vasistha are more generally associated - as in the earlier texts - with the northern rather than the southern region: and it may be noted also that Bhṛgu, who is closely associated with the second main list of the Saptar̥ṣi group, is also frequently associated with the northern rather than the southern region. Taking this fact into account, it may be suggested that certain members of this second main group - as indeed the group as a whole - are closely connected with the southern region: while other members of this group - notably Vasistha and Aṅgiras, as also in part Bhṛgu - most probably owe their inclusion within this group to factors other than those of geographical or regional import. It may further be suggested that such factors arise from Gotra rather than regional considerations: and this point will be further pursued in the general conclusion to this Chapter.

It is of relevance to note that the two R̥sis Vasistha and Angiras - in distinction to any other R̥sis - share certain myth-types with the R̥si Agastya, who has been seen to be very much the R̥si of the south. Thus for example both Agastya and Angiras - and no other R̥sis - are said to have drunk the ocean through the powers of their tapas: (198) while both Agastya and Vasistha - and no other R̥sis - are said to have been born when the seed of Mitra-Varuna fell into a pot. (199) The fact that such myths are related connecting Angiras and Vasistha with Agastya suggests a certain community of tradition shared by these R̥sis: as has also been suggested to be the case with the association of the R̥sis of the second main list of the Saptarsi group with the southern region. Thus while Agastya has been seen to be closely connected with several of the R̥sis of that list - such as Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu - so too his connection through myth with Vasistha and Angiras may be interpreted as a further factor connecting the different R̥sis of that list. In a similar manner one passage in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that when Parāśara sought to destroy the Rākṣasas, the R̥sis Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Atri and Vasistha persuaded him against doing so. (200) In this passage, the fact that both Atri and Vasistha are associated with the R̥sis Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu as in a sense the saviours of the Rākṣasas would again tend to indicate a certain community of tradition shared by these R̥sis.

Thus it may here be concluded that certain factors of regional significance have been operative in the formulation of the second main list of the Saptarsi group. In this respect the nature of the conclusion which may be drawn is a general one, relating to the

(198) e.g. Mahābhārata 3.101.1 - 3.103.19 : 13.138.3.

(199) e.g. R̥gveda 7.33.10-13 : Nirukta 5.13-14 : Brhaddevatā 5.143-160 : Mahābhārata 12.291.7ff : 13.143.18 : 13.102.1ff : 3.101.14 : Ramayana 7.55.19 - 7.57.21 : Matsya Purāna 61.18-53 : 201.1-39 : Viṣṇu Purāna 4.5.1ff etc.

(200) Mahābhārata 1.172.1-17.

overall pattern which emerges from the references when taken as a whole and as concerning the two main groups as a whole: and the conclusion itself is that, while the Rsis of the first main Saptarsi group are associated primarily with a region to the north of the Vindhya, the Rsis of the second main Saptarsi group are on the other hand associated primarily with a region to the south of the Vindhya.

Section 4 : Conclusion.

It remains now merely to summarise the main conclusions which have been reached during the course of this Chapter, and to draw certain further conclusions as to the nature and degree of influence of both Gotra and regional factors which have been operative in the formulation of the second main list of the Saptarsi group, relating these also to the period of the texts in question within which these two main lists were formulated.

As was stated at the start of this Chapter, one of the main aims has been to attempt to discern some of the major factors which may have had a bearing upon the change in identities of the Rsis included in the Saptarsi group. It was seen in section 2 that such changes as occur may be related in some measure to the influence of factors arising from the role of the Rsis as the ancestors or founders of the seven main Gotras: wherein the exclusion of one Rsi from one of the main lists of the Saptarsi group may be said to be directly related to the inclusion of another Rsi in that list. Thus for example the exclusion of the Rsis Jamadagni, Bharadvāja and Gautama from the second main list may be directly related to the inclusion of the Rsi Angiras - and in part also of Bhrgu - in that list: a relatedness which is reflected especially in the family relationships which are said to exist between each of these Rsis. Similarly the inclusion of the Rsis Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu in the second main list of the Saptarsi group may be related to the changing status of Agastya and the Āgastyas, in relation firstly to the earlier main list of the group and secondly to the lists of the seven main Gotras - wherein Agastya and the Āgastyas come to play an increasingly important role. In this latter case it may be seen that the inclusion of the Rsis Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu - who are in places referred to as being Āgastyas - reflects a distinct importance being ascribed to the Āgastyas: while this may in turn be linked with

the conclusions reached in section 3 of this Chapter, wherein both Agastya and these three Rsis were seen to be associated primarily with the southern region of India. Placing the conclusions of both of these sections side by side, it may therefore be concluded here that one of the main factors operative in bringing about the change in identities between the Rsis of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group arises from the influence of the members of particular Brahmin Gotras associated especially with the southern region of India - that is to say, with a region lying predominantly to the south of the Vindhyas. This conclusion may be reached through consideration of references both to the Saptarsi group as a whole - wherein a "new" Saptarsi group is said to have been created in the southern region, and gradually comes to usurp the role of the earlier group in the northern region - and also to the individual Rsi-members of that group - who in the case of the second main list have been seen to be associated predominantly with the southern region of India. In this respect it may be said that the second main list of the Saptarsi group has been formulated through both types of factors - regional and Gotra - operating side by side: regional considerations predominating in the cases of the Rsis Marīci, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu, and Gotra considerations predominating in the cases of the Rsis Angiras, Atri and Vasistha - as also in the case of Bhrgu, insofar as this Rsi is closely associated with and even assimilated into the second main list of the Saptarsi group.

The overall conclusion which thus emerges from this study - namely that the change between the two main lists has been brought about largely due to the influence of the members of particular Brahmin Gotras associated especially with the southern region of India - is one which may be related to the particular period during which the texts which have been considered in this study are generally held to have been composed. This period may - as indicated in the

Introduction - be said to extend from approximately 300 B.C. to approximately A.D. 550: and it is well-established that, during this period, fundamental changes were occurring in the social and political climate of India. During the Maurya period (c.315-175 B.C.), for example, the Mauryan empire extended its sway well to the south of the Vindhya - as is indicated most notably by the many rock-edicts of Aśoka which are to be found as far south as present Karnatak. it is only to be expected that social and cultural influences extended not only from north to south, but also flowed in the opposite direction from south to north. During the subsequent period from the end of the Maurya dynasty to the start of the Gupta dynasty (c.175 B.C. - A.D. 320), changes occurred not only in respect of the advent of foreign invaders from the north and west - notably Greeks, Pahlavas, Śakas and Kusānas - but also in respect of the rise of dynasties in the region to the south of the Vindhya. In the extreme south of India, this period is generally held to have witnessed the composition of the Tamil Śāngam literature, as also extensive trading relations with the Roman Empire - both of which may be said to indicate a high degree of cultural dynamism. It is particularly noteworthy in this connection that the Rsi Agastya is regarded in the south of India as being the father of Tamil grammar and the author of the work Agattiyam - which is said to have been the grammar for the first Śāngam and the inspiration for the Tolkāppiyam of the second Śāngam written by his pupil Tolkāppiyān. (201)

Between the Vindhya and the extreme south, there arose during this period the dynasty of the Śātavāhanas (c.50 B.C. - A.D. 240), with its capital at Pratiṣṭhāna on the river Godāvarī: which was succeeded by the dynasty of the Vākātakas (c.A.D. 250-540). It may therefore be suggested that the second main list of the Saptarṣi group owes its origin in some measure to Brahmin influences associated with some such cultural milieu as those associated with the Śātavāhana

(201) cf. e.g. K.A.N. Sastri - History of South India, pp.76ff.

and Vākātaka dynasties: and with a milieu associated perhaps not so much with a particular dynasty as such, but more especially with the various social or Brahmin groups who were gradually gaining ascendancy -- and gaining an improvement in their social status -- during the period of Śātavāhana and Vākātaka ascendancy. As is known from inscriptional and other data, both the Śātavāhanas and the Vākātakas were noteworthy for seeking a revival of Brahmin customs -- as for example in the case of the performance of Vedic sacrifices, such as the Aśvamedha and Rājasūya:⁽²⁰²⁾ and it might therefore well be expected that it should be within some such cultural context that one should seek those Brahmin groups who had an influence over the formulation and development of the second main list of the Saptarsi group -- as indeed also over the further traditions associated with the individual Rsi-members of that group.

The origins and development of the second main list may thus be said to be linked in some measure with the corresponding social and cultural changes which were occurring at the time in question in a region generally to the south of the Vindhya^(202a). It may further be suggested that this observation in itself helps to throw some light upon such social and cultural changes: indicating the main region in which such changes were occurring, and indicating also the main Brahmin groups who were instrumental in bringing about such changes -- as also demonstrating a degree of influence within the literary texts parallel to the influence which was being exerted in political and social terms by such trans-Vindhyan dynasties as those of the Śātavāhanas and Vākātakas. Thus it may be concluded overall that the change which occurs between the two main lists of the

(202) Both sacrifices with others in e.g. line 11 of the Nanāghat inscription of Nāgamnikā: cf. Sircar -- Select Ins. no.82.

(202a) For further details and more general discussion of social, political and cultural changes under the Śātavāhana and Vākātaka dynasties, see e.g. K.A.N. Sastri -- A History of South India, Ch.6 pp.92-114 + refs.; D.C. Sircar, in Majumdar & Pusalker (ed.) -- The Age of Imperial Unity Chs.13-14 pp.191-227 (History & Culture of the Indian People vol.2); R.C. Majumdar & A.S. Altekar -- The Vākātaka-Gupta Age, esp. Chs.5 & 14-22; etc.

Saptarsi group within the literary texts may be said to highlight and to illustrate the increasingly important and influential role which was coming to be occupied during the period in question by cultural influences originating in a region to the south of the Vindhyas. This conclusion is one to which further reference will be made at the end of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4 : The Manvantara Traditions of the Saptarsis.

Section 1 : Introduction.

The Manvantara, in Hindu Cosmogony, is that period of time which is presided over by one Manu and his sons, one Indra, one group of Gods, and one group of Saptarsis. The Manvantara theory itself is of relatively late appearance in the literary sources: it is scarcely dealt with in any detail in the Epic texts, and is more fully elaborated only in the Harivamśa and in the early Purānic texts. It is furthermore only in these latter post-Epic texts that lists of the Saptarsi groups in each of the different Manvantaras are to be found. A brief outline of the underlying Purānic theory of Manvantaras may first be given, before examining in detail the lists and traditions of these Saptarsi groups.

One of the main components of quasi-chronological computation in both the Epic and the early Purānic texts is the succession of the four Yugas - namely Krta or Satys, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali. Explicit in the early Purānic texts is the cyclical nature of the succession of Yugas: thus the end of each Kali Yuga is in turn followed by the commencement of a new Krta Yuga, thereby giving a continual succession of the four Yugas. One complete succession of the four Yugas is termed a Mahāyuga: and in each new Mahāyuga it is the task of Manu and the Saptarsis to give instructions to the people in the Vedas, in Śruti and Smṛti, in Dharma. Each Mahāyuga lasts for a total of 1200 Divine Years, or 4,320,000 years of men. The Manvantara is considered to consist of a total of just over 71 Mahāyugas (slightly different totals being given in different texts): and each Manvantara is presided over by one Manu and his sons, one Indra, one group of Devas, and one group of Saptarsis. Thus one group of Saptarsis reappears on the earth in order to instruct men in Dharma during 71 consecutive series of the four

Yugas, or during 71 Mahāyugas. There is a total of 14 Manvantaras, and thus a total of 14 different Saptarṣi groups: and the total of 14 Manvantaras is equal to a total of 1,000 Mahāyugas, or 4,320,000,000 years of men - which is the measure of a Kalpa or Day of Brahmā. At the end of this day of Brahmā there occurs the great dissolution of the worlds (naimittika pralaya): the worlds are burnt to ashes by the seven suns, then flooded until they become but a single ocean. Thereafter ensues the night of Brahmā - of equal duration to one day of Brahmā - which is in turn followed by a further day of Brahmā, consisting once again of 14 Manvantaras, having 14 different Saptarṣi groups, a further 1,000 Mahāyugas, and so forth. As elaborated especially in later Purānic texts, this cosmogonic scheme continues virtually without end. The life of a Brahmā extends over a period of 100 such years whereof the measure of a single day is equal to the period of 14 Manvantaras: and at the end of the life of a Brahmā, there arises a further Brahmā to take his place. Yet even this length of time is considered miniscular within the compass of Divine Time: for each passing of a Brahmā occupies a time which is but a flicker of the eyelids of Viṣṇu. And so continues the cosmogony of the endless cycle of existence.⁽¹⁾

Within this cosmogonic scheme, lists of each of the Saptarṣi groups in each Manvantara are given for the 14 Manvantaras which together compose the present Kalpa or day of Brahmā. One of the most notable features of this system in the present context - whose significance will be discussed below - is that the Saptarṣis of the first or Svāyambhuva Manvantara are considered to be the Rṣis of the second main list commencing with Marīci: while the Saptarṣis of the "present" seventh or Vaivasvata Manvantara are considered to be the Rṣis of the first main list commencing with

(1) cf. Matsya Purāna 142.1ff : Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 46.1ff : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.3.1ff : Vāyu Purāna 2.38.1ff : Brāhmānda Purāna 3.4.1.1ff.

Viśvāmitra. As has been mentioned, lists of the Saptarṣi groups within the Manvantaras are not to be found in the Epic texts; and both the Harivaṁśa and the Matsya Purāna enumerate the Saptarṣi groups for only the first eight of the fourteen Manvantaras. Complete lists for all of the 14 Manvantaras are thus given only in the Mārkaṇḍeya, Viṣṇu, Vāyu, and Brahmāṇḍa Purānas among the texts being considered in the present study; and this would of itself tend to imply that the full details of the Manvantara lists of the Saptarṣis were formulated only at a relatively late stage in the development of the Epic and Purānic literature, and in the development of the Saptarṣi traditions. Further such indications will be noted during the course of the Chapter.

Section 2 : The Identity of the Saptarsis in the 14 Manvantaras.

(a) The Lists of the Saptarsis.

In the following pages the lists of the Saptarsis in the Manvantaras are set out in tabulated form: and a few preface remarks may be made concerning these lists. It is especially noteworthy that the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna list the Saptarsi groups for only the first eight of the fourteen Manvantaras. Several manuscripts and editions of the Harivamśa contain lists for all 14 of the Manvantaras; and as collated in the BORI Critical Edition, these are as follows:

1 Śāradā : 2 (of 4) Devanāgarī versions allied to the Śāradā :
Devanāgarī versions of Nilakantha and Śivadāsa : 2 (of 6) further
Devanāgarī versions.

TOTAL 7 MSS.

On the other hand, those which contain lists for only the first eight of the fourteen Manvantaras are as follows:

3 Newārī : 3 Maithilī : 3 Bengali : 4 Telugu : 4 Malayālam :
5 Grantha : 2 (of 4) Devanāgarī versions allied to Śāradā :
4 (of 6) further Devanāgarī versions.

TOTAL 28 MSS.

This would clearly suggest that the latter part of the lists has been added subsequent to the main composition of the work: and it may further be noted that the Rsis listed for Manvantaras 9-14 are enumerated with family or Gotra names (Āṅgīrasa, Bhārgava etc.) - a phenomenon which does not occur with the Rsis listed for Manvantaras 1-8 in this text. The addition of Gotra names occurs only in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, among the texts being considered in the present study: and it would seem logical to conclude that such an occurrence is likely to denote a subsequent development from the

mere listing of personal names - as occurs in the Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purāṇas, and also in the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāṇa. Further details of similarity and difference in the individual names of Ṛsis will be discussed in the following sub-section.

It may also be noted that several of these texts - particularly the Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purāṇas - do not state explicitly the identities of the Ṛsis in the Svāyambhuva Manvantara: their identities are in such contexts virtually taken for granted, since such Ṛsis - namely those of the group commencing with Marīci - have previously been discussed in some detail in these texts in the context of their being the sons of Svayambhu or Brahmā. Similarly the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas speak of this group - commencing with Marīci - as the Saptarṣis of the Svāyambhuva Manvantara not together with the other Manvantara groups, but rather in a considerably earlier context: and in all of these texts, this group of Saptarṣis is invariably given precedence and enhanced importance in comparison with all the other groups of Saptarṣis - including that of the seventh or Vaivasvata Manvantara, which consists of the Ṛsis commencing with Viśvāmitra who appear primarily in the earlier texts (see Chapter 1), and who in the Purāṇic texts are of secondary importance to the group commencing with Marīci.

Table 1 : The Manvantara Lists of the Santarṣi Group - Harivaṃśa.

<u>Manvantara</u>	<u>Santarṣis</u>
Svāyambhuva	Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasistha.
Svārocisa	Aurva son of Vasistha, Stamba Kāśyapa, Prāna, Brhaspati, Datta, Atri (or Datto'tri), Cyavana.
Autami	7 sons of Vasistha called Vāsisthas: sons of Hiranyagarbha, born ūrjāh/strong.
Tāmasa	Kāvya, Prthu, Agni, Jahnū, Dhātr, Kapivān, Akapivān,
Raivata	Vedabāhu, Yadudhra, muni Vedaśiras, Hiranyaloma, Parjanya, Urdhvabāhu somaja, Satyanetra Ātreya.
Cākṣusa	Bhṛgu, Nabha, Vivasvat, Sudhāman, Virajas, Atināman, Sahisnu.
Vaivasvata	Atri, Vasistha, Kāśyapa, Gautama, Dharadvāja, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni son of Rcika.
Sāvarni	Rāma, Vyāsa Dīptimat Ātreya, Drauniraśvatthāman Bhāradvāja, Śaradvat Gautama son of Gotama, Gālava Kauśika, Ruru Kāśyapa.
	Rsis for remaining 6 Manvantaras added by later hand: listed in Appendix 1.1 of Critical Edition.

Table 2 : The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarsi Group - Matsya Purāna.

<u>Manvantara</u>	<u>Saptarsis</u>
Svāyambhuva	Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya, Vasistha.
Svārocisa	Datta, Niścaya, Vanastamba, Prāna, Kaśyapa, Aurva, Brhaspati.
Auttamī	the ūrjāh: Kaukurandi, Dālbhya, Śaṅga, Pravahana, Śiva, Sita, Sasmita.
Tāmasa	Kavi, Prthu, Agni, Akapi, Kapi, Jalpa, Dhīman.
Raivata	Devabāhu, Subāhu, Parjanya, Somapa, Muni, Hiraṅyaroṃa, Saptāśva.
Cākusa	Bhrgu, Sudhāman, Virajas, Sahisnu, Nāda, Vivasvat, Atināman.
Vaivasvata	Atri, Vasistha, Kaśyapa, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni.
Sāvarni	Aśvatthāman, Śaradvat, Kauśika, Gālava, Śātānanda, Kāśyapa, Rāma.
	"There will be another 6 Manus after Sāvarni: Raucya, Bhautya, Merusāvarni, Rta, Rtadhāman, Viśvaksena". (Rsis not listed).

Table 3 : The Manvantara Lists of the Santarasi Group - Markandeya Purāna

<u>Manvantara</u>	<u>Santarasis</u>
Svāyambhuva	Marīci, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Palaha, Kratu, Vasīṣṭha.
Svarocisa	Ūrja, Stamba, Prāna, Dattoli, R̥sabha, Niścara, Arvavirat.
Auttamī	7 sons of that Manu.
Tāmasa	Jyotirdhāman, Pr̥thu, Kāvya, Caitra, Agni, Valeka, Pīvara.
Raivata	Hiranyaloman, Vedaśrī, Ūrdhvabāhu, Vedabāhu, Sudhāman, Parjanya mahāmuni, Vaśīṣṭha.
Caksusa	Sumedhas, Virajas, Haviṣmat, Unnata, Madhu, Atināman, Sahisnu.
Vaivasvata	Atri, Vasīṣṭha, Kāśyapa, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Viśvāmītra, Kauśika, Jamadagni son of R̥ika.
Sāvarnī	Rama, Vyāsa, Gālava, Dīptimat, Kṛpa, R̥śyaśṛṅga, Droni.
Dakṣa-sāvarnī	Medhātithi, Vasu, Satya, Jyotiṣmat, Dyutimat, Sabala, Haryavāhana.
Brahmā-sāvarnī	Āpomūrtti, Haviṣmat, Sukṛtī, Satya, Nābhāga, Apratima, Vaśīṣṭha.
Dharma-sāvarnī	Haviṣmat, Varīṣṭha, Aruni, Niścara, Anagha, Viṣṭi, Agnideva (R̥sti).
Raudra-sāvarnī	Dyuti, Tapasvin, Sutapas, Tapomūrtti, Taponidhi, Taporati, Tapodhṛti.
Raucya	Dhṛtimat, Avyaya, Tattvadarśin, Nirutsuka, Nirnoha, Sutapas, Nisprakampa.
Bhautya	Agnīdhra, Agnibāhu, Śuci, Mukta, Mādhava, Śukra, Ajita.

Table 4 : The Manvantara Lists of the Santarsi Group -- Visnu Purana.

<u>Manvantara</u>	<u>Santarsis</u>
Svāyambhuve	Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasistha.
Svārocisa	Ūrja, Stamba, Prāna, Dattoli, Rsabha, Niścara, Urvarivat.
Auttamī	7 sons of Vasistha.
Tāmasa	Jyotirdhāman, Prthu, Kāvya, Caitra, Agni, Vanaka, Pivara.
Raivata	Hiranyaroma, Vedaśrī, Ūrdhvabāhu, Vedabāhu, Sudhāman, Parjanya, Mahāmuni.
Caksusa	Sumedhas, Virajas, Havismat, Uttama, Madhu, Atināman, Sahisnu.
Vaivasvata	Vasistha, Kaśyapa, Atri, Jamadagni, Gautama, Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja.
Sāvarnī	Diptimat, Galava, Rāma, Krpa, Drauni, Vyāse, Ryaśrīga.
Dakṣa-sāvarnī	Śabala, Dyutimat, Bhavya, Vasu, Medhādhṛti, Jyotismat, Satya.
Brahmā-sāvarnī	Hevismat, Sukṛti, Satya, Apomūrti, Nābhāga, Apratimaujas, Satyaketu.
Dharma-sāvarnī	Niścara, Agnitejas, Vapusmat, Viṣṇu, Āzuni, Hevismat, Anagha.
Rudra-sāvarnī	Tapasvin, Sutapas, Tapomūrti, Taporati, Tapodhṛti, Dyuti, Tspodhana.
Raucya	Nirmoha, Tattvadarśin, Niṣprakampa, Nirutsuka, Dhṛtimat, Avyaya, Sutapas.
Bhautya	Agnibāhu, Śuci, Śukra, Māgadha, Agnidhra, Yukta, Ajita.

Table 5 : The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarsi Group - Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.

<u>Manvantara</u>	<u>Saptarsis</u>
Svāyambhuva	(Bhrgv) Aṅgiras, Marīci, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Atri, Vasistha.
Svārocisa	Ūrja Vāsistha, Stamba Kāśyapa, Prāna Bhārgava, Ṛṣabha Aṅgirasa, Dattotri Paulastya, Niścāla Ātreya, Arvarivat Paulaha.
Auttami	7 sons of Vasistha called 7 Vāsisthas.
Tāmasa	Kāvya Aṅgirasa, Prthu Kāśyapa, Agni Ātreya, Jyotirdhāman Bhārgava, Caraka Paulaha, Pīvara Vāsistha, Caitra Paulastya.
Raivata	Devabāhu Paulastya, Sudhāman Kāśyapa, Hiranyaroma Aṅgirasa, Vedaśrī Bhārgava, Ūrdhvabāhu Vāsistha, Parjanya Paulaha, Satyanetra Ātreya.
Cāksusa	Uttama Bhārgava, Haviṣmat Aṅgirasa, Sudhāman Kāśyapa, Virajas Vāsistha, Atināman Paulastya, Sahiṣṇu Paulaha, Madhu Ātreya.
Vaivasvata	Viśvāmitra son of Gādhā Kauśika, Jamadagni Bhārgava s/o Aurva, Bharadvāja s/o Bṛhaspati, Gautama Saradvat Autathya, Atri s/o Svayambhu, Vāsistha Vasumat, Vatsara Kāśyapa.
Sāvarni	Gālava Kauśika, Jamadagnya Bhārgava, Dvaipāyana Vāsistha, Kṛpa Sāradvat, Dīptimat Ātreya, Ṛṣyaśrāga Kāśyapa, Drauniraśvatthāman Bhāradvāja.
Meru-sāvarni (or Rohita-s, s/o Daksa)	Medhātithi Paulastya, Vasu Kāśyapa, Jyotismat Bhārgava, Dyutimat Aṅgirasa, Vasinas Vāsistha, Havyāvāhana Ātreya, Sutapas Paulaha.
Dharma-sāvarni	Haviṣmat Paulaha, Sukīrti Bhārgava, Apomūrti Ātrya, Āpava Vāsistha, Apratima Paulastya, Nābhāga Kāśyapa, Abhimanyu Aṅgirasa.
Brahma-sāvarni	Haviṣmat Kāśyapa, Vapusmat Bhārgava, Āruṇi Ātreya, Naga Vāsistha, Puṣṭi Aṅgirasa, Niścara Paulastya, Atitejas Paulaha.
Rudra-sāvarni	Dyuti Vāsistha, Sutapas Ātreya, Tapomūrti Aṅgirasa, Tapasvin Kāśyapa, Tapodhana Paulastya, Taporati Paulaha, Tapodhrti Bhārgava.
Raucya	Dhrtimat Aṅgirasa, Avyaya Paulastya, Tattvaderśin Paulaha, Nirutsuka Bhārgava, Niṣprakampya Ātreya, Nirmoha Kāśyapa, Sutapas Vāsistha.
Bhautya	Agnidhra Kāśyapa, Māgadha Paulastya, Agnibāhu Bhārgava, Śuci Aṅgirasa, Sukra Vāsistha, Mukta Paulaha, Svājita Ātreya.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 1.2.13.103: 1.2.36.17-18, .38, .47-48, .61-63, .77-78:
1.2.38.26-30: 3.4.1.9-12, .62-64, 69-71, .78-80,
.91-93, 102-103, 112-114.

Table 6 : The Manvantara Lists of the Saptarsi Group - Vāyu Purāna.

Manvantara	Saptarsis
Svāyambhuva	(Dhrgv) Aṅgīrasa, Marīci, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Atri, Vasistha.
Svārocisa	Ūrja Vāsistha, Stamba Kāśyapa, Drona Bhārgava, Rṣabha Aṅgīrasa, Dattātri Paulastya, Niścāla Ātreya, Dhāvat Paulaha.
Auttam	Omits Rsis.
Tāmāsa	Kāvya (&) Harṣa, Prthu Kāśyapa, Agni Ātreya, Jyotirdhāman Bhārgava, Vanāpīthā Paulaha, Gotra Vāsistha, Caitra Paulastya.
Raivata	Vedabāhu Paulastya, Yajurnāman Kāśyapa, Hiranyaroma Aṅgīrasa, Vedaśrī Bhārgava, Ūrdhvabāhu Vāsistha, Parjanya Paulaha, Satyanetra Ātreya.
Cāksusa	Unnata Bhārgava, Havismat Aṅgīrasa, Sudhāman Kāśyapa, Virajas Vāsistha, Atimāna Paulastya, Sahisnu Paulaha, Madhu Ātreya.
Vaivasvata	Viśvāmitra son of Gādhi Kauśika, Jamadagni s/o Ūru Bhārgava, Bharadvāja s/o Brhaspati, Gautama Śaradvat Autathya, Atri s/o Svayambhu, Vasumat s/o Vasistha, Vatsara Kāśyapa.
Sāvarni	Gālava Kauśika, Jamadagnya Bhārgava, Dvaipāyana Vasistha, Kṛpa Śaradvat, Dīptimat Ātreya, Rṣyaśrīga Kāśyapa, Droniraśvatthāman Bhāradvāja.
Meru-sāvarni (or Rohita-s, s/o Dakṣa)	Medhātithi Paulastya, Vasu Kāśyapa, Jyotimat Bhārgava, Dyutimat Aṅgīrasa, Vasita Vāsistha, Havyavāhana Ātreya, Sutapas Paulaha.
Dharma-sāvarni	Havismat Paulaha, Sukīrti Bhārgava, Apomūrti Ātreya, Vasistha (āni yah replaces Anavah), Pratipa Paulastya, Nābhaga Kāśyapa, Abhimanyu Aṅgīrasa.
Brahma-sāvarni	Havismat Kāśyapa, Vapusmat Bhārgava, Vārūni Ātreya, Dhaga Vāsistha, Puṣṭi Aṅgīrasa, Niścara Paulastya, Agnitejas Paulaha.
Rudra-sāvarni	Kṛti Vāsistha, Sutapas Ātreya, Tapomūrti Aṅgīrasa, Tapasvin Kāśyapa, Tapośayāna Paulastya, Taporati Paulaha, Tapomati Bhārgava.
Raucya	Dhṛtimat Aṅgīrasa, Pathyavat Paulastya, Tattvadarśin Paulaha, Nirutsuka Bhārgava, Niṣprakampa Ātreya, Nirmoha Kāśyapa, Svarūpa Vāsistha.
Bhautya	Agnidhra Kāśyapa, Māgadha Paulastya, Agnibāhu Bhārgava, Śuci Aṅgīrasa. (Omits other 3 Rsis)

Vāyu Purāna 1.31.15-17: 2.1.15-16, .35, .40-42, .53-54, .65-66;
2.3.24-28: 2.38.9-12, .66-68, .73-74, .81-83, .96-97,
.106-108, .116.

210

(b) Examination of the Lists.

Although the Epic texts give no complete lists of the Saptarsi groups in each of the Manvantaras, it is clear from certain references that the underlying idea of different Saptarsi groups appearing in each of the Manvantaras was already becoming current. Thus for example a passage in the Anuśāsana Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that Kṛṣṇa will be reckoned among the Saptarsis in the Sāvarni (here called Sāvarna) Manvantara:

"mayi sambhavetas tasya phalāt kṛṣṇo bhaviṣyati |
sāvarnasya manoh sarge saptarsiś ca bhaviṣyati" || (2)

It is equally quite clear that this reference indicates the lack of any definitive formulation of the Saptarsi groups in the Manvantaras, such as is found in the early Purāṇic texts. For in the lists which occur in those texts, Kṛṣṇa is not enumerated as one of the Saptarsis in the Sāvarni - nor indeed in any - Manvantara.

In the following analysis, the identity of the Rsis - as given in the previously-listed texts - in each of the Manvantaras will be examined individually.

i. Svāyambhuva Manvantara.

These Rsis are, as noted earlier, the seven who are predominantly referred to as The Saptarsis in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts generally. It will be noted that the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purāṇas include Bhṛgu in this group of seven - thus listing in effect eight Rsis, but decreasing the number to seven by listing Bhṛgu and Aṅgiras conjointly as a single Rsi "Bhṛgvaṅgiras":

"bhṛgvaṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
atriś caiva vasiṣṭhaś ca sapta svāyambhuve 'ntare" || (3)

(2) Mahābhārata 13.18.29.

(3) Brahmānda Purāṇa 1.2.13.103 : Vāyu Purāṇa 1.31.16-17.

Although grammatically the form "Bhrgvaṅgirā" here denotes a single Rsi, it may be noted that nearly all other lists of Rsis which include Bhrgu list him as a separate Rsi, rather than conjointly with ṅgiras: as has been seen in Chapter 2. Furthermore, a passage in the Brahmānda Purāna again contains the same grammatical form Bhrgvaṅgiras, but makes it clear this time that two separate Rsis - Bhrgu and ṅgiras - are designated by this form by stating the total number of Rsis listed to be eight:

"bhrgvaṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyah pulahah kratuh |
atriś caiva vasiṣṭhaś ca hy astau te brahmanah sutāh" || (4)

It may moreover be observed that the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas also include Gotra names for the Rsis in each of the subsequent Manvantaras: wherein the Gotra names are ṅgirasa, Bhārgava, Vāsistha, Ātreya, Paulastya, Paulaha, and Kāśyapa. Although the Harivaṁśa and the Matsya Purāna list Bhrgu as one of the Saptarsis in the Cākṣusa Manvantara, the other Purānic texts omit mention of Bhrgu as one of the Saptarsis: hence the attempt in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas to include Bhrgu among the group of Saptarsis in the Svāyambhuva Manvantara - in the form Bhrgvaṅgiras - may be seen as yet another attempt to include this Rsi in the group of seven, in a manner comparable to the further attempts noted especially in Chapter 2. One reason - as has already been suggested - for the attempt to include this Rsi may be related in some measure to the growing importance in certain spheres of the Bhārgava Gotra - which is thus acknowledged by the inclusion of a Bhārgava Rsi in each of the succeeding thirteen Manvantaras. Much the same may be said of the Rsi Kāśyapa, and of the Kāśyapa Gotra, in this context: for while Kāśyapa is generally considered to be one of the Saptarsis in the group which appears in the Vaivasvata Manvantara, the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas include a Kāśyapa Rsi in each of the Manvantaras,

(4) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.21.

even though they fail to mention the Ṛṣi Kaśyapa in any of the Manvantaras and replace "Kaśyapa" in the Vaivasvata Manvantara by "Vatsara Kāśyapa". A similar anomaly occurs in the Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purāṇas, which include (a) Kāśyapa but exclude any mention of the Ṛṣi Kaśyapa in these Manvantara lists of Saptarṣis. The inclusion of Gotra names in the Manvantara lists of the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas has already been discussed further in Chapter 3: and in the present context it may be noted that the Gotra-designations in these two texts correspond to the names of the Ṛṣis in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group, but with the substitution of Kaśyapa for his father Marīci (see Chapter 3) and of Bhṛgu for Kratu - the latter of which has been seen to occur in further Purāṇic passages⁽⁵⁾ (see Chapter 2).

ii. Svārocisa Manvantara.

Stamba appears in all these lists, Prāṇa in all but the Vāyu Purāṇa where he is replaced by Drona: similarly Niścala (-ra, -ya) appears in all but the Harivamśa. Aurva (son of Vasistha in the Mahābhārata and elsewhere) in the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāṇa is replaced by Ūrja (Vāsistha) in all the other lists: similarly Brhaspati (son of Aṅgiras) is replaced by Ṛsabha (Āṅgirasa). The forms Dattoli, Dattotri and Dattātri designate but a single Ṛṣi in all except the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāṇa: in the latter of these the form Datta is given, and in the former Datto'tri - which might be interpreted as designating one (Dattotri) or two (Datta, Atri) Ṛṣis. If it be interpreted as designating only one Ṛṣi, however, then the list will contain a total of only six rather than seven Ṛṣis. The forms Cyavana in the Harivamśa and Kaśyapa in the Matsya Purāṇa would appear to be isolated occurrences: while the forms Dhāvat, Arvarivat, Arvavirat and Urvarivat in the other texts

(5) e.g. Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.49-50 : Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.1.49-51 : Matsya Purāṇa 195.8-11.

would appear to be intended to denote the same Rsi.

iii. Auttami Manvantara.

These Rsis are generally called the seven sons of Vasistha, or the seven Vāsisthas: the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna again agree in calling them the urjāh. The Vāyu, Brahmānda, Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu Purānas all name these seven Vāsisthas in further contexts, calling them: Rakṣa/Rajas, Garta/Gātra, Ūrdhvabāhu, Savana/Sabala, Pavara/Anagha, Sutapas, and Śamkur/Sukla/Sukra.⁽⁶⁾ These names are clearly quite different from those given in the Manvantara list in the Matsya Purāna.

iv. Tāmāsa Manvantara.

Kavya/Kavi, Prthu and Agni are common to all these lists. The term Harṣa in the Vāyu Purāna would appear to be an error for the Gotra-name Āṅgīrasa - as is given in the corresponding passage in the Brahmānda Purāna. Dhīmān in the Matsya Purāna and Dhātṛ in the Harivamśa would seem intended to correspond to Jyotirdhāman in the other texts. Pīvara, Vanapītha, Kapīvān and Kapi would seem intended to denote the same Rsi; similarly Caraka, Gotra, Valaka and Vanaka in all but the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna. Caitra is common to all but the latter two texts. The forms Jahnu/Jalpa and Akapi/Akapīvān in the latter two texts again demonstrate a common tradition followed by these two texts in distinction to that followed by the remaining four Purānic texts.

v. Raiyata Manvantara.

Vedabāhu/Devabāhu, Parjanya, Hiranyaloma (-roma), and Ūrdhvabāhu (Subāhu in the Matsya Purāna) are common to all these texts. Vedaśrī

(6) Vāyu Purāna 1.28.33-35 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.11.39-42 :
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 52.14-26 : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.10.13-14.

(Vedaśiras in the Harivamśa) is common to all but the Matsya Purāna: and while the Harivamśa describes Vedaśiras as mahāmuni, the Matsya Purāna would appear to replace the Rsi by his epithet "Muni". Mahāmuni in the Viṣṇu Purāna and Vaśiṣṭha in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna are isolated forms: while Satyanetra in the Harivamśa and in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas would seem intended to correspond to Saptāśva in the Matsya Purāna. Sudhāman in the Viṣṇu, Mārkaṇḍeya and Brahmānda Purānas would seem intended to correspond to Yajurnāman in the Vāyu Purāna, and to Yadudhra in the Harivamśa: while this name is replaced by the isolated form Somapa in the Matsya Purāna.

vi. Caksusa Manvantara.

Virajas, Atināman/Ātimāna, and Sahiṣṇu are common to all these lists: the forms Sudhāman and Sumedhas would seem intended to denote the same Rsi, as would also the forms Nabha (Harivamśa), Nāda (Matsya Purāna) and Madhu (other texts). Haviṣmat is common to all but the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna, both of which replace this name with Vivasvat: similarly the form Bhrgu in these latter two texts is replaced by Unnata/Uttama Bhārgava in the other texts.

vii. Vaivasvata Manvantara.

As previously noted, these Rsis compose the first main list of the Saptarsi group, which is the only Saptarsi group referred to in the earlier literature. The only point calling for further comment in the present context is that, while the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna enumerate the group as in the earlier texts, the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas replace Kaśyapa by (a) Kāśyapa:⁽⁷⁾ and the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas elaborate upon this process of replacing the original Rsis by one of their descendants in enumerating Vasumat

(7) n.b. this and similar variants apply to the editions cited in Bibliography 1.

Vāsistha (in place of Vasistha), Vatsara Kāśyapa (in place of Kāśyapa), and Śaradvat Autathya Gautama (in place of Gotama).

viii. Sāvarni Manvantara.

This is the last Manvantara for which lists of the Saptarsi groups are given in the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna. The only differences between these various lists is that Vyāsa is termed simply Dvaipāyana in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, wherein Rāma is also termed simply Jāmadagnya: the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas have Drauṇi/Droni, and the Matsya Purāna Aśvatthāman, where the other texts have Drauniraśvatthāman: the Harivamśa has Ruru Kāśyapa, and the Matsya Purāna simply Kāśyapa, where the other texts have R̥syaśr̥ṅga Kāśyapa: the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna have Śaradvat, and the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas have Kṛpa, where the Vāyu and Brāhmānda Purānas have Kṛpa Śaradvat: and the Matsya Purāna omits Vyāsa, and can only complete a total of seven R̥sis if Gālava and Kauśika are regarded as two separate R̥sis -- even though the other texts, namely the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, regard Gālava Kauśika as a single figure.

ix. Dakṣa- (Meru-/Rohita-)sāvarni Manvantara.

Medhātithi (Medhadhṛti in the Viṣṇu Purāna), Vasu, Jyotiṣmat, and Dyutimat are common to all four of these lists: and Dhavya in the Viṣṇu Purāna would seem intended to correspond to Havyavāhana (Haryav-) in the other texts. Sabala and Satya in the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas clearly have little common origin with Vasita and Sutapas in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas.

x. Dharmā- (Brahmā-)sāvarni Manvantara.

Haviṣmat, Sukṛti/Sukīrti, Apomūrti, Nābhāga, and Apratima/Pratipa/

Apratimaujas are common to all these lists. Āpava Vāsistha, Vasistha, Vāsistha, and also the variant Satyaketu would seem intended to denote the same Rsi: while Satya in the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purānas again has little common origin with Abhimanyu in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas.

xi. Brahmā- (Dharma-)sāvarni Manvantara.

Haviṣmat, Āruni/Vāruni, Niścara, and Agnitejas/Atitejas/Agnideva are common to all these lists. Bhaga, Naga and Anagha would seem intended to denote the same Rsi: as also Pusti, Visti and Viṣṇu. Varistha in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna would similarly seem intended to correspond to Vapuṣmat in the other texts.

xii. Rudra-sāvarni Manvantara.

The only differences between these lists are that Kṛti in the Vāyu Purāna corresponds to Dyuti in the other texts: and similarly Tapośāyana corresponds to Tapodhana and Taponidhi, while Tapomati corresponds to Tapodhṛti.

xiii. Raucya Manvantara.

The only differences between these texts are that Pathyavat in the Vāyu Purāna corresponds to Avyaya in the other texts: while similarly Svarūpa corresponds to Sutapas.

xiv. Bhautya Manvantara.

The Vāyu Purāna lists only four of these seven Rsis: of these, Mādhava in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna corresponds to Māgadha in the other texts. Of the remaining three Rsis, Yukta in the Viṣṇu Purāna corresponds to Mukta in the other two texts, while Svājita in the Brahmānda Purāna corresponds to Ajita in the other two texts.

(c) Observations.

These texts may be divided into three main groups. The first group comprises the Harivaṁśa and the Matsya Purāṇa, which contain several names distinctive to these texts alone, and which list the Saptarṣi groups for only the first eight Manvantaras. The second group comprises the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas, which share many names in common with the other texts but which also contain several names distinctive to these two texts alone (for example in the Dakṣa-sāvarni Manvantara). The third group comprises the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas, which not only contain several names distinctive to these two texts alone but also list the Gotra-names of each of the Ṛṣis in each Manvantara. Thus while the Harivaṁśa and the Matsya Purāṇa may be considered to contain the earliest accounts of the Saptarṣi groups in each Manvantara - at a stage when such groups had not yet been formulated for all 14 of the Manvantaras - the other four texts generally draw upon a common source, while also demonstrating distinct features indicative of two divergent sources as between the Viṣṇu and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas on the one hand, and the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas on the other hand.

The most notable feature common to all six of these texts is the degree of consensus evident in the enumeration of the Saptarṣi groups for the Svāyambhuva and Vaivasvata Manvantaras. In the case of the latter group of Ṛṣis, it is consistently said that these are the Saptarṣis of the present age:

"ete saptarṣayaś caktā vartante sāmprate 'ntare" | (8)

In further contexts a far greater importance is given to the Ṛṣis of the Svāyambhuva Manvantara - the Sons of Brahmā: and a passage in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas goes so far as to suggest that a group of Saptarṣis endures throughout an entire Kalpa or day of Brahmā - such a group being that headed by Sattva/Satya in the past

(8) Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 1.2.38.30 : Vāyu Purāṇa 2.3.24-28.

Kalpa, and that headed by Bhṛgu (who in these texts is listed as a Ṛṣi of the Svāyambhuva Manvantara) in the present Kalpa:

"bhṛgvādayo yathoddīṣṭās tasmin kāle maharṣayah |
satyādayas tathā tv aṣṭau kalpe līne maharṣayah" || (9)

"bhṛgvādayo yathā sapta kalpe hy aṣmin maharṣayah |
....
satyādyaḥ sapta ye hy āsan kalpe 'tīte maharṣayah" || (10)

In these and other contexts there would appear to be an attempt to minimise the importance of the group of Saptarṣis headed by Viśvāmitra (namely the first main list of the group), and to maximise the importance of the group of Saptarṣis headed by Marīci (namely the second main list of the group). It will also be noted that there is an attempt in the first of these passages to increase the number of members of the group from seven to eight. Both of these attempts are thus fully consistent with similar tendencies - both to emphasise the second main list of the group and to increase the number of members of that group - which have been noted elsewhere in the Epic and Purānic texts in preceding Chapters.

(9) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.6.70.

(10) Vāyu Purāna 1.7.67-69.

Section 3 : The Saptarsis within the Manvantara Theory.

(a) The Function and Appearance of the Saptarsis within the Manvantara.

The main function of each of the Saptarsi groups within each Manvantara is to establish Dharma upon the earth - whereupon they depart from the earth to their abode, which is usually stated to be in Maharloka (see sub-section (c) below). Thus it is said for example in a passage in the Matsya Purāna that there are groups of seven Maharsis in every Manvantara, who establish Dharma and then depart to the highest abode:

"manvantaresu sarvesu sapta sapta maharsayah ||
kṛtvā dharmavyavasthānam prayānti paramam padam" | (11)

This same process occurs not once but in each of the 71 Mahāyugas within a single Manvantara: and it is said for example that when each new Satya or Krta Yuga comes (but see also next sub-section), the Saptarsis then reappear to instruct the new people in Dharma:

"utpannāh kaliśiṣṭeṣu prajāh kṛtayugās tathā |
....
saha saptarsibhir ye tu tatra ye ca vyavasthitāh |
....
tesāṃ saptarsayo dharmam kathayantiha tesu ca ||
....
te tu dharmavyavasthārtham tisthantiha kṛte yuge ||
manvantarādhikāresu tisthanti rṣayas tu te" | (12)

A passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna relates that at the end of every four Yugas the Vedas disappear, whereupon the Saptarsis come to the earth in order to teach them again:

"caturyugānte vedānām jāyate kila viplavaḥ |
pravartayanti tān etya bhuvī saptarsayo divah" || (13)

According to a passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, the Saptarsis heard

(11) Matsya Purāna 9.30-31.

(12) Matsya Purāna 144.93-98 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.31.104-109 : etc.

(13) Viṣṇu Purāna 3.2.44.

the Vedas from the mouths of Brahmā, whereupon those Mind-born ones took the Vedas from him:

"utpannamātrasya purā brahmano 'vyakto.jannanah |
purānam etad vedās ca mukhebhyo 'mvinihṛtāh ||

....

vedān saptarsayas tasmāj jagrhus tasya mānasāh" | (14)

A passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas adds that at the start of each new Tretā Yuga the Saptarsis, together with Manu, re-utter Śruti, Smṛti and Dharma, and people the worlds through the Ṛsi-Vamśas:

"ṛsivamśaprasaṅgena vyākulātvāt tathaiiva ca |
atra tretāyugasyādan manuḥ saptarsayaś ca ye ||
śrautam smārtam ca te dharmam brahmanānupracoditam |
dārāgnihotrāsambandham ṛgyo.juḥsāmasamhitam ||
ityādilakṣaṇam śrautam dharmam saptarsayo 'bruvan" | (15)

Thus each group of Saptarsis reappears again and again within each Mahāyuga in order to teach and establish Śruti, Smṛti and Dharma upon the earth.

The teaching function of each Saptarsi group is said to be carried on throughout the Manvantara. In the Manvantara system of the Purānic texts, each Manu and each Saptarsi group is said to exist for a complete Manvantara of (slightly more than) 71 Mahāyugas: and at the end of the Manvantara there then arises a new Manu and a new Saptarsi group. Thus it is said, for example in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, that at the end of the Cākṣusa Manvantara and at the start of the Vaivasvata Manvantara the Saptarsis were born again:

"ādye manvantare 'tītāh sargaprēvartakās tu ye |
svāyambhuve 'ntare pūrvam saptasan ye maharsayah ||
cākṣusasyāntare 'tīte prāpte vaivasvate punah" | (16)

The passage continues by relating explicitly that those Saptarsis

(14) Mārkaṇdeya Purāna 45.20-23.

(15) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.29.43-45 : Vāyu Purāna 1.57.38-40.

(16) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.7-8 : Vāyu Purāna 2.4.7-9.

were born again who had formerly - during the first or Svāyambhuva Manvantara - been the seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, namely Bhṛgu and the others:

"daksasya ca ṛṣiṇāṃ ca bhṛgvādīnāṃ mahaujasām ||

 bhūyah saptarṣayas tv evam utpannāḥ sapte mānasāḥ ||
 putratve kalpitāś caiva svayam eva svayambhuva |
 ṛṣayo jajūire dīrghe dvitīyam itī nah śrutam ||
 bhṛgvāṅgirā marīciś ca pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh |
 atriś caiva vasisthaś ca hy aṣtau te brahmanah sutāḥ" || (17)

It will be noted that the passage contains several inconsistencies: notably inasmuch as it speaks of seven Ṛsis and Mind-born Sons, seven Ṛsis commencing with Bhṛgu, but eight Sons of Brahmā (in effect including Bhṛgu in the second main list of the Saptarṣi group). This aspect of the passage has been discussed in Chapter 2. The passage also refers to only two births of these Saptarṣis: firstly in the Svāyambhuva age, and secondly "after a long time" at the end of the Cākṣusa and start of the Vaivasvata age. It may again be suggested that this passage witnesses to a stage in the formulation of the Saptarṣi Manvantara traditions wherein the different groups of Saptarṣis for each of the different Manvantaras had not yet been fully formulated: whence it is said in the above passage that the Saptarṣis were born only twice - namely in this context in the Svāyambhuva and Vaivasvata Manvantaras. Further such indications will be noted in the next sub-section.

A passage in the Matsya Purāṇa relates that both Manu and the Saptarṣis are called promoters of the universe and establishers of Dharma: and that each group of Saptarṣis tells (in the next Manvantara) what it has heard from the Saptarṣis of the preceding Manvantara - whence such knowledge is called "śruti":

(17) Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 2.3.1.8-21 : Vāyu Purāṇa 2.4.8-21 :
 cf. Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.21.27-28.

"pūrvebhyo vedayitveha śrautam saptarṣayo 'bruvan ॥
 rco yajūmsi sāmāni brahmano 'ṅgāni vai śrutih |
 manvantarasyātītasya smrtvā tan manur abravīt ॥
 tasmāt smārtah smṛto dharmo varnāśramavibhāgaśah |

 manuh saptarṣayaś caiva lokasantānakārinah |
 tiṣṭhantīha ca dharmārtham tān cchistān sampracaksate ॥

 vijñeyah śravanāc chrautah smaranāt smārta ucyate" | (18)

Thus the continuation of Vedic knowledge is said to be effected by means of its passing from one group of Saptarṣis to another, throughout each of the 14 Manvantaras.

It may therefore be concluded in general terms that - according to the Manvantara system as it is presented in the early Purānic texts - each group of Saptarṣis acts as promoter and teacher of Śruti and Smṛti, and of Varnāśrama-dharma: and that the knowledge of the Vedas which originates in the first Manvantara from the mouth of Brahmā himself is taken by the Saptarṣis, and is then passed on from one Saptarṣi group to the next throughout each of the successive Manvantaras.

(b) The Appearance of the Saptarsis within the Mahāyuga.

Somewhat divergent views are expressed within these texts as to the precise time at which the Saptarsis appear on earth within a Mahāyuga. On the one hand, as in certain of the passages quoted in the last sub-section, they are said to appear at the end of the Kali Yuga and at the start of the next Kr̥ta or Satya Yuga. On the other hand it is said in further passages that after the end of the Kali Yuga the Saptarsis continue to exist throughout the following Kr̥ta Yuga, and then incarnate themselves in the middle of the Tretā Yuga in order to promulgate the R̥si-Vam̥śas:

"ks̥ine kaliyuge caiva tiṣṭhantīti kr̥te yuge |
saptarsayas tu taiḥ s̥ardham madhye tretāyuge punah ||
bījārthai vai bhaviṣyanti brahmakṣatrasya vai punah" | (19)

Further passages again relate that it is at the start of the Tretā Yuga that the Saptarsis appear, along with Manu:

"saptarsinām manoś caiva ādau tretāyuge tatah |
abuddhipūrvakam tena sakṛtpūrvakam eva ca ||
abhivṛttās tu te mantrā darśanais tarakādibhih |
....
rco yajūmsi sēmāni mantrāś cātharvanās tu ye |
saptarsibhiś ca ye proktāḥ smārtam tu manur abrevīt ||
tretādau saṁhata vedāḥ kevalam dharmasetavaḥ" | (20)

"atra tretāyugasyādau manuh saptarsayaś ca te ||
śrautam smārtam ca te dharman brahmanānupracoditam" | (21)

"prāpte tretāyugamukhe punah saptarsayas tv iha |
pravartayanti ye varnān āśramāś caiva sarvaśah" || (22)

The Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas somewhat confuse the matter in a further passage, by recounting a tradition that the group headed by Bhrgu -- which according to these texts is the group of the

(19) Matsya Purāna 273.60-61 : cf. Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.254 :
Vāyu Purāna 2.37.435.

(20) Matsya Purāna 142.44-47.

(21) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.29.43 : Vāyu Purāna 1.57.39.

(22) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.35.108 : Vāyu Purāna 1.61.98.

Svāyambhuva Manvantara -- were the seven Maharsis who were born in the first Tretā Yuga of Manu Vaivasvata: or in other words, in the first Tretā Yuga within the first Mahāyuga of the Vaivasvata Manvantara:

"bhṛgvādāyāś ca ye sapta jajñire ca maharsayah |
ādye tretāyuge pūrvam manor vaivasvatasya ca" || (23)

Thus, according to the passages discussed so far, while the Saptarsis are considered to exist throughout every successive Mahāyuga and to give instruction in Dharma and in the Vedas at the start of the Kṛta Yuga, they are also considered in certain contexts to appear among men in incarnated form within the Tretā or second Yuga of a Mahāyuga.

A further passage in the Matsya Purāna relates a tradition that the Saptarsis took birth not in the Kṛta or Tretā Yugas but in the Dvāpara Yuga, wherein they conquered death and thereby gained immortality:

"prajaisinah saptarsayo dvāpareṣv ila jajñire |
santatim te jagupsante tasman mrtyur jitas tu taih" || (24)

Thus, according to different passages, the Saptarsis appear within either the Kṛta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas.

The tradition of the appearance of Saptarsis in the Dvāpara Yuga may be in some measure derived from an association between the identities of certain of the Ṛsis in the Sāvarni Manvantara -- notably Drona, Aśvatthāman and Kṛpa -- and their well-known appearance as Ksatriyas in the Mahābhārata war, which is constantly said to have taken place at the end of the Dvāpara Yuga and shortly before the start of the Kali Yuga -- the latter being said to have commenced in the 36th year after the Mahābhārata war, at the moment of Kṛṣṇa's death:

(23) Brahmaṇḍa Purāna 1.2.13.83 : Vāyu Purāna 1.30.76.

(24) Matsya Purāna 124.106.

"yadaiva bhagavadvisnor amśo yāto divam dvija |
vasudevakulodbhūtas tadaiva kalir āgatah ||

....

tatyāja sānujo rājyam dharmaputro yudhiṣṭhirah ||

....

yāte kṛṣṇe cakārātha so 'bhisekam parīksite" || (25)

"satṭrimśe tv atha samprāpte varṣe keuravanandanah |
dadarśa viparītāni nimittāni yudhiṣṭhirah" || (26)

"vimṛśann eva kālam tam paricintya janārdanah |
mene prāptam sa satṭrimśam varṣam vai keśisūdanah" || (27)

The fact that these individuals are said in the Mahābhārata to have been born shortly before that war therefore implies that, according to this Yuga scheme, these individuals were born in the Dvāpara Yuga: whence arose the necessity to relate that certain of the Saptarṣi groups - notably that of the Sāvarni Manvantara, in which the above individuals are enumerated - are also at times born not only in the Kṛta or Tretā Yugas but also in the Dvāpara Yuga, as is stated in the passage quoted earlier from the Matsya Purāna.

It may be noted that several of the Ṛsis who are listed in the Saptarṣi group of the Sāvarni Manvantara are said in the Rāmāyana, in the Mahābhārata and in the early Purānic texts to have been literally fathered by Ṛsis who are listed in the Saptarṣi group of the Vaivasvata Manvantara: as for example Rāma by Jamadagni,⁽²⁸⁾ Drona and Aśvatthāman by Bharadvāja,⁽²⁹⁾ Kṛpa by Gautama,⁽³⁰⁾ and Gālava by Viśvāmitra.⁽³¹⁾ Moreover the Saptarṣis of the Vaivasvata

(25) Viṣṇu Purāna 4.24.34-38.

(26) Mahābhārata 16.1.1.

(27) Mahābhārata 16.3.18: cf. 16.2.2.

(28) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.74.10ff : Mahābhārata 1.60.39-48: 1.98.1-5:
1.121.12-33: 3.83.14-40: 3.85.9-12: 3.115.9ff: 3.283.8:
12.49.1ff: etc.

(29) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.57.88-90: 1.61.63: 1.121.3-9: 3.42.19:
5.54.47-48: 7.159.2: 7.167.37ff: etc.

(30) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.57.88-90: 1.120.2-21: 5.54.47-48: 5.163.20-21:
15.30.6: etc.

(31) e.g. Mahābhārata 5.104.1-5.117.23 : Harivamśa 9.88-100 : Vāyu
Purāna 2.29.64-99 : Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.63.85ff: 2.3.66.35-77: etc.

Manvantara are themselves said to have been fathered by the R̥sis listed in the Saptar̥si group of the Svāyambhuva Manvantara - as has been seen in Chapter 3. Thus these three groups of R̥sis would seem to be linked with one another in a way which does not occur with the other groups of Saptar̥sis in the Manvantara lists. The fact that such R̥sis are said to be paternally and filially related to one another may be said to suggest the possibility that the Manvantara tradition of different Saptar̥si groups arose in some measure from an earlier pre-Pur̥ānic and more generalised conception as to the traditional chronological succession of R̥sis: wherein such groups were separated from each other by a period of relatively short duration, rather than - as in the Manvantara theory - by a period of some 71 x 12,000 years. It may further be noted that the R̥sis who are listed for both the Vaivasvata and the Sāvarni Manvantaras are frequently associated in both the Epic and the early Pur̥ānic texts with kings and Ksatriyas who are reputed to be descended from Manu Vaivasvata, and thus to have lived during the Vaivasvata Manvantara: and indeed the Mahābhārata war is itself generally said to have occurred during the present or Vaivasvata Manvantara. Hence in one sense both of these groups of R̥sis - listed in the Manvantara theory for the Vaivasvata and Sāvarni Manvantaras - should have lived during the Vaivasvata Manvantara. In this respect the Manvantara traditions of the Saptar̥si groups may be considered as a development of earlier traditions wherein the period of time separating these different figures or individuals was first held to be of relatively short duration - as for example generally in the Epic texts - and only subsequently enlarged to very greatly increased proportions following the assimilation of such individuals within the Saptar̥si groups in the Manvantara system of the early Pur̥ānic texts.

It may be noted at this stage that the Yuga Pur̥āna of the

Gārgī-jyotiṣa - which, as discussed in the Introduction, may be considered as an early prototype of the later classical Purānas - knows the measures of the Yuga and of the Kalpa, but not of the Manvantara: thus for example it states that 1,000 Yugas constitute a Kalpa,⁽³²⁾ but it makes no mention of the Manvantara within this computational scheme. This lack of mention might therefore be interpreted as an indication that the period of the Manvantara was a relatively late addition to the earlier scheme of Yugas and Kalpas. A further such indication may be seen in the fact that, while the Kalpa is divided into exactly 1,000 Mahāyugas, no such exact division is evident in the number of Mahāyugas which constitute a Manvantara. Thus different Purānic and astronomical texts give the total as either 71, 71 and a fraction, or 72 Mahāyugas: and in precise mathematical terms, a complete Manvantara will last for $1000/14 = 71.42$ Mahāyugas. Conversely, since a day of Brahmā is said to last for 12,000,000 divine years or 4,320,000,000 years of men, then each of the 14 Manvantaras will last for $12,000,000/14 = 857,142 + 6/7$ divine years, which is the equivalent of $12,000 \times 71 + 3/7$ years. Such a mathematical discrepancy in the number of Mahāyugas in a Manvantara is noted for example in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, which acknowledges the necessity of adding an additional fraction (sādhika) of a Yuga:

"caturyugānām samkhyātā sādhikā hy ekasaptatih |
manvantaram tasya samkhyām" | (33)

It would seem unlikely that such an inaccuracy and discrepancy in the theory would have arisen if the three units of the Yuga, the Kalpa and the Manvantara had been formulated at the same time: since they would otherwise have been combined in a more harmonious system, and the various texts would then have agreed upon the number of Mahāyugas in a Manvantara - just as they agree upon the number of Mahāyugas in a Kalpa.

(32) Yuga Purāna lines 234-235.

(33) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 46.34.

It may further be noted that a passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata -- which is one of the relatively few passages in the Epic to make any reference at all to either the Yuga or the Manvantara -- presents a somewhat divergent view from that in the early Purānic texts, and refers to a scheme wherein the four Yugas occupy the total length of the Kalpa -- thus making no mention whatever of the Manvantara. After speaking of the succession of the Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali Yugas, the Supreme Being ("Deva") relates that at the end of these he assumes the form of Kāla or Time and destroys the three worlds -- thereafter sleeping for a period which is equal to 1,000 times the length of the four Yugas:

"śvetah kṛtayuge varṇah pītas tretāyuge mama |
 rakto dvāparam āsādyā kṛṣṇah kaliyuge tathā ||
 trayo bhāgā hy adharmaṣya tasmin kāle bhavanty uta |
 antakāle ca samprāpte kālo bhūtvātidārunah |
 trailokyam nāśayāmy ekah kṛtsnam sthāvarejaṅgamam ||

 yāvād yugānam vipraṅse sahasraparivartanam |
 tāvat svapīmi viśvātme sarvalokapitāmahaḥ" || (34)

The description in this passage continues with the start of a new Kṛta Yuga: yet this apparently does not occur within the same Kalpa, since the passage relates that when this new Kṛta Yuga arrives it is heralded by the birth of a Brahmin called Kalki who destroys all things as he brings the (former) Yuga to an end:

"yadā candraś ca sūryaś ca tathā tiṣyabrhaspatī |
 ekaśāśau samesyanti prapatsyati tadā kṛtam ||

 kalkir viśmయాśā nāna dvijah kālapraecoditah |
 utpatsyate mahāvīryo mahābuddhiparākramah ||

 utthito brāhmaṇo dīptah kṣayāntakṛd udāradhīh |
 sa saṅkṣopo hi sarvasya yugasya parivartakah" || (35)

(34) Mahābhārata 3.187.31-39.

(35) Mahābhārata 3.188.87-92.

Thus it would seem that, according to this passage, the reign of Kalki -- which occurs at the end of the Kali Yuga and at the start of a new Kṛta Yuga -- heralds the start not only of a new Yuga but also of a new creation: or in other words, the end of the Kali Yuga is here intended to designate the end of a Kalpa, which is followed by the destruction of all beings through the agency of Kalki.

Thus the view presented in these passages of the Vana Parvan would tend to suggest that a single succession of Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali Yugas constitutes the total extent of a Kalpa. They also suggest that while the basic unit of time for the Kalpa or day of Brahmā is regarded as the length of the four Yugas, that of the night of Brahmā is regarded as a thousand times this period -- an extent referred to also in the Yuga Parāna. The above passages make no mention, however, of the Manvantara as a unit of time.

A further passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata gives an account of the births of Brahmā in different Kalpas. According to the Manvantara scheme in the early Purānic texts, each of the 14 different Manus (and Saptarsi groups) is said to live during a single Kalpa or day of Brahmā. However, in this Śānti Parvan passage, a widely divergent view is again evident. It is here related that during one Kalpa or day of Brahmā, Brahmā instructed Manu Svārocīṣa in the Vedas during the Kṛta Yuga, but the knowledge disappeared during the Tretā Yuga: this is repeated through successive births of Brahmā, until in his seventh birth Brahmā instructs Dakṣa in the Vedas at the start of the Kṛta Yuga, whence the knowledge passed to Aditi and to Vivasvat -- and at the start of the Tretā Yuga Vivasvat instructed his son Manu Vaivasvata:

"tataḥ prāvartata tadā ādau kṛtayugam śubham |
 dharmapratisthāhetoḥ ca manum svārocīṣam tataḥ |

 dharmapratisthāhetoḥ ca manum svārocīṣam tataḥ |

adhyāpāyānāsa tadā lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā ॥

....

tataḥ so 'ntardadhe bhūyaḥ prāpte tretāyuge punaḥ ॥

....

kr̥tādau kurusārdūla dharmam etam adhitavān ॥

vīraṇaś cāpy adhitvainaṃ raucyāya manave dadau |

....

yad idam sap̥tamam janma padmejam brahmaṇo nr̥pa |

tatraiṣa dharmah kathitah svayam nārāyaṇena hi ॥

pitāmahāya śuddhāya yugādan lokadhāriṇo |

pitāmahaś ca daksāya dharmam etam purā dadau ॥

tato jyesthe tu dauhitre prādād dakṣo nr̥pottama |

āditye savitur jyesthe vivasvān jagrhe tataḥ ॥

tretāyugādau ca punar vivasvān manave dadau" | (36)

The passage clearly indicates that only one Manu is considered to exist during each Kalpa or day of Brahmā -- or indeed, during an entire lifetime of Brahmā, prior to his continual rebirth: and it also suggests that such a Kalpa is thought of as consisting of only a single Mahāyuga or succession of the four Yugas, with Dharma being promulgated at the start of the Kr̥ta Yuga, being lost during the Tretā Yuga, and with the rebirth of Brahmā occurring at the end of each Kali Yuga to commence the new Kalpa. It may also be noted that the passage mentions Raucya Manu, placing him after Svārocīṣa and before Vaivasvata -- in marked contrast to the early Purāṇic Manvantara tradition, wherein he is the thirteenth Manu. This may be seen as yet another indication of the divergent theories presented in the Mahābhārata on the one hand and in the early Purāṇic texts on the other hand.

These passages quoted above from the Vana and Śānti Parvans of the Mahābhārata may accordingly be taken to indicate that the Mahābhārata holds to a different theory of Yugas, Kalpas and Manvantaras from that which is developed in the early Purāṇic texts: namely one wherein a single succession of the four Yugas constitutes

the total extent of a Kalpa or day of Brahmā, and wherein the length of such a Kalpa of four Yugas is also the period of a Manvantara (although the term itself is not used in the above contexts in the Mahābhārata) over which there presides a single Manu.

Since the period of the Manvantara is not referred to in the main passage on the Yugas in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata, it may be inferred that the Manvantara was not consistently considered in this work as being a constituent part of the units of Yuga and Kalpa: a conclusion which is suggested also by the omission of the Manvantara from the scheme in the Yuga Purāna. It may also be observed that neither the Mahābhārata nor the Yuga Purāna refers to the Vedas as being taught by the Saptarṣis, as occurs in the Purānic Manvantara theory: and the Mahābhārata on the contrary relates that they were taught by Brahmā himself. This may accordingly be taken as a further indication that the assimilation of both the Saptarṣis and the Manus into the scheme of Yugas and Kalpas occurred only at a relatively late post-Epic stage in the formulation of these traditions: while conversely such passages as those just discussed from the Mahābhārata may be seen as precursors of the developed Manvantara theory as it is to be found in the early Purānic texts.

According to the scheme in the Mahābhārata, the seventh birth of Brahmā - which is said also to be the period of Manu Vaivasvata -

is considered as the present age within which there live the kings descended from that Manu, commencing with Ikṣvāku:

"tretāyugādau ca punar vivasvān manave dadau |
manuś ca lokabhūtyartham sutāyekṣvākave dadau" || (38)

According to this passage, therefore, there must have occurred within this period of the seventh birth of Brahmā the births not only of the Saptarṣis headed by Viśvāmitra - who are consistently associated throughout the Epic and early Purānic texts with Ikṣvāku and the Aikṣvākas, hence also with the Tretā Yuga of this period - but also of those who are enumerated in the Purānic lists as the Saptarṣis of the Sāvarni Manvantara and who took part in the Mahābhārata war, and who are also said to have been the sons of the Ṛsis headed by Viśvāmitra. Thus while the Saptarṣis headed by Viśvāmitra are connected most closely with the Tretā Yuga - being referred to as Purohitas of Ikṣvāku and of his successors and contemporaries, who are said to have lived at the start of the Tretā Yuga - the group of Ṛsis in the Sāvarni Manvantara in the Purānic lists are connected with the Dvāpara Yuga, at the end of which occurred the Mahābhārata war in which they took part. Moreover, the Saptarṣis enumerated in the Purānic lists for the Svāyambhuva Manvantara (those headed by Marīci) - who are said to be the fathers of the Saptarṣis headed by Viśvāmitra - are consistently said to be those Sons first created by Brahmā before all other Gods, Demons and Men: and they are thus evidently to be associated with the start of a new creation, and thus with the first or Kṛta Yuga. It may therefore be suggested that at one stage in the formulation of this tradition - prior to the multiplication of Saptarṣi groups in the Manvantara lists of the early Purānic texts - each of these three groups was considered to have lived at different periods within the same Kalpa or day of Brahmā: just as the members

(38) Mahābhārata 12.336.47.

of all three groups are associated with kings who are said to have lived during the present age, which is the age or antara of Manu Vaivasvata. Hence, given the varying traditions in the early Purānic texts as to the appearance of different Saptarsi groups during either the Krta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas, it may be suggested that at an early pre-Purānic stage in the formulation of this tradition, each of these three groups was considered to have lived during different Yugas of the same Kalpa: such a Kalpa possessing only a single succession of the four Yugas, as occurs in the passages quoted previously from the Mahābhārata. Only at a subsequent stage, with the division of the Kalpa into 14 separate periods or Manvantaras within which occurred 71·42 Mahāyugas, was the tradition expanded, so that different groups of Saptarsis were formulated and considered to appear within different Manvantaras. Nevertheless it may be said that a remnant of such an earlier tradition ascribing the appearance of different Saptarsi groups to the different Yugas of the same Kalpa may still be observed in the varying traditions of the early Purānic texts ascribing the appearance of Saptarsi groups to either the Krta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas within a Manvantara.

An initial reason for the formulation of such a tradition, involving the multiplication of Saptarsi groups, may be suggested to arise from the acknowledgement in the first instance of two main separate lists of the Saptarsi groups: whence each group was ascribed to a different period of time in order to emphasise the distinction and separation between the two. Thus, once the acceptance of at least two different Saptarsi groups was acknowledged, the way was thereafter open for the multiplication of the number of Saptarsi groups which occurs within the Purānic Manvantara theory. Any number of Saptarsi groups might then have been formulated: and the choice of such a number as 10 might have been a logical step, since then a Manvantara would have been divided into an exact number

of 100 Mahāyugas, given a total of 1,000 Mahāyugas in a Kalpa. The choice of the number 14 would, however, appear to have been made partly due to the particular significance of the number 7. In the passage from the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata which was referred to earlier, the present age of Manu Vaivasvata is termed the seventh birth of Brahmā: it is also considered as the final age, and no further births of Brahmā are there referred to. Given that the present age is considered as seventh age, the Manvantara theory of the early Purānic texts may be seen to propound that an equal length of time as has passed in the Kalpa is also to come about in the future. In other words, while the Mahābhārata views the present seventh age as being at the end of time, the Purānic Manvantara theory takes a different perspective and places the present seventh age at the centre of time: thereby adopting the Epic view that the present age is the seventh, and propounding the view that a further seven ages are yet to come. The Harivaṃśa and the Matsya Purāna may here be seen to represent in a sense an intermediate stage between these two views: for it has been seen that they both list a total of 8 Saptarṣi groups in Manvantaras - namely the 7 Saptarṣi groups down to the "present age" and the Saptarṣi group headed by Viśvāmitra, together with one further group whose members, although they took part in the Mahābhārata war of the present age, are now considered to form a Saptarṣi group of a future age. In the other early Purānic texts the full number of 2×7 Saptarṣi groups has been formulated, and the embryonic Manvantara theory of the Mahābhārata has reached a considerably fuller stage of development.

Thus three main stages of development in this tradition may be suggested in respect of the assimilation of the Saptarṣis to the theories of Yuga, Kalpa and Manvantara. The first main stage arises from the recognition that there were in existence more than one main group of Saptarṣis: namely the group headed by Viśvāmitra on the

one hand (the Rsis of the first main list), and the group headed by Marīci on the other hand (the Rsis of the second main list). The second main stage ascribes the appearance of each of these groups upon the earth to a different Yuga within a single Kalpa: namely the latter group to the Kṛta Yuga, and the former group to the Tretā Yuga; and this stage also formulates a further group of Saptarsis - comprising Rāma, Kṛpa, Drona, Aśvatthāman and others - whose appearance is ascribed to the Dvāpara Yuga of the same Kalpa. This stage still presupposes the type of outlook which is presented in the Mahābhārata, wherein a single succession of the four Yugas constitutes the total extent of a Kalpa. The third main stage then assimilates all three of these groups to the developing scheme of 14 Manvantaras: thereby greatly increasing the length of time which separates the appearance of each of these groups upon the earth, and also formulating and introducing various other groups of Saptarsis - firstly, as in the Harivamśa and the Matsya Purāna, for Manvantaras 2-6, and secondly, as in the other early Purānic texts, also for Manvantaras 9-14. It may be inferred that, while the first of these stages is evident in the Mahābhārata, the second and third of these stages are essentially post-Epic. Moreover, while the third stage is essentially that presented in the early Purānic texts, it nonetheless presupposes the second stage of development - traces of which may be discerned in the varying early Purānic traditions which ascribe the appearance of the Saptarsi groups to either the Kṛta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas.

(c) The Abode of the Saptarsis.

It is evident that, according to the Manvantara cosmogony, the Saptarsis are considered to live elsewhere than upon the earth during a considerable portion of the time in which they preside over the Manvantara: for it is repeatedly said - as seen in the last sub-section - that they incarnate themselves upon the earth only in the Tretā - or less frequently in the Krta or Dvāpara - Yuga in order to instruct men in Śruti and Smṛti, thereafter departing once again from the earth. A passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna states that the Saptarsis came from heaven or the sky (div) to the earth:

"caturyugānte vedānām jāyate kila viplavaḥ |
pravartayanti tān etya bhūvi saptarsayo divaḥ" || (39)

In a similar manner a passage in the Matsya Purāna relates that in every Manvantara each group of Saptarsis establishes Dharma and then departs to the highest abode (paramam padam):

"manvantaresu sarvesu sapta sapta maharsayah |
kṛtvā dharmavyavasthānam prayānti paramam padam" || (40)

Before examining the precise locality or Loka in which the Saptarsis are generally said to reside, it is instructive to examine first the references in the earlier texts to the loka which the Saptarsis are said to inhabit.

i. The cosmogony of the Brāhmanas and allied texts in general terms knows of only three principal worlds or lokas: namely Bhūr, Bhuvā, and Svar - respectively the Earth, the Atmosphere, and the Sky or Heaven. Reduced to its simplest form, men live on the earth while the Gods live in the sky: and throughout the Brāhmana texts in particular there occur references which relate that the Gods, the Rsis and the sacrificer himself attain Svarloka by means of

(39) Viṣṇu Purāna 3.2.44.

(40) Matsya Purāna 9.30-31.

fire or the sacrifice. Such references will be examined in detail in section 3 of the following Chapter: but a few instances may be cited here in order to illustrate the point. Two passages in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā relate that the Gods went to Svargaloka by means of Agni or fire or by means of the sacrifice:

"agninā vai devāḥ svargam lokam āyan" | (41)

"yajñena vai devāḥ svargam lokam āyan" | (42)

A complete cycle of myths similarly relates how the Ṃgirases and the Ādityas formerly went to Svargaloka through Agni - as is summarised for example in a passage in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa:

"ādityāś caivehāsan aṅgirasāś ca te 'gre 'gnināgnim ayajanta te svargam lokam āyan" | (43)

Further passages again relate how individual Ṛsis or the Ṛsis as a group attained Svargaloka. In such Brāhmaṇa contexts the highest realm to which the Gods, the Ṛsis and the sacrificer attain is variously referred to as Svarloka, Svargaloka, Svargaloka, and also Div, Divam, and Sukrtasyaloka.

Similarly in the Sūtra texts, and again in the Dharma Śāstras, it is to Svargaloka that the Ṛsis and the Gods are said to have attained - and it is Svargaloka that the sacrificer himself seeks to attain:

"nākasya pṛsthe svarge loke yajamāno astu" | (44)

"agnim anvārabhāmahe hotrvūrye purohitam
yenāyann uttamam svar devā aṅgiraso divam iti" | (45)

"śrāddham kurvan svargam kṛttikāsu āpnoti" | (46)

Thus throughout these texts Svargaloka is generally regarded as being

{41} Taittirīya Saṁhitā 5.3.9.

{42} Taittirīya Saṁhitā 6.3.4.

{43} Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 1.16.

{44} Vaitāna Sūtra 2.1.

{45} Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 24.12.7 : Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra 1.3.28.

{46} Viṣṇu Dharma Śāstra 78.8 : cf. Yajñavalkya Dharma Śāstra 3.184-187.

the highest or supreme Loka, the realm of the Gods and of the Rsis.

ii. The Epic texts similarly relate how Rsis and others became stars in Svargaloka or Devaloka, particularly through the performance of tapas - as for example in the case of Triśaṅku, whom Viśvāmitra transferred in bodily form to the sky.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Arjuna again observes as he travels through Svargaloka that what are seen from the earth as stars in the sky are in fact the self-illuminated bodies of Rsis and others who have attained Svarga through the performance of tapas.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Within these Epic texts, however, a new view is presented: wherein the highest or supreme realm is no longer the third or Svarga Loka, but Brahmaloka or the realm of Brahma - the seventh Loka. In several contexts it would seem that the Epic texts draw little distinction - apart from that of the names - between Svarga and Brahma Loka: thus for example one myth in the Anuśāsana Parvan of the Mahābhārata commences by telling of how the Saptarṣis sought to gain Brahmāloka by their tapas, and ends by telling of how they eventually gained their goal of Svargaloka:

"te vai sarve tapasyantaḥ purā cerur mahīm inām |
samādhinopāśikṣanto brahmalokam sanātanam ||

....

naiva lobham tadā cakrus tataḥ svargam avāpnvan" || (49)

Other Epic passages imply, however, that the Saptarṣis have their abode in Brahmāloka:

"viśvāmitro jamadagnir bharaadvājo 'tha gautamaḥ |
vasiṣṭhaḥ kaśyapo 'triś ca brahmalokam ninīśavaḥ" || (50)

"pitāmahasutaś cāpi pulastyo manipuṅgavaḥ |
nocayitvā daśagrīvaḥ brahmalokam jagāma ha" || (51)

(47) Rāmāyana 1.58.10 - 1.59.33.

(48) Mahābhārata 3.43.29-35.

(49) Mahābhārata 13.94.2 - 13.95.86.

(50) Mahābhārata 7.164.86-89.

(51) Rāmāyana 7.33.20.

Thus within these Epic passages there is no definitive distinction drawn between Svarga and Brahma Lokas: inasmuch as both are variously said to be the abode of the Saptarsis.

iii. In the early Purānic texts, the Saptarsis are on very few occasions said to have their abode in Svargaloka. One passage in which this does occur appears in both the Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas, where the Saptarsis are said to have gone to Divan or the sky after abandoning their clothes at a Tīrtha called Svargamārgaprada - or that which bestows the way to Svarga:

"svargamārgapradaṃ nāme tīrthan sadyo varapradam |
cīrāny utsrjya yasmims tu divaṃ saptarsayo gataḥ" || (52)

Such passages are, however, relatively isolated in this group of texts. In the early Purānic texts, the cosmogonic scheme of Seven Lokas is fully enunciated, particularly in connection with the Manvantara theory: and the Saptarsis are accordingly located in a specific sphere or Loka. The Seven Lokas are the three of the earlier texts - namely Bhūr, Bhuvar, and Svar - together with Mahar, Jana, Tapo, and Satya or Brahma Lokas: the latter now being the highest or supreme Loka, the abode of Brahmā. In these texts generally - and particularly in passages relating to the Manvantara theory - the Ṛsis are said to reside in neither Svar nor Brahma Lokas, but rather in Maharloka:

"atītā vartamānās ca tathaivānagatās ca ye |
devāḥ saptarsayaś caiva manavaḥ pitaras tathā ||
sarve hy api kramātītā maharlokam samāśritāḥ" | (53)

At the end of the Kalpa or day of Brahmā, the three worlds (namely Bhur, Bhuvar and Svar Lokas) are burnt to ashes by the seven suns: whereupon these inhabitants of Maharloka are said to remove themselves to the next or Jana Loka:

(52) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.13.62 : Vāyu Purāna 2.15.60.

(53) Vāyu Purāna 2.39.3-5 : Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.2.3-4 : etc.

"bhūrloko 'tha bhūvarlokaḥ svarlokaś ca vināśinah |
 tathā vināśam āyati maharlokaś ca tiṣṭhati ||
 tadvasino 'pi tāpēna janalokam prayanti vai" | (54)

"brāhmayo naimittiko nāma tasyānte pratisamcarah |
 tadā hi dahyate sarvām trailokyam bhūrbhuvādikam ||
 janam prayanti tāpārttā maharlokanivāśinah" | (55)

Following this conflagration, the worlds are then flooded to create but a single ocean, whereon sleeps Brahmā observed by the inhabitants of Janaloka:

"ekārnave tu trailokye brahmā nārāyaṇātmekah |
 bhogīśayyagataḥ śete trailokyagrāsavrahitaḥ ||
 janasthair yogibhir devaś cintayamāno 'bjasambhavaḥ |
 tatpramāṇam hi tam rātram tadante srjyate punah" || (56)

A passage in the Brahmānda Purāna relates that the Maharsis observe Brahmā in the form of Kāla or time asleep in Maharloka:

"caturyugasahasvānte sarvataḥ sa jalāvṛte |
 brahmā nārāyaṇakhyas tu sa cakāśe bhava svayam ||
 caturvidhāḥ prajāḥ sarvā brahmaśaktyā tamovṛtāḥ |
 paśyanti tam maharloke kālam sūptam maharsayah" || (57)

Thus here again the Maharsis are by implication considered to be in Jana rather than Mahar Loka.

According to a passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna, when the worlds are flooded the waters reach as far as the abode of the Saptarsis, and then stop:

"saptarsisṭhānam ākrāmya sthite 'mbhasi mahāmune |
 ekārnavam bhavaty eva trailokyam akhilaṁ tataḥ" || (58)

Since the passage states that it is the three worlds which become a single ocean, this implies once again that the abode of the Saptarsis is considered to be in the fourth world, namely Maharloka.

(54) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 46.39-40.

(55) Viṣṇu Purāna 1.3.20-21.

(56) Viṣṇu Purāna 1.3.22-23 : cf. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 46.40-41.

(57) Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.6.68-69.

(58) Viṣṇu Purāna 6.4.1.

A further passage in both the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas relates a slightly different tradition: namely that the Ṛsis went to Janaloka immediately upon leaving the earth once their task of raising offspring had been completed:

"marīciḥ kaśyapo dakṣo vaśiṣṭhaś cāṅgiraḥ bhṛguḥ ||
 pulastyaḥ pulahaś caiva kratur ityevanādayaḥ |
 pūrvam te samprasūyante brahmano mānasaḥ iha ||
 tataḥ prajāḥ pratīṣṭhāpyu janam evāśrayanti te" | (59)

Just as the passage gives an extended list of Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, rather than a list of Saptarṣis, so too it would tend to present a slightly variant tradition from that in the previously-quoted passages: wherein the Ṛsis have their abode constantly in Janaloka, as opposed to dwelling in Janaloka only after the conflagration of the three worlds has obliged them to move from Maharloka. In another passage in these two Purānas -- which is comparable to that quoted earlier from the Brahmānda Purāna alone -- it is related that the Saptarṣis, from their abode in Janaloka, observe Brahmā in the form of Kāla or time asleep during the night of Brahmā, and also observe Satya and the other seven Lokas:

"caturyugasahasrānte sarvataḥ salilāplute |
 susupsur aprakāṣepsuḥ sa rātriḥ kurate prabhuh ||
 caturvidhā yadā śete prajāḥ sarvāḥ layam gatāḥ |
 paśyanti tam mahātmanam kālam sapta maharṣayaḥ ||
 janalokam vivartās te tapasaḥ labdhacaksusaḥ |
 bhṛgvādayo mahātmanah pūrve vyāhyātakṣanāḥ ||
 satyādīn sapta lokān vai te hi paśyanti caksusā |
 brahmānam te tu paśyanti sadā brāhmāsu rātrisu ||
 saptarṣayaḥ prapaśyanti svapnam kālam svarātrisu" | (60)

Although these various textual traditions contain many common features, it must also be acknowledged that there are several inconsistencies within this group of texts. Thus, for example,

(59) Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.2.47-49 : Vāyu Purāna 2.39.49-51.

(60) Brahmānda Purāna 3.4.1.184-188 : Vāyu Purāna 2.38.188-193.

according to the passage just cited, the Saptarṣis are said to endure throughout the night of Brahmā, and to observe Brahmā as he sleeps - remaining in their abode in Janaloka. Yet a passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna relates that each Saptarṣi group is created in each Manvantara, and passes again to destruction along with the Manu, the Indra, the Gods and the Kings of that Manvantara:

"devāḥ saptarṣayah sendrā manus tatsūnavo nṛpāḥ |
manunā saha srjyante samhriyante ca pūrvavat" || (61)

A passage in the Matsya Purāna relates yet another tradition - namely that the Saptarṣis go to Nirvāna at the end of the day of Brahmā, when the entire universe sleeps within Brahmā and he alone remains by himself:

"prajānāṃ patayaś caiva sapta caiva maharṣayah ||
....
pūrṇe yugasahasre tu brāhme 'hani tathāgate |
nirvāṇe sarvabhūtānāṃ sarvotpātasamudbhave ||
....
samhṛtya lokān akhilān sadevāsura mānuṣān |
kṛtvā susamsthāṃ bhagavān āsta eko jagadguruḥ" || (62)

Such inconsistencies may again be said to be due partly to the fact that the role of the Saptarṣis within the Manvantara theory - as indeed the Manvantara theory itself - was still in the process of formulation within these texts: thus giving rise to such fundamentally divergent conceptions as are evident in the examples cited above.

It may accordingly be concluded that, in the Manvantara theory of the early Purānic texts, the Saptarṣis are generally considered to have their abode in Maharloka, and to resort to Janaloka at the conflagration of the three worlds.

(61) Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna 46.33.

(62) Matsya Purāna 247.10-22.

Section 4 : Conclusion.

By way of conclusion to this examination of the Manvantara traditions of the Saptar̥sis, the main features of the Manvantara traditions which are generally followed by most or all of these early Purā̆nic texts may here be briefly summarised.

Each Saptar̥si group is considered to preside over one complete Manvantara, in which there occur (a little more than) 71 Mahāyugas. Within each Mahāyuga the Saptar̥sis appear on the earth in order to instruct men in the Vedas and in Dharma: their appearance being variously ascribed to the Kr̥ta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas. As has been suggested in section 3(b), such a divergence of ascriptions may be traced to an earlier pre-Purā̆nic form of the Manvantara theory, wherein the Saptar̥sis were considered to appear in different Yugas of the same Kalpa rather than in different Manvantaras - such a conception in turn arising partly due in the first instance to the recognition of the two fundamentally different lists of the Saptar̥si group which first appear together in the Epic texts, and giving rise in the second instance to the listing of three Saptar̥si groups appearing in the three different Yugas, prior to the multiplication of Saptar̥si groups in the developed Manvantara theory of the early Purā̆nic texts. Once the Saptar̥sis have completed their task on earth of giving instruction in Śruti and Smṛti and of creating offspring, they depart to Maharloka, resorting to Janaloka especially at the conflagration of the three worlds, and residing there at the end of the Kalpa and during the ensuing night of Brahmā (although, as noted in section 3(c), according to certain traditions they then go to destruction or to Nirvāna). At the commencement of the next Manvantara, the next group of Saptar̥sis - together with the next Manu, Indra, Gods and Kings - take over the task of instructing men in Dharma and the Vedas, having themselves gained such knowledge from the Saptar̥sis of the preceding Manvantara. This

process continues throughout the entire day of Brahmā, which consists of 14 Manvantaras: and following the night of Brahmā, the same process once again continues during the next 14 Manvantaras which thereafter constitute the next day of Brahmā.

CHAPTER 5 : The Saptarsis as Stars in the Sky.Section 1 : Introduction.

The primary aim of this Chapter is to examine some of the main traditions associated with the concept of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky. One such tradition has already been examined in the first Chapter: namely that whereby the Saptarsis were at one time called Rksas or bears. Sections 2-3 of this Chapter examine certain further references to the Saptarsis in the sky: and section 4 then examines the mythological explanations given in the texts of how the Saptarsis were thought to have been transferred from the earth to the sky. Section 5 is devoted to a detailed examination of the astronomical theory of the Saptarsi Yuga which arises from the same concept of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky: and the concluding paragraphs of this section connect the conclusions drawn in this section with those drawn especially in Chapter 3, thereby illustrating one of the main causes and processes of development of the later traditions of the Saptarsi group.

Section 2 : The Earlier Literature.

Two passages have been quoted in previous contexts -- particularly in Chapter 1 -- which refer to the Saptarṣis in the sky. The first of these is from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and refers to the Ṛsis in connection with the Kṛttikās, saying of them that they were in former times called Rksas.⁽¹⁾ The second of these is from the R̥gveda, and refers to the Rksas which shine by night but disappear elsewhere by day.⁽²⁾ Both of these passages have been quoted and discussed especially in Chapter 1 section 3(b).

One relatively late R̥gvedic passage -- which is quoted in part and with minor changes in the Atharvaveda -- contains a reference which was suggested in Chapter 1 to refer to the Saptarṣis in the sky:

"sākamjānām sap̄tatham āhur ekajam sal idyamā r̄sayo devajā itī |
tesām istāni vihitāni dhāmasāḥ sthāt̄re rejante vikrtārī rūpaśah ||
striyah satīs tā u me pūnsa āhuh paśyad akṣanvān na vi cetad andhah" || (3)

The statement in this passage that "he who has eyes, sees -- not the blind" would appear to imply some form of visual observation: while "those who are really women, they show to me as men" would suggest that this latter is the immediate object of visual observation. The arguments in favour of the six twins and one born alone as referring to the Saptarṣis in the sky have been discussed in Chapter 1 section 2(c). It may be suggested that the second part of the above passage refers to the Kṛttikās: for while the Kṛttikās appear in most contexts as women -- and as the wives of the Saptarṣis -- one passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā relates that the Kṛttikās are men, being the embodied form of the Gods:

"agninā vai devāḥ suvargam lokam āyan tā amūḥ kṛttikā abhavan" | (4)

(1) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.1-5.

(2) R̥gveda 1.24.10.

(3) R̥gveda 1.164.15-16 : cf. Atharvaveda 9.9.16: 10.8.5.

(4) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.3.9.

Since such an idea of the Kṛttikās being masculine in gender is not to be found in the subsequent literature, which invariably views the Kṛttikās as women, it may be inferred that the constellation of the Kṛttikās was initially thought of as representing seven men or Gods: while this concept came to be replaced by the period of the later Vedic Samhitās by the concept of seven women, who in the Brāhmaṇa literature - as in the passage referred to above from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa - are regarded as the wives of the Saptarṣis.

The passage from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which speaks of the Kṛttikās as the wives of the Rṣis, and which refers to the Kṛttikās as residing in the east while the Rṣis rise in the north, may clearly be taken to refer to the Saptarṣis in the sky. Comparable to this is a further passage in the R̥gveda which speaks of the Saptarṣis as oxen (Ukṣanas) and as going to the east for their enjoyment or pleasure:

"adhvaryubhiḥ pañcabhiḥ sapta viprah̄ priyam rakṣante nihitam padam vehi
prāncō madanty ukṣano ajuryā devā devānām anu hi vrataḥ guh" || (5)

This passage has already been discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, particularly in respect of the connection between this Vedic idea of the Saptarṣis as oxen and similar ideas in further Indo-European contexts.

Another R̥gvedic passage may similarly be interpreted as referring to the Saptarṣis in the sky, as perhaps also to the Saptarṣis in the body (as the Prānas):

"viśvakarmā vimanā ādviḥayā dhātā vidhātā paramota sandrk |
tesam istāni samisā madanti yatraḥ sapta rṣin para ekam ākuh" || (6)

In this passage, a dual interpretation may be suggested: whereby on the one hand "beyond the Saptarṣis" (in the sky) is the centre of the sky, the northern celestial pole or Dhruva: while conversely "beyond the Saptarṣis" (in the body) is the centre of the head,

(5) R̥gveda 3.7.7.

(6) R̥gveda 10.82.2 : cf. Taittirīya Samhitā 4.6.2 : Vājasaneyi Samhitā 17.26 : Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā 2.10.3.

which is elsewhere stated to be the abode of Brahman.⁽⁷⁾

The Śatapatha Brāhmana contains a further reference to the Saptarsis in the sky, in a passage stating that the region of the living is that region between the rising of the Saptarsis (which is elsewhere said to be in the north⁽⁸⁾) and the setting of the sun (namely the west):

"eso ha jīvanām digantarena sapta r̥sinām codayanam ādityasya
cāstamayanam" | (9)

A passage in the Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana similarly connects the Saptarsis with the northern region, in stating that they are located at the "centre" of the sky:

"atha yatraite saptarsayas tad divo madhyam" | (10)

The interpretation of this passage has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3 section 3(a): where it was seen that the term madhyam in this context refers to the proximity of the Saptarsi constellation to the "middle" of the sky, or the northern celestial pole. A passage in the Kausītaki Brāhmana also implies a reference being made to the Saptarsis in the sky, through their mention alongside the Nakṣatras:

"te nu vā u vayam uttarenaiva parīma iti ha smāha kausītakiḥ |
yajñasyānusamcaram sapta r̥sibhyo 'nantarhitā iti" || (11)

The Sūtra texts similarly refer on occasions to the Saptarsis as stars in the sky, in places mentioning also Arundhatī alongside the R̥sis. Thus for example in a passage in the Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra a newly-wed bride is instructed to look at Dhruva, Arundhatī and the Saptarsis before requesting long-life for her husband and children for herself:

(7) e.g. Atharvaveda 10.2.26-27: 10.8.5-9.

(8) e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmana 2.1.2.1-5.

(9) Śatapatha Brāhmana 13.8.1.9.

(10) Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana 4.26.12.

(11) Kausītaki Brāhmana 27.6.

"dhruvam arundhatīm saptarsīn iti dr̥stvā vācam visr̥jeta jīvapātnī
prajāṃ vindeyati" || (12)

A passage in the Hiranyakeśin Gr̥hya Sūtra again makes reference to both the Saptarsis and the Kṛttikās - including Arundhatī - in connection with the ritual:

"saptarsayah prathamam kṛttikanām arundhatīm ye dhruvatām ha ninyuh
satkṛttikāmukhyayogam vahantiyam asmākam bhṛājatv astamī ||
iti saptarsīn upasthāya dhruvam upatiṣṭhate" | (13)

The reference in this context to Arundhatī as the eighth Kṛttikā - if the passage be so interpreted - would appear to arise from a confused understanding of the number of the Kṛttikās: but since the passage also refers to the six Kṛttikās (excluding Arundhatī, who is usually counted as the seventh of this constellation), it may be suggested that the term astamī refers to Arundhatī as being the eighth star conjoined to the Saptarsi constellation - wherein she appears, as was seen in Chapter 1, as the star Alcor close to § Ursa Major. A further passage in this same work gives instructions for arranging seats for the Saptarsis, for Arundhatī, and for Agastya: wherein the seat of Arundhatī is to be placed between those of Vasistha and Kaśyapa:

"vasisthakaśyapayor antarāle 'rundhatyai kalpayanti" | (14)

The full passage has already been quoted and discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. These Sūtra passages would appear to make it reasonably clear that Arundhatī is to be identified with the star Alcor, the small star beside § Ursa Major: hence that Vasistha is to be identified with § Ursa Major, the sixth star in the group of seven. Such identifications are made explicit in the Epic, early Purānic and astronomical texts (see next section). They are also suggested by the fact that, in the standard form of the first main list of

(12) Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya Sūtra 1.7.22.

(13) Hiranyakeśin Gr̥hya Sūtra 1.7.22.14.

(14) Hiranyakeśin Gr̥hya Sūtra 2.8.19.2.

the Saptarsi group in the earlier texts, Vasistha appears most frequently as the sixth Rsi in the group of seven: and it may thus be inferred that the seventh Rsi is Kaśyapa, who is to be identified with η Ursa Major; the fifth Rsi is Atri, who is to be identified with ϵ Ursa Major (the "loner" of the group, as demonstrated in Chapter 1); and so forth for the other Rsis in the group.

The role of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky is thus a tradition which is to be found in the Vedic hymns, and which continues throughout the subsequent Brāhmana and Sūtra texts.

Section 3 : The Later Literature.

Throughout the later literature of the Epic, early Purāṇic and astronomical texts, the tradition of the Saptarṣis as stars in the sky is well-known and well-attested. The references may be divided for convenience into three separate categories: namely poetical, mythological, and astronomical or observational.

(a) Poetical References.

These references are primarily in the form of a simile: likening something to the Saptarṣis in the sky. A passage in the Bāla Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, for example, refers to the decorations on sacrificial poles shining with a brilliance like that of the Saptarṣis:

"ācchāditās te vāsobhiḥ puṣpoir gandhaiś ca pūjitāḥ |
saptarṣayo dīptimanto virājante yathā divi" || (15)

Similarly a passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata speaks of many Munis surrounding king Viradyumna just as the Saptarṣis surround Dhruva:

"tatas te munayah sarve parivārya nararṣabham |
upaviśan puraskṛtya saptarṣaya iva dhruvam" || (16)

In one of the plays ascribed to Bhāsa, namely the Svapnavāsavadattam, the Saptarṣis are likened to a group of cranes seen flying through the sky:

"vayasya paśyāmy enām | rjvāyatām ca viralām ca natoumatām ca |
saptarṣivamśakutīlām ca nivertanesu ||
nirmucyamānabhujagodaranimālasya | sīnām ivāmbaratālasya
vibhujyamānām" || (17)

At one point in the Brhatsaḥitā, Varāhamihira speaks of the Saptarṣis as protecting the northern region, and as being like a string of

(15) Rāmāyaṇa 1.13.21.

(16) Mahābhārata 12.123.25.

(17) Svapnavāsavadattam 4.2.

pearls or a wreath of white water-lilies adorning a young girl:

"saikāvalīva rājati sasitotpalamālinī sahāseva |
nāthavatīva ca dig yaiḥ kauberī saptabhir munibhiḥ ||
dhruvanāyākopadeśān norinarṭtīvottarā bhramadbhiś ca |
yaiś cāram ahaṁ tesāṁ kathayisye vṛddhagargamatāt" || (18)

Such references as these lead in turn to the next category of references: which speak in mythological terms of the Saptarṣis in the sky, and which also account in mythological or similar terms for both individual Ṛsis and also the Saptarṣi group being transferred to the sky and appearing as stars.

(b) Mythological References.

General references in the earlier literature relate that the Rsis - or variantly the Aṅgirasas, concerning whom there occurs an entire myth-cycle in the Vedic Saṁhitās and the Brāhmana texts - gain heaven (Divam, Svar, Svargaloka and similar) through the performance of sacrifice or tapas or through the chanting of hymns (see next section). Much the same idea is to be found also in the later literature: as for example in a passage in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas, which relates that the Saptarṣis went to heaven (Divam) after abandoning their clothes at a Tīrtha called Svargamārgapradam or "that which bestows the way to heaven":

"svargamārgapradam nāma tīrtham sadyo varapradam |
cīrāny utsrjya yasmins tu divam saptarṣayo gatāḥ" || (19)

A more general passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata speaks of the stars in the sky as being the self-illuminated bodies of Rsis and others: explaining that they have attained such a status on account of their performance of tapas and of good deeds:

"svayaiva prabhayā tatra dyotante punyalabdhayā ||
tārārūpani yāniha drśyante dyutimanti vai |
dīpavaḥ viprakṛstatvād anūni sumahānty api ||
tāni tatra prabhāsvanti rūpavanti ca pāṇḍavaḥ |
dadarśa svesu dhīṣṇyeṣu dīptimanti svayārciṣā ||
tatra rajarsayah siddha vīrāś ca nihata yudhi |
tapasā ca jitasvargāḥ sampetaḥ śatasamghaśah ||
...
ete sukṛtinah pārtha svesu dhīṣṇyeṣv avasthitāḥ |
yān dr̥ṣṭavan asi vibho tārārūpani bhūtaḥ" || (20)

The passage may be seen to express a particular cosmological view, as to the nature of the stars in the sky: and it may accordingly be related to the allied idea of how the Saptarṣis themselves became transferred to the sky through their performance of sacrifice, of good deeds, and of tapas (see further in the following section).

(19) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.13.62 : Vāyu Purāna 2.15.60.

(20) Mahābhārata 3.43.29-35.

The myth of Viśvāmitra transferring Triśaṅku to the sky²³⁷ in bodily form is related on several occasions in the Epic texts.⁽²¹⁾ In its basic form, the myth commences by telling that Triśaṅku sought to gain in bodily form a place in the sky (variously referred to as Divam, Devaloka, Svargaloka): and that Viśvāmitra granted his desire - in opposition to the wishes of Vasiṣṭha - through the performance of a sacrifice. The accounts of this myth then relate that Indra refused to allot Triśaṅku a place in the sky: whereupon Viśvāmitra became filled with anger, and created another set of Saptarṣis and Nakṣatras in the southern region:

"sr̥jan daks̥inam̐rgasthān saptar̥ṣīn aparān punah ||
naks̥atramālām aparām asr̥jat krodham̐rchitah" | (22)

"ati naks̥atravams̐sāms̐ ca kruddho naks̥atrasampadā |
prati śravanap̐urvāni naks̥atrāni sasarja yah" || (23)

It may be noted that the Epic accounts of the myth of Triśaṅku end by relating that Indra eventually allowed Triśaṅku to remain in bodily form in the sky: and that the Gods also permitted the new group of Nakṣatras and of Saptarṣis created by Viśvāmitra so to remain. Thus Viśvāmitra makes his request that they should remain as long as the worlds endure:

"naks̥atrāni ca sarvāni māmakāni dhruvāny atha ||
yāval lokā dharisyanti tiṣṭhantv etāni sarvaśah" |

to which the assembled Gods reply:

"evam bhavatu bhadram te tiṣṭhantv etāni sarvaśah |
gagane tāny anekāni vaiśvānarapathād bahih ||
naks̥atrāni munis̐restha tesu jyotihsu jājvalan" | (24)

The references in these passages to the creation by Viśvāmitra of another Saptarṣi group, and of another system of Nakṣatras commencing with Śravanā, lead to the consideration of a further issue: namely

(21) e.g. Rāmāyana 1.56.10-1.59.73 : Mahābhārata 1.165.20-42: 13.3.9.

(22) Rāmāyana 1.59.20-21.

(23) Mahābhārata 1.65.34.

(24) Rāmāyana 1.59.25-28.

that of the different reckonings - as between the Epic, Purānic and astronomical texts - of the astronomical system of the Saptarsi Yuga. The full details of this system will be examined in detail in section 5 of this Chapter: but in the present context, two particular points may be singled out which arise from the above-quoted passages.

In the first place, the fact that Viśvāmitra is said to create another Saptarsi group - as also another set of Nakṣatras - in the southern region, in contrast to the more usual situation of the Saptarsi group in the northern region (see Chapter 3), may be taken to suggest that such an alternative series of Saptarsis and Nakṣatras was in some way connected with the southern region. Such a suggestion would thus be parallel to the further suggestions advanced on other grounds in Chapter 3 that the second main list of the Saptarsi group is itself associated especially with a regional and cultural context which is of a more southern orientation than that evident in the earlier texts. Such a question of regional association will be returned to at the end of section 5.

In the second place, it may be noted that Viśvāmitra is in the above-quoted passages said to create both a new Saptarsi group and also a new group of Nakṣatras commencing with Śravaṇā. It has already been seen that there are two main groups of the Saptarsis evident in the literary traditions: one of which appears only from the Epic texts onwards - which are also the texts which speak of the creation of such a "new" group of Saptarsis by Viśvāmitra. It may also be noted that these same texts give evidence of two different enumerations or orderings of the Nakṣatras. As already indicated, the full details of these two different systems are implicated in the chronology of the Saptarsi Yuga: and they will accordingly be examined in detail in section 5. In the present context the evidence for two such variant systems may be set out, prior to its detailed

consideration in that section.

The passages quoted above imply that, whereas the system of Nakṣatras was usually considered to commence with Kṛttikā - as from the Yajurveda texts onwards - that created by Viśvāmitra began with Śravaṇā, which was earlier called Śronā and listed as either the 20th of the 27 Nakṣatras or the 21st of the 28 Nakṣatras. On a mythological level, similar information is conveyed by those passages which tell that Skanda allotted the Kṛttikās a place in the sky which was formerly occupied by Abhijit.⁽²⁵⁾ In the early lists of 28 Nakṣatras,⁽²⁶⁾ Abhijit immediately precedes Śronā/Śravaṇā: thus in this account Abhijit is omitted from the list of Nakṣatras - thereby leaving only 27 - and the Kṛttikās adopt a position immediately adjacent to that of Śravaṇā. The passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata which gives this account also relates that Brahmā created the Nakṣatras as commencing with Dhanīsthā - which was earlier called Śraviṣṭhā, and listed as either the 21st of the 27 Nakṣatras or the 22nd of the 28 Nakṣatras:

"dhanīsthādis tadā kālo brahmaṇā parinirmītaḥ" | (27)

Thus with this passage, there are now two alternative commencements of the Nakṣatras: one with Śravaṇā, and the other with Dhanīsthā.

The astronomer Vrddha Garga observed that in his day - namely around the end of the 1st century B.C. - there were two alternative enumerations of the Nakṣatras: one commencing with Kṛttikā, used in sacrifices, and another commencing with Śraviṣṭhā/Dhanīsthā, used in other reckonings:

"tesāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ nakṣatranāṃ karmasu kṛttikāḥ prathamam ācakṣate | śraviṣṭhā tu saṅkhyāyāḥ pūrve lagnānāṃ" || (28)

Varāhamihira similarly implies in several passages in his works that

(25) Mahābhārata 3.219.1-11.

(26) e.g. Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 2.13.20 : Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3.1.1.1-2: 3.1.4.1ff : Atharvaveda 19.7.1: 19.8.2: etc.

(27) Mahābhārata 3.219.10.

(28) quoted by Somākara on Vedāṅga-jyotisa 5.

Dhanisthā is to be considered as the first of the Nakṣatras:

"diggrahabhāgaiḥ septabhir ūnaṃ śaśibham dhanisthādyam" || (29)

"śeṣaṃ trinavakabhaktān nakṣatram tad dhanisthādi" || (29a)

A passage in the Āśvamedhika Parvan of the Mahābhārata similarly states that, in its opinion, the Nakṣatras commence with Śravisthā:

"śravisthādīni rksāni rtavaḥ śiśirādayaḥ" || (30)

This latter passage is further complicated by the fact that 12 of the 28 manuscripts referred to in the BORI Critical Edition of the text read "śravanādīni" in place of "śravisthādīni ..": thereby illustrating the different variant reckonings as to the commencement of the Nakṣatras with either Śronā/Śravanā or Śravisthā/Dhanisthā.

The full implications of these passages will be considered in detail in section 5: but in the present context it may be concluded that the reference to the creation by Viśvāmitra of new groups of both Saptarṣis and Nakṣatras may be interpreted as more than a merely poetical or mythological reference.

Several further mythological references implicating the Saptarṣis in the sky relate to Dhruva: who, after performing severe tapas, is given by Brahmā a place in the sky in front of the Saptarṣis:

"tasmai brahmā dadau prītaḥ sthānam ātmasamaṃ prabhuh |
acalam caiva purataḥ saptarṣīnām prajāpatih" || (31)

A passage in the Matsya Purāna further relates that Dhruva is established above the realm of the Saptarṣis, and constitutes the third foot of Viṣṇu:

"ūrdhvottaram rṣibhyas tu dhruvo yatrānusamsthitaḥ |
etat viṣṇupadaṃ divyaṃ tṛtīyaṃ vyomni bhāsvaram" || (32)

A passage in the Anuśāsana Parvan of the Mahābhārata refers to

(29) Pañcasiddhāntikā 12.3.

(29a) Brhājñātaka 26.15, cf. 26.16.

(30) Mahābhārata 14.44.2.

(31) Harivaṃśa 2.10-13 : cf. Matsya Purāna 4.36-37 : Viṣṇu Purāna 1.11.29-56.

(32) Matsya Purāna 124.111 : cf. Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.21.175-176 :
Vāyu Purāna 1.50.221 : Viṣṇu Purāna 2.8.93.

Viśvāmitra as shining in the middle of the Brahmarsis and Dhruva, and as always frequenting the northern region:

"dhruvasyanttanapādasya brahmarsīṅgāṃ tathaiṣa ca |
madhye jvalati yo nityam udicitāśrīto diśam" || (33)

A further passage in the Vana Parvan speaks of all the Saptarsis as shining in the sky - a status which they obtained by honouring the law enjoined by Dhātṛ in the Purānas:

"dhātrā vidhir yo vihitaḥ purāṅsis taṃ pūjayanto narevarya santah |
saptarseyah pārtha divi prabhānti neṣe balasyeti careḍ adharmam" || (34)

Other passages speak of Arundhatī in connection with the Saptarsis in the sky. One passage in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata relates that Arundhatī, by insulting the Muni Vasistha who goes in the middle of the Saptarsis, became a little star next to him:

"arundhatī paryaśaṅkad vasistham r̥sisattamam ||
viśuddhabhāvam atyantam sadā priyahite ratam |
saptarsimadhyagan vīram avamene ca tam munim ||
apadhyanena s̄a tena dhūmaruṅasamaprabhā |
lakṣyālakṣya nābhixūpā nimittam iva lakṣyate" || (35)

One sign of the disturbance of the natural order is said to be when Arundhatī hides or eclipses Vasistha:

"yā caisā viśrutā rūjams trailokye s̄adhuseṅgetā |
arundhatī tayēpy eṣa vasisthaḥ pr̥sthataḥ kṛtaḥ" || (36)

One further group of mythological references relate to events at the end of each Manvantara and Kalpa: when the Saptarsis are said to move from Mahar to Jana Loka.⁽³⁷⁾ Such references may be said to refer to the Saptarsis as figures involved in a particular cosmological view: and they have been discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

(33) Mahābhārata 13.3.15.

(34) Mahābhārata 3.26.13.

(35) Mahābhārata 1.224.27-31.

(36) Mahābhārata 6.2.31.

(37) e.g. Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.1.7-21; 3.4.1.185-188; 3.4.2.47-55;
3.4.2.130-140; Vāyu Purāna 2.4.8-22; 2.28.189-193; 2.39.46-58;
Viṣṇu Purāna 6.4.1ff; etc. (see further refs. in Ch.4 sec.3(c)).

(c) Astronomical or Observational References.

A passage from the Brhatsamhitā has already been cited under the heading of Poetical References: and it relates of the Saptarsis that they protect the northern region, and that the entire northern region appears to be dancing around them; and that they are like a string of pearls or a wreath of white water-lilies adorning a young girl. The same passage thereafter continues to relate that they rise constantly in the north-east, together with Arundhatī: and it then enumerates and identifies each of the Saptarsis, commencing with Marīci at the eastern end (who is thus identified with η Ursa Major), next to whom is Vasistha with Arundhatī adjacently positioned, and so forth for the other Rsis. It may be noted that the passage thus equates Vasistha with ζ Ursa Major, and Arundhatī with the star Alcor next to him:

"prāguttarataś caite sadodayante sasādhvikāh ||
pūrve bhāge bhagavān marīcir apare sthito vasistho 'smāt |
tasyāngirās tato 'tris tasyāsannah pulastyaś ca ||
pulahah kratur iti bhagavān āsanā anukramena pūrvādyāh |
tatra vasistham munivaram upāśritārundhatī sādhi" || (38)

The passage has already been discussed in Chapter 2 section 2(c): and it need not be further commented upon at this stage.

A passage in the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata gives an instruction that soldiers should fight with the Saptarsis at their back - that is to say, with their backs to the north and facing towards the south:

"saptarsīn prsthatah kṛtvā yudhyerann acalā iva" | (39)

A passage in the Kāma Sūtra similarly makes reference to the Saptarsis in the sky: and relates that, after intercourse, the man should point out to the woman the collection of Nakṣatras and the garland of Arundhatī, Dhruva and the Saptarsis. It terms such a

(38) Brhatsamhitā 13.1-6.

(39) Mahābhārata 12.101.16.

sight the "consummation of pleasure":

"tadañkasamlināyāś candramasam paśyantya naksatrapaaktivyaktīkaranam ||
arundhatīdhruvasaptarsimālādarśanam ceti ratāvasānikam" || (40)

A passage in the Yājñavalkya Dharma Śāstra describes various constellations in the sky, and speaks of those many Munis in Devaloka who inhabit the region between the Nāgavīthī and the Saptarsis:

"saptarsināgavīthyante devalokam samāśritāḥ |
tāvanta eva munayah sarvārambhavivarjitāḥ" || (41)

According to Varāhamihira and other writers,^(41a) the Nāgavīthī represents the course of Venus or the Moon through the Nakṣatras Svāti (or Aśvinī), Bharanī, and Kṛttikā: hence the passage may accordingly be interpreted as indicating that the Munis inhabit either the space which is in a direct line through Dhruva (♄ Draconis) between the two sets of star-groups (along the 30°-210° longitudinal axis), or the space which is between the latitudes of the Saptarsis (55°-60° north) and the said Nakṣatras (0°, i.e. on both the ecliptic and the equator. An idea corresponding to the latter concept is to be found in several of the early Purānic texts: which relate that the path of the Devas lies to the north of the sphere of Savitṛ, to the north of the Nāgavīthī, and to the south of the Saptarsis; and which also relate that the inhabitants of that region include Siddhas, Brahmacārins and others:

"nāgavīthyuttaram yac ca saptarsibhyaś ca daksinam |
uttarah savituh panthā devayānaś ca smṛtaḥ ||
tatra te vāsinah siddhā vimalā brahmacārinaḥ" | (42)

The early Purānic texts also contain several further references to the position of the Saptarsis in the sky: usually stating that

(40) Kāma Sūtra 2.10.21-22.

(41) Yājñavalkya Dharma Śāstra 3.187.

(41a) e.g. Brhatsamhitā 9.1-2.

(42) e.g. Visnu Purāna 2.8.85-86 : Brahmandā Purāna 1.2.21.168-169 :
Vāyu Purāna 1.50.216-217.

this is 100,000 Yojanas above the position of Śani (Saturn), while Dhruva in turn lies above the realm of the Saptarsis:

"ūrdhvaṃ śatasahasraṃ tu yojanānāṃ śanaīscarāt ||
 saptarsimandalam kṛtsnam uparisthāt prakāśate |
 rsibhyas tu sahasrānāṃ śatād ūrdhvaṃ vibhāsyate ||
 yo 'sau tāramaye divye vimāne hrasvarūpake |
 uttānapādaputro 'sau medhibhūto dhruvo divi" || (43)

Such passages may in turn be linked with the Mythological References which speak of Dhruva as being established above the realm of the Saptarsis. They may also be taken to indicate that the Saptarsis in the sky represent the constellation Ursa Major, closest to Dhruva or the symbolic "centre" of the sky - the fixed point around which all the other stars and constellations would appear to be turning.

It may be noted that in several contexts in the early Purānic texts the term Saptārcis would appear to be used as a synonym of the Saptarsis. A passage in the Brahmandā Purāna, for example, relates that certain verses of praise were resorted to by the Saptārcis or Seven Bright Ones and by the Ganas of Brahmarsis:

"etaḍ uktaṃ ca saptārcirbrahmarsiganasevitam" | (44)

A further passage in the Vāyu Purāna refers to the Saptārcis as bestowers of boons, an epithet which is similarly applied to the Saptarsis:

"saptārciṣaṃ pravakṣyāmi sarvakāmapradam śubham ||

 saptarsīnāṃ pitṛnāṃ ca tān namasyāmi kāmadān" || (45)

Thus it may be inferred that in such contexts the term Saptārcis is used in order to designate the Saptarsi group: and it may be noted that such a term is itself implicated in the concept of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky, through referring to their shining

(43) e.g. Brahmandā Purāna 3.4.2.133-135; 1.2.24.122 : Vāyu Purāna 2.39.134-135; 1.53.97 : Viṣṇu Purāna 2.7.9-10 : Matsya Purāna 128.74.

(44) Brahmandā Purāna 2.3.11.30.

(45) Vāyu Purāna 2.12.20-22.

or bright nature.

Several further references to the Saptarsi group are to be found in various of the astronomical works:⁽⁴⁶⁾ but since such references are mainly of a technical nature, they need not be cited in the present context.

(46) e.g. Sūrya Siddhānta 13.309 : Mahāsiddhānta 1.11: 2.9 :
Brhatsamhitā 2.5: 11.33-34: 47.12: 48.55ff.

Section 4 : The Transference of the Saptarṣis to the Sky.

(a) The Intermediary Role of Fire.

The elemental principle of fire is characterised primarily as being that force which, rising from the earth, ascends to the sky which is the abode of the Gods. As such, fire is one of the principal links and means of communication between the earth and the sky, and between men and the Gods: and in this capacity it is sanctified through incorporation within a sacrificial cult, wherein the sacrificial fire is revered as that which forms a bond between men on the earth and the Gods in the sky. Agni - the fire personified - has as one of his chief roles the task of conveying the sacrifices of men to the Gods: and as such he is the intermediary between men and the Gods, between the world of men and the world of the Gods.

Throughout the Vedic Samhitās and the Brāhmanas in particular, Fire or Agni not only conveys the sacrifices to the Gods: he is also the means whereby first the Gods, and subsequently the Rsis, attain a place in the sky or in heaven, which is the abode of the Gods (Svar, Svargaloka, Suvargaloka, Devaloka and similar). A passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā relates for example that the Gods went to Suvargaloka by means of Agni or Fire:

"agninā vai devāḥ suvargam lokam āyan" | (47)

Further passages similarly relate that the Gods went to Suvargaloka by means of the sacrifice:

"yajñena vai devāḥ suvargam lokam āyan" | (48)

In like manner a passage in the Atharvaveda relates that it was through Agni that the Gods went to Svar:

"yena devāḥ svar āruruhur hitvā śarīram amṛtasya nābhim" | (49)

(47) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.3.9.

(48) Taittirīya Samhitā 6.3.4 : Śatapatha Brāhmana 1.6.2.1.

(49) Atharvaveda 4.11.6.

Thus Fire appears in such contexts not merely as an active intermediary between heaven and earth, moving between the two and conveying sacrifices from the earth to the sky: it is also a passive principal, acting as the means which enables others to move between heaven and earth and to gain transference from the earth to the sky.

(b) Fire as the Means whereby the Rsis attain Svargaloka.

The myth-cycle of the Sacrifice of the Ādityas and Aṅgirasas relates, in many varied forms, how first the Ādityas or Gods and after them the Aṅgirasas or Rsis attained Svargaloka through the performance of sacrifice. Such accounts are given throughout the Vedic Saṁhitās, the Brāhmanas and the Sūtras; and the basic form recounts that the Ādityas and Aṅgirasas sacrificed with Agni/Fire to Agni, and thereby went to Svargaloka:

"ādityāś caivehaśan aṅgiraśāś ca te 'gre 'gnināgnim ayajanta
te svargam lokam āyan" | (50)

"agnim auvārabhāmahe hotrvūrye purohitam |
yenāyam uttamam svar devā aṅgiraśo divam iti" || (51)

A great many variants of this theme occur throughout these texts.

Thus for example it is said in some versions that the Ādityas, having attained Svargaloka through sacrifice, gave to the Aṅgirasas as a Dakṣiṇā the sun in the form of a white horse:

"ādityāś ca vā aṅgiraśāś ca svarge loke 'spardhanta athaitēbhya
etaṁ ādityā adityam evāśvam śvetam bhūtam aśvābhidhānyabhihitam
ānayam imam u vai pratigrhṇitēti tato vā ādityāḥ pūrve svargam
lokam agaccham ahiyantāṅgiraśāś sa yo bhrātrvyavān syād yo
'bhicared ya spardheta sa etena yajeta hiyate 'sya pāpma bhrātrvyo
gacchati svargam lokam" || (52)

It is similarly said in some passages that the sacrificer himself will attain Svargaloka by performing such a sacrifice:

"ādityāś caṅgiraśāś ca svarge loke 'spardhanta ta ādityāḥ pūrve
svargam lokam agaccham ahiyantāṅgiraśāś iti sa ya etena procyā
bhrātrvyāya yajate sa eva bhavati parāśya dviśan bhrātrvyo
bhavati" | (53)

(50) Aitareya Brāhmana 1.16.

(51) Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra 24.12.7 : Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra 1.3.28.

(52) Jaiminīya Brāhmana 2.115-117 : cf. Śatapatha Brāhmana 3.5.1.13-23 :
Pañcaviṅśa Brāhmana 16.12.1-4 : Jaiminīya Brāhmana 3.187-188 :
Aitareya Brāhmana 6.34-35 : Kauśītaki Brāhmana 30.6 : Taittirīya
Brāhmana 3.9.21.1 : Śākāyana Śrauta Sūtra 12.19.1-5.

(53) Jaiminīya Brāhmana 2.122-124.

Further variants of this same myth-cycle expand upon the basic theme: ⁽⁵⁴⁾ and also tell how individual Āngirases attained Svargaloka. ⁽⁵⁵⁾

Moving on from this particular myth-cycle, other passages relate how the Ṛsis in general attained Svargaloka. Several passages relate that the Gods, having attained Svargaloka by sacrifice, hid the traces of sacrifice in the Yūpa - fearing lest men might follow them and equal them; but that the Ṛsis then discovered that Loka through the Yūpa:

"yajñena vai devāḥ suvargam lokam āyan te 'manyanta manasyā no 'nvābhaviṣyantīti te yūpena yopayitvā suvargam lokam āyan tam ṛsayo yūpenaivānu prajānan tad yūpasya yūpatvam" || (56)

Another version in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa relates that the Ṛsis, while searching for the traces of sacrifice which the Gods had hidden, came to the place whence the Gods had gone to Svargaloka and there discovered the sacrifice crawling in the form of a tortoise; this they eventually sacrificed to Agni, and thereby attained their goal of Svargaloka:

"yajñena vai devāḥ | imāṃ jitiṃ jigyur yaiśāṃ iyaṃ jitis te hocuḥ katham na idaṃ manasyair anabhyārohyam syād iti te yajñasya resam dhītvā yathā madhu madhukṛto nirdhayeyur viduhyā yajñam yūpena yopayitvā tiro 'bhavan || te (ṛsayah) 'rcantah śrāmyantaś ceruḥ | preta tadesyāmo yato devāḥ svargam lokam samāśnuvateti te kim prarocate kim prarocata iti cerur et purodāśam eva kūrmaṃ bhūtvā sarpantam te ha sarva 'eva menire 'yam vai yajña iti || te hocuḥ |

(54) e.g. Taittirīya Samhitā 2.6.3.2-4: 3.1.9: 5.2.8.4-5: 5.4.2: 5.4.3: 5.7.2: 6.1.1: 6.1.3: 6.2.6 : Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā 3.6.7: 3.8.4 : Atharvaveda 18.1.61 : Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 4.17: 4.32: 5.14 : Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 18.10 : Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 12.2.2.9ff : Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 1.224 : Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa 16.14.2: 24.2.2: 24.16.2 : Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra 14.40.1.

(55) e.g. Taittirīya Samhitā 7.1.4 : Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 3.24 : Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 1.183: 2.235: 3.56: 3.76-77: 3.216 : Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa 8.9.5: 12.3.23: 12.5.16: 12.6.12: 12.11.10-11: 13.11.22: 14.5.25: 14.10.9: 15.5.11: 20.11.3-4.

(56) Taittirīya Samhitā 6.3.4.

.... agnaye tisthēti tatas tasthāv agnaye vā asthād iti tam agnāv
 eva parigrhya sarvahutam ajuhavur āhutir hi devānām tata 'ebhyo
 yajñah prārocata || yatkāmā vā etam rsayo 'juhavuh sa ebhyah
 kāmah samardhyata" || (57)

Thus in such passages it is through Agni or Fire in the context of
 sacrifice that the Rsis attain their wish of gaining Svargaloka.

Fire itself may be said to be compounded of two primary
 elements: namely heat and light. On occasions only one of these
 elements is said to act as the means for attaining Svargaloka -
 as for example in a passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā, where the
 Gods, the Ādityas and others are said to have gone upwards through
 light, by which also the Āngirases are said to have attained
 greatness:

"yena devā jyotiṣordhvā udāyan yenādityā vasavo yena rudrāh |
 yenāṅgirasō mahimānam ānaśus tenai tu yajamānah svasti" || (58)

A further passage in the same work similarly relates that when the
 Āngirases attained Svargaloka, they gave to the Rsis accomplishment
 of sacrifice, which became gold - and it is through golden light
 that the sacrificer attains Svargaloka:

"āṅgirasah suvargam lokam yanto yā yajñasya niskrtir āsīt tām
 rsibhyah pratyauhan tad dhiraṇyam abhavat yad dhiraṇyaśalkaih
 prokṣati yajñasya niskrtyai atho bhesajam evāsmāi karoti ||
 atho rūpenaivainam samardhayati atho hiranyajyotiṣaiva suvargam
 lokam eti" || (59)

The elements of heat and light appear not only in the external
 form of the sacrifice, but also - and more especially in the Epic
 and early Purānic texts - in the internal form of asceticism or
tapas: namely in the performance of austerities which internalise
 heat (tap), thereby affording a further means whereby the Rsis
 attain Svargaloka. Thus a passage in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa relates

(57) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.6.2.1-7.

(58) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.7.2.2.

(59) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.4.2.3-4.

that the Saptarsis attained Svargaloka after performing tapas,
śrama and vrata:

"rsayo ha vai svargam lokam jigryuh śramena tapasā vratacaryena
te 'kamayanta prajā asmil loke vidhāya svargam lokam gacchemeti
.... tato vai te prajā asmil loke vidhāya svargam lokam agacchan
prajā evāsmil loke vidhāya svargam lokam gacchati ye evam
veda" | (60)

In a similar manner a passage in the Anuśāsane Parvan of the
Mahābhārata continues the same basic idea, in relating that the
Saptarsis sought to attain Brahmaloka through the performance of
tapas:

"kaśyapo 'trir vasisthaś ca bharaḍvōjo 'tha gautamaḥ |
viśvamitro jamadagniḥ sādhvī caivāpy arundhatī ||
....
te vai sarve tapasyantah purā cerur mahim imān |
samādhinopāśikṣanto brahmalokam sanātanam" || (61)

So too a more general passage in the Vana Parvan relates that when
Arjuna travels through Svarga or the sky, he observes that what are
seen from the earth as stars are in fact the self-illuminated bodies
of Isis and others who have attained Svarga through the performance
of tapas and of good deeds:

"svayaiva prabhayā tatra dyotante punyalabdhayā ||
tārārūpaṇi yāniha drśyante dyutimanti vai |
....
dadarśa svesu dhisnyesu dīptimanti svayārcisā ||
tatra rājarsayah siddhā vīrāś ca nihatā yudhi |
tapasā ca jitasvargāḥ sampetuh śatasamghaśah ||
....
ete sukṛtinah pārtha svesu dhisnyesv avasthitān |
yan dr̥ṣṭavān asi vibho tārārūpaṇi bhūtale" || (62)

Thus it is through the medium of Fire - both as the external heat

(60) Jaiminiya Brāhmana 2.218-221.

(61) Mahābhārata 13.94.4-6.

(62) Mahābhārata 3.43.29-35.

and light of the sacrifice, and also as the internal heat and light of tapas or asceticism - that the Rsis are transferred from the earth to the sky, to take up their abode in the world of the Gods and to shine as stars in the sky.

(c) The Rsis as embodiments of Fire-Agni.

Agni is frequently said to have been given birth by the Rsis. In places - from the Rgveda onwards - his birth is ascribed to an individual Rsi, such as Atharvan:

"tvām agne puskarād adhy atharvā niramantahata |
mūrdhno viśvasya vāghatah" || (63)

In other contexts - as in a passage in the Atharvaveda - it is said that the Saptarsis gave birth to Agni:

"agne jāyasvāditir nāthiteyam brahmaudanam pacati putrakāmā |
sapta rsayo bhūtakṛtas te tvā manthantu prajāyā saheha ||
....
sapta rsayo bhūtakṛtas te tvājījanam asyai rayim sarvavīram ni yaccha" ||
(64)

Agni is also said to possess seven Rsis, just as he possesses seven tongues and similar:

"sapta te agne samidhah sapta jihvah sapta rsayah sapta dhāma priyāni" |
(65)

On other occasions Agni is very frequently identified with the Rsi Angiras, and is called the first Angiras:

"tvam agne prathamo aṅgirā rsir devo devānām abhavaḥ śivah sakha" | (66)

A still closer identification between Agni and the Rsis occurs in a passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa; where it is said that the Rsis, as the Prānas, constitute the very being of Agni:

(63) Rgveda 6.16.13 : Taittirīya Samhitā 3.5.11: 4.1.3: 4.4.4 :
Vājasaneyi Samhitā 11.32: 15.22 : Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 1.16 :
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 6.4.2.2.

(64) Atharvaveda 11.1.1-3.

(65) Taittirīya Samhitā 1.5.3 : Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā 1.6.2 : Vājasaneyi
Samhitā 17.79.

(66) Rgveda 1.31.1 : cf. Rgveda 1.31.17: 1.75.2: 4.3.15: 4.9.7: 5.8.4:
5.10.7: 5.11.6: 5.21.1: 6.2.10: 6.16.11: 8.60.2: 8.74.11: 8.75.5:
8.84.8: 8.102.17 : Taittirīya Samhitā 1.2.12: 1.3.14: 2.5.8:
2.6.11: 4.1.4: 4.2.1: 4.4.4: 5.1.5: 6.2.7 : Vājasaneyi Samhitā
11.45: 12.117: 15.28: 34.12 : Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā 1.7.1: 2.7.4:
2.7.6: 2.7.8: 2.13.7: 3.1.3 : Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.4.1.25:
3.5.1.32: 6.1.4.4: 6.7.3.6: 7.3.2.8: 6.3.3.3-4: 6.4.1.1-2:
6.3.1.38-41: 6.4.4.14: etc.

"etad vai yatraitam prāṇaḥ ṛsayo 'gre 'gnim samaskurvams tad
asminn etam purastād bhāgam akurvata tasmāt purastād bhāgāh" | (67)

All of these passages suggest a relatively early identification of Agni with the Ṛsis: and indeed an assimilation of Agni - the principle of Fire - to the Ṛsis, whereby Fire is seen as a constituent element within the nature of the Ṛsis.

The role of the Ṛsis as embodiments of Agni remains an important theme throughout the mythological traditions of the Saptarṣis: and the Ṛsis - either individually or as a group - are frequently envisaged as embodiments of Fire, containing within themselves that combination of heat and brilliance which is the result of severe asceticism or tapas. The following Epic passages may be cited in illustration of this point.

i. When Viśvāmitra performs severe tapas while attempting to attain the status of a Brahmarsi, the Gods go in fear to Brahmā, complaining that the three worlds are troubled and the sun dimmed by Viśvāmitra who resembles Agni in appearance: and that, just as Kāla or time in the form of Fire consumes the entire universe at the dissolution, so too will Viśvāmitra:

"bahubhiḥ kṛṇānair deva viśvāmitro mahāmuniḥ |
.....
tāvāt prasādyo bhagavān agnirūpo mahādyutiḥ ||
kālaguṇinā yathā pūrva trailokyam dahyate 'khilam |
devarājyam cikīrṣeta dīyatam asya yan matam" || (68)

In a passage in the Ādi Parvan of the Mahābhārata, Menakā similarly complains to Indra that Viśvāmitra is like a blazing fire, with eyes that resemble both sun and moon, and can burn the three worlds through the power of his tejas or fiery energy:

"mahātejāḥ sa bhagavān sadaiva ca mahātapāḥ |
.....

(67) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 7.2.3.5: 9.1.2.21.

(68) Rāmāyana 1.64.5-18.

tejasā nirdahel lokān kampayed dharanīm pada |
 samkṣipeca mahāmerum tūrnā avartayet tathā ||
 tādrśam tapasā yuktaṃ pradīptam iva pāvakam |
 katham asmavidhā balā jitendriyam abhispr̥set ||
 hutāśanamukham dīptam sūryacandrāksitārakam" | (69)

ii. When the sons of Vasistha are slain, Vasistha in grief attempts on five occasions to kill himself: but when he throws himself into the rivers and the ocean they reject him, and the river Śatadru mistakes him for Agni and flees from him:

"tadāgnim iddhvā bhagavān samviveśa mahāvane ||
 tam tadā susamidho 'pi na dadāha hutāśanah |
 dīpyamāno 'py amitraghno śīto 'gnir abhavat tatah ||

 tatah sa punar evarsir nadīm haimavacīm tadā |
 candagrāhavatīm dr̥stvā tasyah srotasy avāpatat ||
 sā tam agnisamam vipram anucintya saridvarā |
 śatadhā vidrutā yasmāc chatadrur iti viśrutā" | (70)

iii. When Agni goes to a wood to perform tapas, Angiras takes his place and becomes Agni - heating the worlds, destroying darkness, and carrying oblations to the Gods. Agni thereupon becomes distressed, thinking that Brahmā has installed another Agni and that his own status as Agni has been destroyed; but Angiras persuades him to reassume his former role, in return for giving him a son:

"yathā kruddho hutavahas tapas taptum vanam gatah ||
 yathā ca bhagavān agnih svayam evāṅgirā 'bhavat |
 samtāpayamś ca prabhayā nāśayams timirāni ca ||
 āśramastho mahābhāgo havyavāham viśesayan |
 tathā sa bhūtvā tu tadā jagat sarvam prakāśayan ||
 tapaś caramś ca hutabhuk samtaptas tasya tejasā |
 bhr̥śam glānaś ca tejasvī na sa kim cit prajajñivān ||
 atha sancintayāmāsa bhagavān havyavāhanah |

(69) Mahābhārata 1.65.27-38.

(70) Mahābhārata 1.166.42 - 1.167.9.

anyo 'gnir iha lokānām brahmanā sampravartitah |
 agnitvam vipranastam hi tapyamanasya me tapah ||
 katham agnih punar aham bhaveyam iti cintya sah |
 apaśyad agnival lokāms tāpayantam mahāmuniḥ ||
 sopāsarpac chanair bhītas tam uvāca tadāṅgirāḥ |
 śighram eva bhavasvāgnis tvam punar lokabhāvanah |

....

kuru puṇyam prajāsvargyam bhavāgnis timirāpahah |
 mā ca deva kuruśvāgne prathamam putram aṅjasā" || (71)

In a similar myth it is again related that Atharvan once took the place of Agni.⁽⁷²⁾

iv. Just as the waters of the earth are said to be consumed by Agni at the dissolution of the three worlds - in his form as Kālāgni - so too Aṅgiras, like Agastya, is said to have drunk the ocean through the power of his tejas as if it were milk:

"apibat tejasā hy āpah svayam evāṅgirāḥ purā ||
 sa tāḥ piban ksīram iva nātrpyata mahātapāḥ" || (73)

v. It is related of the Sons created by Brahmā that their splendour is equal to that of Fire and the sun:

"asṛjad brāhmanān eva pūrvam brahmā prajāpatih |
 ātmatejo 'bhinirvṛttān bhāskarāgnisamaprahān" || (74)

All of these passages thus demonstrate that the Rsis are themselves regarded as embodiments of Agni: inasmuch as they possess an equal brilliance and heat, which has been acquired through the performance of severe tapas.

(71) Mahābhārata 3.207.6-20.

(72) Mahābhārata 3.212.1-30.

(73) Mahābhārata 13.138.3-4 : cf. 13.139.9-30.

(74) Mahābhārata 12.181.1.

(d) The Rsis as Suns.

One of the main functions of Agni or Fire is to disperse darkness and lighten the worlds, in addition to heating them; as for example Agni is told by Āngiras:

"tvam agne prathamah sṛṣṭo brahmanā timirāpahah |

....

kuru puṇyam prajāsvargyam bhavāgnis timirāpahah" | (75)

Agni thus shares this role or function with the sun, the destroyer of darkness and the heater of the worlds: and just as the Rsis are said to be embodiments of - and to take the place of - Agni or Fire, so too they are on occasions said to be embodiments of - and to take the place of - the Sun. Several instances will have been noted in the passages in the last sub-section: and the following further passages may be cited in illustration of this point.

i. In the Rg and Atharva Vedas and throughout the Brāhmana texts, Atri is said to have rediscovered, rescued and restored the sun after it had been struck by Svarbhānu:

"atrir sūryasya divi cakṣur ādhāt svarbhānor apa māyā aghukṣat" | (76)

"ādityam hi tamo jagrāha tad atrir apamunoda tad atrir anvapaśyāt" | (77)

In the Mahābhārata, Atri not merely rescues the sun: in a passage in the Ādi Parvan, when the sun disappears, Atri himself takes its place and becomes visible:

"yaś cedito bhāskare 'bhūt prajāṣṭe so 'py atrātrir bhagavān ājagāma" | (78)

Another passage in the Anuśāsana Parvan relates that both Soma and Sūrya were pierced with arrows by Svarbhānu, and the worlds fell into darkness: whereupon Atri, at the request of the Gods, himself

(75) Mahābhārata 3.207.6-20.

(76) Rgveda 5.40.5-9.

(77) Gopatha Brāhmana 1.2.17 : cf. Atharvaveda 13.2.4, .12, .36 :
Kausītaki Brāhmana 24.3 : Satapatha Brāhmana 4.3.4.21 :
Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmana 6.6.8-10: 14.11.14.

(78) Mahābhārata 1.114.39-42.

became Candramas and Sūrya, creating brilliance through his tapas
and becoming the darkness-destroying one:

"avidhyata śarais tatra svarbhānuḥ somabhāskarau ||
atha te tamasā grastā nihanyante sma dānavaiḥ |
....
apaśyanta tapasyantam atrim vipram mahāvane ||
.... (astrir uvāca:)
katham raksāmi bhovatas te 'bruvamś candramā bhava |
timiraghnaś ca savitā dasyuhā caiva no bhava ||
evam uktas tadātris tu somavat priyadarśanaḥ |
apaśyat saumyabhāvam ca sūryasya pratidarśanam ||
dr̥stvā nātīprabham somam tathā sūryam ca pāṛthiva |
prakāśam akarod atris tapasā svena samyuge ||
jagad vitimiram cāpi pradīptam akarot tadā |
vyajayac chatrusaṅghāmś ca devānām svena tejasē ||
atrinā dahyamānām tām dr̥stvā devā mahāsuraḥ" | (79)

ii. When Vasistha acts as an intermediary between king Samvarana
and Vivasvat - the Sun - he is himself said to possess the brilliance
of the sun:

"jagāma manasā caiva vasistham ṛsisattamam |
purohitam amitraghnaś tadā samvarano nṛpaḥ ||
....
sa tasya manujendrasya paśyato bhagavaṇ ṛsiḥ |
ūrdhvam ācakrame dr̥stum bhāskaram bhāskaradyutiḥ" || (80)

On further occasions Vasistha is again said to possess the brilliance
of the sun:

"vasistham śreṣṭham āsīnam ṛsīnam bhāskaradyutiḥ |
papraccha janako rājā jñānam naiḥśreyasaṁ param" || (81)

His splendour is in one passage said to transcend that of the sun:

"yam mānasam vai pravadanti putram pitāmahasyottamabuddhiyuktam |
vasistham agryam tapaso nidhānam yaś cāpi sūryam vyatiricya bhāti" ||

(82)

(79) Mahābhārata 13.141.1-11.

(80) Mahābhārata 1.162.10 - 1.163.10.

(81) Mahābhārata 12.291.7-9.

(82) Mahābhārata 12.337.47.

Similar descriptions are also given of other R̥sis: as for example of Viśvāmitra, who on one occasion is said to have become like the sun through his tejas:

"tejasā bhāskarākāro gādhijah samapadyata" || (83)

iii. In two separate passages in the Nirukta the Septar̥sis are identified with the seven rays of the sun:

"saptāsmāi raśmayo rasān abhisannāmayanti |
saptainam ṛṣayah stuvantīti vā" | (84)

"sapta ṛṣayah pratihitāḥ śarīre | raśmaya āditye" | (85)

iv. The Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana relates a tradition that in the after-part of the night, the sun is called Aṅgiras - while at the time of the Ar̥nihotra it is called Bhrgu:

"virātre bhavo bhovasy apararātre 'āgirā agnihotravelāyām bhrguḥ" | (86)

v. In the Śatapatha Brāhmana the tortoise (kūrma) is identified with the sun, which is said to be a form of Prajāpati: and it is also identified with Kaśyapa (= tortoise), whence Kaśyapa is said to be the father of all creatures:

"sa yat kūrmo nāma | etad vai rūpam kṛtvā prajāpatiḥ prajā
asṛjata yad asṛjatakarot tad yad akarot tasmāt kūrmaḥ kaśyapo
vai kūrmas tasmād ānuḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ kaśyapya iti || sa yah
sa kūrmo 'sau sa ādityah" | (87)

The idea of Kaśyapa as the sun appears again in several further contexts. He is in particular associated with the seven suns: thus for example a passage in the Atharvaveda relates that the seven suns

(83) Mahābhārata 9.39.26-27.

(84) Nirukta 4.27 (4.4.6).

(85) Nirukta 12.37 (12.4.3).

(86) Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmana 4.5.3.

(87) Śatapatha Brāhmana 7.5.1.5-6.

are placed together in Kaśyapa, who is bright, full of lustre, and of wondrous light:

"yat te candram kaśyapa rocanāvad yat samhitam puškalam citrabhānu |
yasmin sūryā arpitāḥ sapta sākam" | (88)

A passage in the Taittirīya Samhitā relates the birth of Kaśyapa from the golden waters (āpah):

"hiranyavarnāḥ śucayah pāvakā yāsu jātaḥ kaśyapo yāsv indrah |
agnim yā garbham dadhire virūpās tā na āpah śam syonā bhavantu" || (89)

A corresponding passage is to be found in the Atharvaveda - but here Kaśyapa has been replaced by Savitr:

"hiranyavarnāḥ śucayah pāvakā yāsu jātaḥ savitā yāsv agnih |
yā agnim garbham dadhire suvarnās tā na āpah śam syonā bhavantu" || (90)

Thus a close connection between Kaśyapa and the Sun is again evident here. A passage in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka continues the tradition of Kaśyapa as shining with light, and further relates that Kaśyapa is the eighth sun in whom the other seven suns are placed together. It further adds that all these seven suns derive their light from Kaśyapa, as does also Soma or the moon:

"ārogo bhrājah pataṛah pataṅgah | svarṇaro jyotiśīmān vibhāsaḥ |
te asmaī sarve divam ātapanti | ... kaśyapo 'stamah | ... tasyaiśā
bhavati | yat te śilpam kaśyapa rocanāvat indriyāvat puškalañ
citrabhānu | yasmin sūryā arpitāḥ sapta sākam || ... te asmaī
sarve kaśyapāḥ jyotir labhante | tān somah kaśyapād adhinirdhamati" |

The same passage also relates a tradition that the seven suns are to be identified with the seven Prānas - with which, as was seen in Chapter 1, are identified the Saptarśis:

"prāno jivānindriyajivāni | sapta śīrsanyāḥ prānāḥ | sūryā
ity ācāryāḥ" | (91)

(88) Atharvaveda 13.3.10.

(89) Taittirīya Samhitā 5.6.1.

(90) Atharvaveda 1.33.1.

(91) Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 1.7.1-12.

Although this idea of the Saptarsis as being identical with the seven suns is not generally to be found in further contexts -- as, for example, the seven suns which burn the worlds to ashes at the end of the Kalpa are not identified with the Saptarsis -- it is nevertheless of interest as a further indication of a perceived connection between the Saptarsis on the one hand and the seven suns on the other hand, both emanating equal portions of heat and light.

All of these passages thus demonstrate that the Rsis are here regarded as being equal to or embodiments of the sun: radiating the same heat and brilliance, which has been gained primarily from their wealth of tapas.

(e) The Transference of the Saptarṣis to the Sky.

On the basis of the passages which have been cited and discussed in this section, it may be concluded that the Rṣis are themselves regarded as being endowed with a brilliance - a heat and light - which is equal to that of Fire/Agni and the Sun. As such, they not only contain within themselves the attributes of Fire and the Sun, but they may be said to be embodiments of both Fire and the Sun - containing within themselves the dual principles of heat and light which have been gained primarily through the pursuit and performance of tapas. Just as Fire/Agni acts as an intermediary between the world of men and the world of the Gods, so too the Rṣis are in one sense intermediaries between men and the Gods. In the early Purāṇic texts this idea is formulated into the cosmogonic scheme - associated especially with the Manvantara traditions, as was seen in Chapter 4 - wherein the Saptarṣis, created by Brahmā, are those who complete the work of creation and who give birth to men before returning to the world of the Gods - thus acting as intermediaries between the creator and his creation.

It is through Fire - and through their nature as embodiments of Fire - that the Rṣis attain Svargaloka or the realm of the Gods: and it is also through Fire that the Rṣis become stars in the sky, shining on account of their innate tejas or fiery energy which has been acquired through the performance of tapas. As has been noted, it is not the Saptarṣis alone who become stars in this way: for it is said in several contexts that any man may - through the performance of tapas and good deeds - become a shining object in the sky, shining on account of the light of acquired merit and through a wealth of tapas:

"yasyaitā upadhīyante suvargam eva lokam eti gacchati prakāśam
citram eva bhavati" | (92)

"tatra yo punyākṛtas teṣāṃ prakṛtayah purā jvalantya upalabhyante ||
 syāt tu karmāvayavena tapasā vā kaś cit saśarīro 'ntavantam
 lokam jayati" || (93)

"tatra rājarsayah siddhā vīrās ca nihatā yudhi |
 tapasā ca jitasvargāḥ sampetaḥ śatasamghasāḥ ||

 ete sukṛtinaḥ pārtha sveṣu dhīṣṇyesv avasthitāḥ |
 yān dr̥ṣṭavān asi vibho tārarūpāni bhūtale" || (94)

Just as in the earlier texts the Gods and the Rsis go to the sky - to Svargaloka, to the world of the Gods - through the medium of Fire and the sacrifice, so too at a later stage they are seen to attain the same position - as stars in the sky - not so much through external sacrifice as through the amassing of internal heat or tapas, which is in turn manifested through their own external light and brilliance. Thus the idea of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky - far from being isolated from their role as performers of sacrifice and tapas on the earth - is indeed in mythological terms the logical outcome of that very role as performers of sacrifice and tapas.

(93) Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra 2.9.24.12-14.

(94) Mahābhārata 3.43.29-35.

Section 5 : The Saptarsi Yuga.

(a) Introduction.

One further group of passages remains to be considered in connection with the idea of the Saptarsis as stars in the sky. All of these passages refer to the Saptarsi Yuga, and to the bhoga of the Saptarsis with the Nakṣatras: the term bhoga designating both sexual pleasure - as the Saptarsis are said to have enjoyed when "in" the Kṛttikās - and also astronomical conjunction. The Saptarsi Yuga is used as a method of chronological computation: it rests upon the theory that the Saptarsis remain "in" or conjoined with each of the 27 Nakṣatras in turn for a period of 100 years - thus completing a full cycle in a period of 2700 years. Varāhamihira remarks in this respect that:

"ekaikasminn rkṣe śatam śatam te caranti varṣānām" | (95)

In the early Purānic texts the same basic idea is put forward and elaborated upon - as may be seen from the following passage, which is to be found in several of these texts:

"saptaviṃśatiparyante kṛtsne nakṣatramandale |
saptarsayas tu tiṣṭhanti paryāyena śatam śatam ||
saptarsīnām yugam tv etad divyayā samkhyayā smṛtam |
māsā divyah smṛtaḥ sad ca divyābdāś caiva sapta hi ||
tebhyaḥ pravartate kālo divyah saptarsibhis tu taiḥ |
saptarsīnām tu yau pūrvau drśyete uttarādiśi ||
tayoṛ madhye ca nakṣatram drśyate yat samam divi |
tena saptarsayo yukta jñeyā vyomni śatam samāḥ ||
nakṣatrānām rsīnām ca bhogasyaitan nidarśanam" | (96)

Thus, according to this Purānic theory, the Saptarsis are believed to stay for 100 years in each of the Nakṣatras, whose total number is 27 - rather than 28, as in the earlier Nakṣatra lists in certain

(95) Brhatsamhitā 13.4.

(96) Brahmandā Purāna 2.3.74.231-235 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.413-417 :
Matsya Purāna 273.40-44 : cf. Viṣṇu Purāna 4.24.33-39.

of the Vedic Samhitās, the Brāhmanas and the Sūtras: whereby they are thought to set in motion Divine Time for the Nakṣatras, which consists of seven Divine years and six Divine months. It is said elsewhere that one Divine year is equal to 360 years of men - as for example in a passage in the Matsya Purāna:

"trīṇi varṣaśatāny evaṃ saptir varṣās tathaiva ca |
divyah samvatsaro hy esa mānuseṇa prakīrtitah" || (97)

Hence on this basis $7\frac{1}{2}$ Divine years will be equal to 2700 years of men - as is also stated in the first śloka of the above passage. The theory - as given in the above passage - also maintains that the Saptarṣis remain conjoined with a Nakṣatra when such a Nakṣatra is to be seen in a position between the two first or more eastern stars of the Saptarṣi group - which, according to Varāhamihira's enumeration of the group (see section 3(c)), may be taken to be Marīci (η Ursa Major) and Vasistha (§ Ursa Major). The theory is in effect founded upon something of a misconception: since it is observationally and astronomically incorrect to hold that the stars of Ursa Major move their position in this way relative to each of the Nakṣatras or Lunar Mansions. Various attempts have thus been made to explain this supposed phenomenon: as for example by Kamalākara in the Tattvaviveka who, while observing that no such motion of the stars was perceptible, concluded that since the authority of the Purānas which affirmed such a motion was irrefutable, the stars themselves might be fixed but the Saptarṣis must be invisible deities who performed such a motion in the specified period.⁽⁹⁸⁾

In view of the observational inaccuracy of the theory, it might be inferred that the theory of the Saptarṣis' remaining conjoined with the different Nakṣatras for a period of 100 years represents an attempt to bring the Saptarṣis - as the stars of Ursa Major - into some form of connection with what was originally a

(97) Matsya Purāna 142.12.

(98) cf. H.T. Colebrooke - Miscellaneous Essays, vol.2 p.316.

quite separate system of chronological reckoning in terms of centennial cycles: and it would seem possible that such a system was originally associated with -- and perhaps employed the names of -- the Naksatras. The subsequent association of the Saptarsis with this system might on this basis be seen as a further elaboration of an idea which occurs in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: namely that the Saptarsis had at one time in the past been the husbands of the Kṛttikās, but had subsequently moved away from or "divorced" their wives, who rose in the east while they themselves rose in the north.⁽⁹⁹⁾ Thus the theory of the Saptarsis' remaining conjoined with a Nakṣatra - enjoying bhoga, namely both astronomical conjunction and sexual pleasure, with them - may be traced in origin to such Brāhmaṇa contexts, even though such a conjunction does not occur in astronomical terms: and the development of this theory may thus be said to have occurred upon conceptual and mythological rather than observational grounds. The fact that the theory employs a centennial cycle is a point well worthy of note: for it provides evidence both of a cyclical mode of reckoning - as opposed to further chronological reckonings which are based upon a particular non-recurrent date, such as Kali 3102 B.C., Samvat 58 B.C., or Śaka A.D. 78 - and also of the currency of the concept of a century, from a relatively early time in India.

Despite the observational inaccuracy of the theory, such a system of chronological reckoning has in practice remained of importance from at least the early Purāṇic texts to the present day: for such a system still remains in use, particularly in North-West India and in Kashmir where it is variously referred to by such names as the Lok-Kāl, the Saptarsi-Kāl, and the Pahāri-Samvat or hill-era. Further names for the system include the Saptarsi Yuga (as used for example in the early Purāṇic texts), the Pāṇdu-Kāl (a term used especially by Albīrūnī), and the Laukika (a term used by both Kalhana

(99) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 2.1.2.1-5.

and Albīrūnī, and used also in certain inscriptional contexts).

The Saptarsi Yuga - by which name it will here be referred to - is of considerable importance not only through its use as a method of chronological computation, and through its documentation in the early Purānic and astronomical texts which are presently under review. It is also of importance due to the fact that two rival versions of the system - and two methods of putting the theory into practice - may be discerned: both in the early literary texts and also in later accounts and uses of the system. The remainder of this Chapter will accordingly attempt to elucidate the precise natures of these two different versions of the system.

(b) The Saptarsi Yuga according to Varāhamihira.

An account of the Saptarsi Yuga may commence by noting a statement of Varāhamihira that the Saptarsis were in Maghā when Yudhisthira was ruling, which was 2526 years before the Śaka era:

"āsan maghāsu munayah śāsati pṛthivīm yudhisthire nṛpatau |
saddvikapañcadviyutah śakakālas tasya rajñaś ca" || (100)

The same verse is almost literally copied by Kalhana in a passage in the Rājatarānginī.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Taking the Śaka era as commencing in A.D. 78,⁽¹⁰²⁾ it may be seen that according to this reckoning of Varāhamihira the Saptarsis were thought to have been in the Nakṣatra Maghā during the reign of Yudhisthira, which was 2526 years before the Śaka era - namely in 2448 B.C. In further contexts Varāhamihira details computations which place the date of the Mahābhārata war in 2449 B.C. - thus indicating that, according to his reckoning, the year 2448 B.C. represents the first year of the reign of Yudhisthira.

Varāhamihira - together with other astronomers, such as Parāśara and Āryabhata - also accepts the date of 3102 B.C. as denoting the start of the Kali Yuga. All of these astronomers are therefore obliged to make allowance for the additional period of approximately 650 years which is necessary to bridge the resulting gap between the period of Yudhisthira on the one hand and the date of the start of the Kali Yuga on the other hand. It may be noted here - and will be referred to in subsequent contexts - that Varāhamihira, by accepting that the Saptarsis were in Maghā when Yudhisthira was ruling in 2448 B.C., therefore does not accept that the Saptarsis were in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga, which he places in 3102 B.C.

(100) Brhat-saṁhitā 13.3.

(101) Rājatarānginī 1.56.

(102) It is to be noted that, with this and all subsequent dates, a margin of 1 year must be allowed for: due to the fact that such eras commence usually during the course of a year according to the Christian calendar, namely during the month of Caitrā or March-April.

The later astronomers - namely those such as Varāhamihira around the Gupta period, as opposed to earlier astronomers such as Vrddha Garga around the start of the Christian era - give detailed computations for establishing the motions of the planets and constellations, including those of the Saptarṣis. Āryabhata, for example, gives the following figures which may be presented in summary form:

- a. The total number of years in a Kalpa is 4,320,000,000.⁽¹⁰³⁾
- b. The total number of complete revolutions or cycles of the Saptarṣis in a Kalpa is 1,599,998.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾
- c. Between the dawn of the Kalpa and the start of the Kali Yuga, the total number of years elapsed is 1,972,944,000.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾
- d. To discover the position of a planet or constellation at the start of the Kali Yuga, multiply the total number of revolutions in a Kalpa by 4567 and divide by 10,000.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

It may be noted in (b) that, since 1 complete revolution of the Saptarṣis is said to occur in 2700 years, then a total of 1,600,000 revolutions will in fact occur in 4,320,000,000 years: hence Āryabhata here adds an additional 1 year every 800,000 years. It may be noted in (d) that the fraction 4567 : 10,000 is equal to the fraction 1,972,944,000 : 4,320,000,000.

Applying these computations to the revolutions of the Saptarṣis, this results in a figure of 730,719.0866. In other words, at the start of the Kali Yuga the Saptarṣis had completed 730,719 full cycles and 0.0866 of another cycle. Taking the full cycle as consisting of 2700 years, then the Saptarṣis had completed $2700 : 0.0866 = 3.11778$ years of another cycle. Accepting for the moment that the complete

(103) Mahāsiddhānta 1.15-16.

(104) Mahāsiddhānta 1.11: 2.9.

(105) Mahāsiddhānta 1.19.

(106) Mahāsiddhānta 2.10.

cycles of the Saptarṣis should commence with Kṛttikā - as in the lists throughout the Vedic Samhitās, the Brāhmanas and the Sūtras (see below) - then accordingly at the start of the Kali Yuga the Saptarṣis should have just entered Kṛttikā at the start of a new cycle. Given that - on the basis of the statement of Varāhamihira - the Saptarṣis were in Maghā in 2448 B.C., it may be seen that they would have been in Kṛttikā some 600 to 700 years earlier than this: Kṛttikā being the 1st Nakṣatra in the Nakṣatra lists, and Maghā being the 8th. In other words, the start of the Kali Yuga is on this basis indicated as being in 3102 B.C. - as is stated to be the case by Āryabhata in several further contexts. According to the computations of Āryabhata, the Saptarṣis should have been in Kṛttikā for only some 3 years before the start of the Kali Yuga, thus entering Kṛttikā in 3105 B.C. However, if they had entered Kṛttikā in 3105 B.C., then they would similarly have entered Maghā in 2405 B.C. or some 700 years later: yet this would contradict the statement of Varāhamihira that they were in Maghā in 2448 B.C. On the other hand, Cunningham recorded several accounts given by 19th century informants to the effect that the Saptarṣis had already spent 75 years in a Nakṣatra at the start of the Kali Yuga: (107) and it will be seen below that their entry into a Nakṣatra is consistently considered to have occurred in the year 76 of each Christian century B.C. It may thus be inferred that the computations of Āryabhata are some 71 years incorrect over a period of 1,972,944,000 years. On this basis, therefore, there will accordingly have occurred an interval of approximately 650 years between the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. and the time of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Mahābhārata war in 2449-2448 B.C. Kalhana, following Varāhamihira, also accepts the necessity of positing such an interval, and states in one passage in the Rājatarāṅginī that 653 years of the Kali Yuga had passed when the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas flourished on the earth:

(107) cf. A. Cunningham - A Book of Indian Eras, p.12.

"śatesu śatsū sārḍhesu tryadhikesu ca bhūtale |
kaler gatesu varṣānām abhūvan kurupāṇḍavāḥ" || (108)

The figure of 653 years deducted from the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. accordingly gives a date of 2449 B.C. for the time when the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas flourished on the earth.

Varāhamihira claimed to be following the theories of his predecessor Vrddha Garga in describing the motion of the Saptarṣis:

"yaiś cāram aham tesām kathayisye vrddhagargamatāt" || (109)

Yet Vrddha Garga held that at the twilight between the Dvāpara and Kali Yugas the Saptarṣis were in the Nakṣatra sacred to the Pitṛs:

"kalidvāparasandhau tu sthitās te pitṛdaivatam |
munayo dharmanirataḥ prajānām pālāne rataḥ" || (110)

Since Maghā is the Nakṣatra sacred to the Pitṛs, it may be seen that Vrddha Garga - at around the end of the 1st century B.C. - held to the theory that the Saptarṣis were in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga. Thus Varāhamihira - who holds that the Saptarṣis were in Kṛttikā at the start of the Kali Yuga, which he places in 3102 B.C. - has emended this statement of his predecessor to exclude any mention of the start of the Kali Yuga, and to assert that the period of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Mahābhārata war is to be placed in 2449-2448 B.C. - at which time he holds that the Saptarṣis were in Maghā. Thence arises in turn the interval of approximately 650 years between the start of the Kali Yuga and the time of the Mahābhārata war and reign of Yudhiṣṭhira.

The Epic and early Parānic texts know of no such interval between these two occurrences: and on the contrary place the commencement of the Kali Yuga at a time after that of the Mahābhārata war. A passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna, for example, states explicitly that the Kali Yuga commenced after the Mahābhārata war, while the

(108) Rājatarāṅginī 1.51.

(109) Brhatsamhitā 13.2.

(110) quoted by Bhaṭṭotpala on Brhatsamhitā 13.3.

Saptarṣis were in Maghā, and at the moment when Kṛṣṇa's feet left the earth - whereupon Yudhiṣṭhira renounced his throne, and consecrated Parīkṣit as king:

"te tu parīkṣitam kāle maghāsv āsan dvijottama |
tadaṁ pravṛttaś ca kalir dvādaśābdaśatātmakah ||
yadaiva bhagavadviṣṇor aṁśo yāto divam dvija |
vasudevakulodbhūtas tadaiva kalir āgatah ||

....

tatyāja sāmūjo rājyaṁ dharmaputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ ||
viparītāni drṣtvā ca nimitāni sa pāṇḍavaḥ |
yāto kṛṣṇo cakārātha so 'bhīṣekam parīkṣite" || (111)

Thus according to the Viṣṇu and other Purāṇas, the Saptarṣis were in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga: which was also the time of Yudhiṣṭhira and of the Mahābhārata war. It will be demonstrated below that the time accepted for such a period by the early Purāṇic texts is around 2448 B.C. - in other words, the period as stated by Varāhamihira, and not the period of 3102 B.C. elsewhere stated to represent both the start of the Kali Yuga and also the time of the Mahābhārata war. In this respect, Varāhamihira and the later astronomers may be said to attempt to bridge two traditions: by accepting both the period of 2448 B.C. for the Mahābhārata war, and also the period of 3102 B.C. for the start of the Kali Yuga. Yet it is evident that there are two originally quite separate and distinct systems of dating being referred to. That used by Varāhamihira may first be examined in detail - ignoring for the moment his attempt to harmonize this system with the Kali Yuga date of 3102 B.C. - as based upon the statement that the Saptarṣis were in Maghā at the start of the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira in 2448 B.C.

It is possible to construct a reasonably precise chronology for events in and around this period, on the basis of references in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts: and individual events in this reconstructed chronology will be referred to below in order to

illustrate the acceptance by Purāṇic writers in particular of this particular chronological scheme. It may be noted that this chronology reflects the views of the Epic and early Purāṇic writers; and that it is a fictive rather than objectively valid chronology.

The Epic and early Purāṇic texts agree in terming Parīksit the son of Abhimanyu and grandson of Arjuna: Arjuna being the brother of Yudhiṣṭhira, and Parīksit being the successor of Yudhiṣṭhira to the throne of Hastināpura. Several passages in the Mahābhārata relate that the death of Kṛṣṇa, abdication of Yudhiṣṭhira and accession of Parīksit occurred in the 36th year after the Mahābhārata war:

"saṭṭriṃśe tv aṭha saṃgrāṃpte varṣe keuravānandanah |
dadarśa viparītāni nimitṭāni yudhiṣṭhirah" || (112)

"saṭṭriṃśe 'tḥa tato varṣe vṛṣṇīnām anayo mahān |
anyonyam musalais te tu nijaghnuh kēlacoditāh" || (113)

"vimṛśam eva kēlam tam paricintya janārdanah |
meme prāptam sa saṭṭriṃśam varṣam vai keśisūdanah" || (114)

It may be noted that the sight of viparītāni nimitṭāni referred to in the first of these passages is mentioned also in the passage cited earlier from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa - where it additionally heralds the start of the Kali Yuga. Given the above-noted date of 2440 B.C. for the Mahābhārata war, then the death of Kṛṣṇa, abdication of Yudhiṣṭhira and accession of Parīksit - as also the start of the Kali Yuga - may accordingly be placed some 35 years later, namely in 2414 B.C. Both the death of Abhimanyu and the birth of his son Parīksit are said to have occurred during the course of the Mahābhārata war: thus in the case of the latter it is related that Aśvatthāman slew Parīksit while he was still in his mother's womb, but that Parīksit was subsequently revived by Kṛṣṇa.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Thus according to

(112) Mahābhārata 16.1.1.

(113) Mahābhārata 16.2.2.

(114) Mahābhārata 16.3.18.

(115) Mahābhārata 10.16.1ff : death of Abhimanyu in Drona Parva.

this chronology, both the birth of Parīksit and the death of Abhimanyu may be placed in 2449 B.C. At his accession, therefore, Parīksit was thought to be 35 years old. The death of Parīksit is said to have occurred as the result of a snake-bite; and in this connection the R̥si Kāśyapa is said to have sought to cure Parīksit, and to have been dissuaded from doing so by the Nāga Takṣaka.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Upon the death of Parīksit, his son Janamejaya Parīksita is said to have succeeded to the throne while he was still a child:

"nr̥paṃ śiṣuṃ tasya sutaṃ pracakrire sametya sarve puravāsino janāḥ |
nr̥paṃ yaṃ āhuḥ taṃ amitraghātinam kurupravīraṃ janamejayam janāḥ ||
sa bāla evāryamatir nr̥pottamaḥ sahaiva teir mantripurohitais tadā" | (117)

Thus according to this chronology, the death of Parīksit and accession of Janamejaya - to which reference will subsequently be made - may be placed close to c.2400 B.C.: when Parīksit would have been 48 years old, and Janamejaya perhaps ten or so. Such a date for the accession of Janamejaya would also agree with a further passage which speaks of the Brahmins at the court of Janamejaya as having witnessed the Mahābhārata war with their own eyes:

"kurūṇāṃ pāṇḍavāṇāṃ ca bhavān pratyakṣadarśivān |
teṣāṃ caritaṃ icchāmi kathyamānaṃ tvayā dvija" || (118)

Janamejaya's request to hear of that war is followed by the recitation of the entire Mahābhārata epic by those Brahmins.

Referring again to the date of the Mahābhārata war in 2449 B.C., then according to this chronology the exile of the Pāṇḍavas will have occurred some 13 years prior to this date, namely in 2462 B.C. Since Abhimanyu is said to have been born prior to the exile and to have fathered Parīksit in 2449 B.C., his birth may be ascribed to approximately 2470 B.C.: while the birth of his father Arjuna may be ascribed to approximately 2490 B.C. Hence, since Arjuna is said to be the third of the sons of Pāṇḍu and Yudhiṣṭhira the first, then

(116) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.3.188-189; 1.37.1-1.39.20; 1.46.14-22.

(117) Mahābhārata 1.40.6-7.

(118) Mahābhārata 1.54.18.

the birth of Yudhisthira may according to this chronology be assigned to approximately 2492 B.C. On this basis, Yudhisthira would have been born in c. 2492 B.C.: he would have been 30 years old at the time of the exile in 2462 B.C.: he would have been 53 years old at the time of the Mahābhārata war in 2449 B.C., and 54 years old when he acceded to the throne of Hastināpura in 2448 B.C.: and he would have been 78 years old when he abdicated the throne in favour of Parīksit in 2414 B.C. Such an approximate chronology - as suggested by the Epic and early Purānic texts and by the chronological statement of Varāhamihira - would thus appear to provide reasonable periods of time in respect of the lengths of reign and the ages of the rulers concerned. It would also place the start of the Kali Yuga in 2414 B.C., in the 36th year after the Mahābhārata war of 2449 B.C.

As has been noted, according to this chronological scheme the Saptarsis were thought to have been in Maghā during at least part of this period: namely in 2448 B.C., when Yudhisthira was thought to have acceded to the throne of Hastināpura. Since the Saptarsis are said to remain for 100 years in each Nakṣatra, then their period of stay in Maghā would accordingly have spanned a considerable part of the period just discussed. The exact chronology of the Saptarsi Yuga may in fact be accurately ascertained to within a single year in the case of the later usages of this system.

Kalhana states in the Rājatarāṅginī that he writes in the year 24 Laukika or 1070 Śaka:

"laukike 'bde caturviṃśe śakakālasya sāmpratam |
saptatyā 'bhyadhikam yātam sahasram parivatsarāh" || (119)

He similarly states that he completed the work in the year 25 Laukika or 1071 Śaka. (120) Given that the year 24 Laukika corresponds to the year 1070 Śaka, then the first year of the Laukika will accordingly

(119) Rājatarāṅginī 1.52.

(120) Rājatarāṅginī 8.3404.

correspond to the year 1047 Śaka, or to the year A.D. 1125. Hence, since the Laukika or Saptarṣi Yuga is a centennial cycle - the Saptarṣis remaining for 100 years in each Nakṣatra - it therefore follows that on this basis the first year of each Saptarṣi cycle in which the Saptarṣis enter a different Nakṣatra will correspond to the year 25 of each Christian century A.D.

Kalhana first makes use of the Laukika era from the fourth book of the Rājatarāṅginī onwards: the first reference being to the effect that the brothers-in-law of Lalitāpīḍa ruled unrestrained from the year 89 Laukika to the year 26 Laukika.⁽¹²¹⁾ By totalling the lengths of reign for each of the kings of Kashmir between the time of Lalitāpīḍa and the time of Kalhana's writing in the year 1070-1071 Śaka, it is clear that the above-mentioned dates must fall within the 9th century A.D. At this point it may be noted that an inscription in the temple of Baijnāth in the district of Mandi records the twin dates of 89 Laukika and 735 Śaka, as also the twin dates of 80 Laukika and 725 Śaka.⁽¹²²⁾ In both cases the year 1 Laukika will be equivalent to the year 647 Śaka, or to the year A.D. 725. Similarly, Kalhana's date of 89 Laukika will accordingly refer to the Laukika cycle of A.D. 725-825, thus denoting the year A.D. 813: while his date of 26 Laukika will refer to the following Laukika cycle of A.D. 825-925, thus denoting the year A.D. 850.

Albīrūnī also gives a detailed account of how to compute the Saptarṣi Yuga. Taking as an example the date of the fall of Somnāth - which occurred in January of A.D. 1026 - he says that he has seen Indians write down the figures 242, 606 and 99, which they add together to give the Śaka year of 947. Albīrūnī suggests that the figure 242 shows the number of Śaka years which preceded the period when the Indians first started to use this cycle: while the figure 606 shows the number of complete centennial cycles of 101 years each, and the figure 99 shows the number of years elapsed of the current

(121) Rājatarāṅginī 4.703.

(122) cf. Cunningham - Book of Indian Eras, p.6.

Saptarsi cycle.⁽¹²³⁾ However, while Albīrūnī suggests that the figure 606 represents the number of 6 centennial cycles of 101 years each, it must be noted in opposition to such an interpretation that all of the Indian literary sources are unanimous in stating that each cycle of the Saptarsis is of only 100 years duration. In disagreeing also with this interpretation of Albīrūnī, Cunningham has plausibly suggested⁽¹²⁴⁾ that the figure 6 in the above computation should be taken to denote the number of years which had elapsed between the establishment of the Gupta era in A.D. 319-320 - some 242 years after the start of the Śaka era in A.D. 78 - and the commencement of the new Saptarsi cycle in A.D. 325: to which figure is added the total of 6 complete cycles elapsed, to A.D. 925, plus 99 years of the current cycle elapsed: and since the 99th year is said to have already elapsed, therefore the cycle must be in its 100th year, namely in A.D. 1025-1026.

It has been demonstrated by Bühler, Cunningham and others that the same reckoning was followed also in Kashmir in the 19th century A.D., whereby the start of each centennial cycle of the Saptarsis was considered to correspond to the year 25 of each Christian century A.D. Bühler also demonstrated that the Kashmiri Brahmins of the 19th century A.D. reckoned that the Laukika era had commenced in the year 3076-3075 B.C., namely some 25 years after the start of the Kali Yuga which they placed in 3102-3101 B.C. In this respect Bühler cited a verse - whose source he could not ascertain - which was related to him by a Kashmiri Brahmin:

"kaler gataih sāyakanetravarṣaiḥ saptarsivaryās tridivam prayātaḥ |
loke hi samvatsarapatṭrikāyām saptarsimānam pravadanti santah" || (125)

The "arrows and eyes" in the above śloka are used in the Kashmiri reckoning to denote the numeral 25. Cunningham independently obtained

(123) Albīrūnī - India, ch.49 : trans. E. Sachau, vol.2 pp.9-10.

(124) Cunningham - Book of Indian Eras, p.16.

(125) G. Bühler - A. Detailed Report of a Tour in search of Sanskrit Manuscripts, pp.59-60.

similar information through his enquiries in Kashmir.⁽¹²⁶⁾ The arguments put forward by Bühler and Cunningham are sufficient to establish that the traditional chronological reckoning of the Saptarṣi Yuga used in Kashmir in the 19th century A.D. equated the commencement of each centennial cycle of the Saptarṣi Yuga with the month of Caitra or March-April in the year 25 of each Christian century A.D. It may similarly be noted that the Brahmins of Kashmir in the 19th century A.D. reckoned the start of the Saptarṣi Yuga from the date 3075 B.C. Such a commencing date would seem likely to be due in part to the more general reckoning of dates from the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. It does not necessarily follow from such 19th century accounts that the same date was regarded as denoting the commencement of the Saptarṣi Yuga in earlier times: and it must indeed be noted that such a date is not recorded by either Kalhana or Albīrūnī, nor is it given in the early Purānic texts or in the works of the astronomers.

On the basis of all the above passages and references, it may be inferred that the initial year of each centennial cycle of the Saptarṣi Yuga was considered in all of the above contexts to correspond to the year 25 of each Christian century A.D.: and thus to the year 76 of each Christian century B.C.⁽¹²⁷⁾

Referring once again to the statement of Varāhamihira that the Saptarṣis were in Maghā when Yudhiṣṭhira was ruling in 2448 B.C., it may accordingly be inferred that the Saptarṣis were thought on this basis to have been in Maghā during the period 2476-2376 B.C. This conclusion may now be set out in tabulated form: giving the initial year according to the Christian calendar for each centennial cycle of the Saptarṣi Yuga through each of the Nakṣatras in turn. Two further points must first be noted. The first of these is that,

(126) Cunningham - Book of Indian Eras, pp.6-15.

(127) It is again to be noted that a margin of 1 year must be allowed for in such calculations, due to the commencement of such cycles during March-April of the Christian calendar: cf. note 102.

as has already been indicated, this version of the Saptarsi Yuga assumes that there is a total of 27 rather than 28 Nakṣatras:

"saptaviṃśatiparyante kṛtsne nakṣatramāṇḍale |
saptarsayas tu tiṣṭhanti paryāyena śataṃ śataṃ" || (128)

The second point concerns the commencement of the complete cycles of the Saptarsis through the Nakṣatras. It is to be noted that the Nakṣatre system as it is presented throughout the Vedic Saṃhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras invariably commences with Kṛttikā: and Maghā is thus the 8th of the 27 Nakṣatras.⁽¹²⁹⁾ In his account of the Saptarsi Yuga, Cunningham considered each complete cycle of the Saptarsis through the Nakṣatras as commencing with Aśvinī. Yet the commencement of the Nakṣatra lists with Aśvinī first occurs only in the Sūrya Siddhānta,⁽¹³⁰⁾ and was not fully accepted until much later times: and indeed Varāhamihira himself variously lists the Nakṣatras as commencing with either Kṛttikā or Aśvinī,⁽¹³¹⁾ thereby suggesting that the change in commencement from Kṛttikā to Aśvinī had still not been fully effected or accepted in the mid-6th century A.D. In the opinions of Macdonell, Keith, Colebrooke, Weber and others,⁽¹³²⁾ the commencement of the Nakṣatra lists with Aśvinī was not adopted until around the 6th century A.D.: and it was adopted at around that date because the vernal equinox then coincided with the star § Piscium being on the borders of Revatī and Aśvinī. On this basis, therefore, it may be suggested that any reconstruction of the Saptarsi Yuga which is intended to trace the system to a period earlier than around the 6th century A.D. should accordingly

(128) e.g. Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.231-235 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.413-417 : Matsya Purāna 273.40-41 : cf. Pañcasiddhāntikā chs.2, 12 etc. : Brhatsaṃhitā chs.14, 15 etc.

(129) e.g. Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.4.10.1-3 : Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 2.13.20 : Kāthaka Saṃhitā 39.13 : Atharvaveda 19.7.1ff : Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.5.1 : 3.1.4.1ff: etc.

(130) e.g. Sūrya Siddhānta 8.9ff.

(131) e.g. Brhat-jātaka 16.1ff (Aśvinī): Brhatsaṃhitā 14.1ff: 15.1ff (Kṛttikā) : cf. G.R. Kaye - Hindu Astronomy.

(132) cf. Macdonell-Keith - Vedic Index vol.1 p.421 : H.T. Colebrooke - Miscellaneous Essays vol.2 pp.231ff : A. Weber - Indische Studien vol.10 p.234.

not commence the list of Nakṣatras with Aśvinī: and since all previous lists of the Nakṣatras in the Vedic texts commence with Kṛttikā, it would seem logical that any such reconstructed form of the Saptarṣi Yuga should commence each complete cycle with Kṛttikā. The accounts of the Saptarṣi Yuga in the early Purānic texts may be ascribed to a period almost certainly earlier than the 6th century A.D. (see Introduction, and below): and the complete cycles may accordingly be deemed to commence with Kṛttikā in the system as used in these texts. The accounts of the Saptarṣi Yuga in the works of Varāhamihira fall within the 6th century A.D.: and as noted, in different contexts Varāhamihira lists the Nakṣatras as commencing with either Kṛttikā or Aśvinī. However, since he claims to be following the system of the Saptarṣi Yuga laid down by his predecessor Vṛddha Garga (kathaviṣṭve vṛddhagargamatāt) before his time - and hence before the 6th century A.D. - it may be deemed at this stage that the version of the Saptarṣi Yuga used by Varāhamihira accordingly commenced each complete cycle of the Saptarṣis with Kṛttikā. It may at the same time be noted that any subsequent adjustments which may be made to this version of the system may affect the numbering or positioning of each of the Nakṣatras, and may necessitate the provision of a different starting-point of the complete Saptarṣi cycles with a different Nakṣatra: but they will not affect the period during which the Saptarṣis were thought to be in each Nakṣatra.

Following the Table detailing the period of the Saptarṣis in each Nakṣatra in the version of the Saptarṣi Yuga according to Varāhamihira, there is presented a further Table (Table 8) embodying the conclusions drawn earlier in this sub-section in respect of the relative chronology which is given in the Epic and early Purānic texts for events during the century in which the Saptarṣis were thought to have been in Maghā. The details and dates in both of these

Tables will be referred to during the course of the discussion in the following sub-sections.

Table 7 : The Period of the Saptarsi Yuga, according to Varāhamihira.

1.	Kṛttikā	8576 B.C.	5876 B.C.	3176 B.C.	476 B.C.
2.	Rohinī	8476	5776	3076	376
3.	Mṛgaśiras	8376	5676	2976	276
4.	Ārdra	8276	5576	2876	176
5.	Punarvasū	8176	5476	2776	76
6.	Puṣya	8076	5376	2676	25 A.D.
7.	Āślēsā	7976	5276	2576	125
8.	Maghā	7876	5176	2476	225
9.	Pūrva-phalgunī	7776	5076	2376	325
10.	Uttara-phalgunī	7676	4976	2276	425
11.	Hastā	7576	4876	2176	525
12.	Citrā	7476	4776	2076	625
13.	Svātī	7376	4676	1976	725
14.	Viśākhā	7276	4576	1876	825
15.	Anurādhā	7176	4476	1776	925
16.	Jyesthā	7076	4376	1676	1025
17.	Mūlā	6976	4276	1576	1125
18.	Pūrvāsādhā	6876	4176	1476	1225
19.	Uttarāsādhā	6776	4076	1376	1325
20.	Śravaṇā	6676	3976	1276	1425
21.	Dhanisthā	6576	3876	1176	1525
22.	Śatabhisā	6476	3776	1076	1625
23.	Pūrva-bhadrapadā	6376	3676	976	1725
24.	Uttara-bhadrapadā	6276	3576	876	1825
25.	Revatī	6176	3476	776	1925
26.	Āśvinī	6076	3376	676	2025
27.	Bharanī	5976	3276	576	2125

Table 8 : The Saptarsis in Maghā and associated events, according to the Epic and Purānic texts.

c. 2492 B.C.	Birth of Yudhiṣṭhira.
c. 2490	Birth of Arjuna.
2476	Saptarsis enter Maghā.
c. 2469	Birth of Abhimanyu.
2462	Exile of Pāṇḍavas.
2449	Mahābhārata War. Death of Abhimanyu. Birth of Parīkṣit.
2448	Accession of Yudhiṣṭhira.
2414	Death of Kṛṣṇa. Abdication of Yudhiṣṭhira. Accession of Parīkṣit. Start of the Kali Yuga.
c. 2400	Death of Parīkṣit. Accession of Janamejaya Parīkṣita.
2376	Saptarsis leave Maghā.

(c) The Saptarsi Yuga according to the Early Purānic Texts.

The accounts of the Saptarsi Yuga as given in each of the early Purānic texts may next be examined in detail. In the following analysis, the text as given in the Brahmānda Purāna⁽¹³³⁾ will be quoted: minor variants in the Vāyu⁽¹³⁴⁾ and Matsya⁽¹³⁵⁾ Purānas will be noted in footnotes, while major variants - constituted especially by the text of the Viṣṇu Purāna⁽¹³⁶⁾ - will be quoted separately. Since the Bhāgavata Purāna⁽¹³⁷⁾ is the only other Mahāpurāna which contains a detailed account of this topic, reference will also be made where relevant or useful to the text of this work, which in general closely follows the Viṣṇu Purāna in its account of the Saptarsi Yuga. The accounts in these various texts are given in five main ślokas: each of which may be examined separately.

- i. "mahānandābhisekāt tu⁽¹³⁸⁾ janma yāvat pariṅsitah⁽¹³⁹⁾ |
etad⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ varṣasahasram tu jñeyam pañcāśaduttaram" ||

The śloka may be translated as: "From the anointing of Mahānanda to the birth of Parīksit: this (period) is to be known as (consisting of) 1050 years".

Taking the birth of Parīksit as having occurred in 2449 B.C. - as demonstrated in the last sub-section - this would give a date of 1399 B.C. for the accession of Nanda. It may be seen from Table 7 that the Saptarsis would then have been "in" the Nakṣatra Pūrvāśādhā: and this is confirmed by a variant passage in the Viṣṇu Purāna:

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- (133) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.227-236.
(134) Vāyu Purāna 2.37.409-418.
(135) Matsya Purāna 273.30-45.
(136) Viṣṇu Purāna 4.24.32-40.
(137) Bhāgavata Purāna 12.2.26-33.
(138) Vāyu "mahādevābh-" : Matsya "mahāpadmābh-".
(139) Matsya "yāvaj janma pariṅsitah".
(140) Matsya "evam".

"prayāsyanti yadā caite pūrvāsādhām maharsayah |
tadā nandāt prabhṛty esa kalir vṛddhiṁ gamisyati" ||

In other words, the Kali Yuga will be at its nadir from the time of Nanda onwards, which will be when the Saptarṣis will be in the Nakṣatra Pūrvāsādhā. The Viṣṇu Purāna also gives a further variant sloka which differs significantly from those in the other Purānas:

"yāvat pariṅsito jaama yāvan nandābhiseccanam |
etad varsasahasram tu jñeyam pañcadaśottaram" ||

The information is much the same as in the other Purānic passages; but the interval between the birth of Parīkṣit and the consecration of Nanda is here stated to be 1015 years, rather than 1050 years. The same reckoning is given also in the Bhāgavata Purāna. According to this chronology, therefore, the accession of Nanda is to be placed in 1434 B.C. - namely some 1015 years after the birth of Parīkṣit in 2449 B.C.

The second main śloka is as follows:

ii. "promānam vai tathā vaktum⁽¹⁴¹⁾ mahāpadmottaram⁽¹⁴²⁾ ca yat |
antaram ca śatāny aṣṭau⁽¹⁴³⁾ ṣaṭtriṅśac ca samāh smṛtāḥ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾" ||

The Matsya Purāna differs markedly in its account of the first part of this śloka:

"paulomās tu tathāndhrās tu mahāpadmāntare punah" |

The first of these versions may be rendered as: "The measure of the interval of Mahāpadma (Nanda) is said to be 336 years"; and the second: "The interval from Mahāpadma to Pauloma Andhra is 336 years". In both versions the intended meaning would appear to be that an interval of 336 years elapsed after the time of Mahāpadma Nanda; and the Matsya Purāna proposes that such a period elapsed between

(141) Vāyu "coktam".

(142) Vāyu "mahāpadmāntaram".

(143) Vāyu "tāc chatāny-"; Matsya "anantaram" and omit "ca".

(144) Matsya "ṣaṭtriṅśat tu samāh tathā".

Nanda and Pauloma Andhra. Given the date of Nanda in either 1399 B.C. or 1424 B.C. - according to the first main śloka - then an interval of 836 years after Nanda would give a date of either 563 B.C. or 598 B.C.: when the Saptarṣis would be in either Bharanī or Aśvini respectively. According to the individual chronologies given for each dynasty in the Purānic texts, a period of 836 years would be consistent with the sum of the years for each of the dynasties from the Nandas through the Mauryas, Śuṅgas and Kanvas to the end of the Andhras. Yet at the same time it is known with reasonable certainty that the Andhras ruled especially in the early centuries A.D.: and not in the 6th century B.C., as is implied in the Matsya passage. This must have been well-known also to the authors of these Purānic texts, writing at a period contemporary with or shortly after that of the Andhra dynasty; and the third main śloka would appear to attempt to clarify the situation:

iii. "tat kalāntaram bhāvyaṃ andhrāntādyāḥ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ prakīrtitaḥ |
bhaviṣyais tatra samkhyātāḥ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ purāṇajñaiḥ śrutarṣibhiḥ" ||

The Matsya Purāna again differs in its account of the first part of the śloka:

"tāvat kalāntaram bhāvyaṃ andhrāntādaḥ parīkṣitaḥ" |

As Pargiter has noted in commenting on these passages, there would clearly seem to have been some corruption between these two versions: due partly perhaps to the fact that the meaning of the text is not immediately clear in either version. The first version might be interpreted as: "This same interval of time is to separate the beginning and end of the Andhras", or "The first and last (rulers) of the Andhras are said (to occupy) this same future period of time"; the second part of the śloka reading: "These have been reckoned by future Śrutarṣis learned in the Purānas". The second version might

(145) Vāyu "bhāvyaṃ andhrāntā ye".

(146) Matsya "bhaviṣyais te prasam-".

be interpreted as: "Such an interval of time is to come about, as for the beginning and end of the Andhras, so for Parīksit"; continuing: "Those in the future have been reckoned by Śrutarsis learned in the Purānas". Both versions would appear to imply that the same interval (antaram) as previously referred to is to separate the time previously stated from the time of the end of the Andhra dynasty. The interval referred to must be one of either 1050/1015 or 836 years: and since the term antaram has been used only in connection with the period of 836 years - in the śloka which immediately precedes this one - it would accordingly seem more likely that it is this period to which reference is here intended. Hence a further period of 836 years after the previously-given date of either 563 B.C. or 593 B.C. would give a date of either A.D. 273 or A.D. 238 for the end of the Andhra dynasty, according to this chronology.

It may be noted at this point that numismatic and inscriptional evidence would tend to favour the earlier of these two dates for the end of the Andhra dynasty: namely the date of A.D. 238 (as given in the reckonings of the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purānas) rather than the date of A.D. 273 (as given in the reckonings of the Brahmānda, Vāyu and Matsya Purānas); both dates being given for the end of the Andhra dynasty on the basis of the intervals separating the birth of Parīksit (2449 B.C.), the accession of Nanda (either 1434 B.C. or 1399 B.C.), and the end of the Andhra dynasty. The reason for the difference of 35 years between the two sets of texts - which has been seen to arise from the different versions given of the first main śloka - may be suggested to have come about due to the fact that the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purānas are here following the Epic tradition previously quoted in the last sub-section that the Kali Yuga commenced in the 36th year after the Mahābhārata war: while the Brahmānda, Vāyu and Matsya Purānas are in effect confusing

the date of the commencement of the Kali Yuga with the date of the Mahābhārata war - during which occurred the birth of Parīkṣit, which is the event in question from which the intervals are being reckoned. In other words, the reading pañcāśad- in the latter group of texts already includes a period of 35 years: while such a period has been additionally added in the pañcadaśa- of the former group of texts. This accordingly gives rise to the variant reckonings with a difference of 35 years between the two groups of texts: while in their extant forms it is the reckoning given in the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purānas which in this instance retains the correct mode of reckoning, thereby placing the end of the Andhra dynasty in A.D. 238. This reckoning will accordingly be adopted in the following discussion.

The fourth main śloka in these texts is as follows:

iv. "saptarsayas tadā prāptāḥ pitrye parīkṣite śatam⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ |
saptaviṃśaiḥ śatair bhāvya andhrānām te 'nvayāḥ punaḥ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾" ||

This śloka may be rendered as: "The Saptarsis then achieved 100 (years) in (the Nakṣatra) dedicated to the Pitrs (i.e. in Maghā) in the time of (Janamejaya) Parīkṣita: they will again be linked in the future (to Maghā) (at the time) of the Andhras after 2700 years". Pargiter has again noted textual corruption in the case of this śloka: and by suggesting his own emended reading, he would seem to have in fact added to the confusion. Thus he suggests a reading for the first part of the śloka as:

"saptarsayas tadā puṣye pratīpe rājñi vai samam" |

and translates accordingly:⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ yet such a reading is found in

(147) Matsya "prāmsu pradīptenāgninā samāḥ" : Vāyu "prāhuḥ pratīpe rājñi vai".

(148) Matsya "saptaviṃśatibhāvyaṇām āndhrānām tu yadā punaḥ".

(149) cf. F.E. Pargiter - The Purāna Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, pp.59 (text + note 46) and 75 (translation).

none of the texts, and cannot be said to entirely resolve the obscurity of the textual variants in any conclusive - or necessarily persuasive or meaningful - manner. Following again the version in the *Drahmānda Purāna*, this would imply that while the Saptarṣis completed their stay in Maghā during the time of (Janamejaya) Pārīksita, they will again be in Maghā at the end of the Andhra dynasty. The information in the second part of the śloka is given also in the *Vāyu Purāna*: while that in the first part of the śloka is presented in a different form in the *Viṣṇu Purāna*:

"te tu pārīksitam kāle maghāsv āsan dvijottama" |

Thus the period separating the time of Pārīksit from that of the end of the Andhra dynasty is deemed to constitute a complete cycle of the Saptarṣis, or 2700 years. At this point reference may again be made to Table 7: and it will be seen that the Saptarṣis were thus thought to have been in Maghā from 2476 B.C. to 2376 B.C., leaving Maghā during the reign of Janamejaya Pārīksita (as demonstrated in the last sub-section and in Table 8), and again entering Maghā some 2700 years later in A.D. 225 - leaving Maghā subsequently in A.D. 325. Thus the statements in preceding ślokas that the end of the Andhra dynasty should be placed in A.D. 238 (= 1015 + 836 + 836 years after the birth of Pārīksit in 2449 B.C.) are fully consistent with the statement that the Saptarṣis would again be in Maghā at the end of the Andhra dynasty: since the date of A.D. 238 clearly falls within the period of A.D. 225-325 when the Saptarṣis were thought to be once again in Maghā.

The fifth main śloka in these texts would appear to confirm in some measure the validity of these interpretations:

v. "saptarsayo hy athāyuktāh⁽¹⁵⁰⁾kāle parīksite⁽¹⁵¹⁾śatam |
andhrāṁse sacaturvimśe⁽¹⁵²⁾bhaviṣyanti śatam samāh⁽¹⁵³⁾" ||

This śloka may be rendered: "The Saptarsis were thus joined (to Maghā) in the time of Parīksit for 100 years: they will be the same (i.e. in the same position, namely joined to Maghā) for 100 years in (the time of) the 24th part (i.e. ruler) of the Andhras". Pargiter has suggested that the second part of this śloka should be emended to read "andhrānte-": and interprets the śloka as meaning: "It (the Saptarsis) will be in the 24th constellation 100 years at the termination of the Andhras"⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ According to the previously-examined system of chronology, such an interpretation is however untenable. In the first place, all the texts agree in stating that the Saptarsis will be in Maghā - the 8th Nakṣatra - at the end of the Andhra dynasty, namely some 2700 years after the time of Parīksit: and in the second place, it may be seen from Table 7 that the Saptarsis would be in the 24th Nakṣatra (Uttara Bhādrapadā) in 876 B.C., and in the 24th Nakṣatra after Maghā (Punarvasū) in 76 B.C. Neither of these dates or periods would agree with the date of A.D. 238 which is given in the preceding ślokas for the end of the Andhra dynasty: nor would they agree with the approximate period for the end of that dynasty which is given on the basis of numismatic and inscriptional evidence. Moreover, the expression samāh bhaviṣyanti following athāyuktāh/maghāyuktāh would clearly appear to imply that the Saptarsis will again be in the same position, namely joined to Maghā, at the end of the Andhra dynasty - rather than in the 24th Nakṣatra; while the mention in the fourth main śloka that the Saptarsis will again be in Maghā at the end of the Andhras after a further 2700 years from the time of

(150) Vāyu "maghāyuktāh", also Matsya.

(151) Matsya "parīksite".

(152) Matsya "brāhmanās tu caturvimśe".

(153) Vāyu "mate mama".

(154) Pargiter - *Dynasties of the Kali Age*, pp.61 and 75.

Parīksit (i.e. after one complete cycle) would again appear to convey the same implication.

If the śloka be interpreted accordingly as meaning that the Saptarsis would again be in Maghā in the time of the 24th ruler of the Andhras, then it is next necessary to enquire as to the identity of the 24th ruler of the Andhras. The Brahmānda, Vāyu and Viṣṇu Purānas all state that there was a total of 30 Andhra kings: while the Matsya Purāna states their total number to be 19. In the actual enumeration of the individual rulers, however, the Brahmānda Purāna lists 16 kings: the Vāyu Purāna lists 17 kings: the Viṣṇu Purāna lists 24 kings: and the Matsya Purāna lists 30 kings.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ It has been seen that all these texts agree in stating that the end of the Andhra dynasty coincided with the Saptarsis being in Maghā. Accordingly, since the texts have been referring to the end of the Andhra dynasty in preceding ślokas, it may be suggested that the term "the 24th ruler of the Andhras" is similarly intended in this context to designate the last ruler of the Andhra dynasty. This inference is supported by the fact that the Viṣṇu Purāna lists 24 rulers of the Andhra dynasty: also by the fact that the Matsya Purāna - which is the only text to actually list more than 24 rulers - reads brāhmaṇās tu caturvimśe bhaviṣyanti in place of andhrāṃśe sacaturvimśe bhaviṣyanti: thereby indicating that, since it has listed more than 24 Andhra rulers in other contexts, it does not accept the figure 24 as referring to the last ruler of the Andhra dynasty. It would thus appear that the information presented in this śloka is intended to convey the meaning that the Saptarsis will again be in Maghā in the time of the 24th ruler of the Andhras, which is also the time of the end of the Andhra dynasty.

The information which is presented in these five main ślokas may be summarised in the following form:

(155) Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.161-170 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.342-352 :
Viṣṇu Purāna 4.24.12-13 : Matsya Purāna 273.1-17.

- i. The Saptarsis were in Maghā in the time of Parīksit.
- ii. The Saptarsis left Maghā in the time of (Janamejaya) Pārīksita.
- iii. The Saptarsis will again be in Maghā at the end of the Andhra dynasty, which will be 2700 years after the time of Parīksit.
- iv. The Saptarsis will be in Pūrvāsādhā in the time of Nanda.
- v. The interval between the birth of Parīksit and the coronation of Nanda is 1015 years.
- vi. The interval between Nanda and the end of the Andhra dynasty is 2×836 years, or 1672 years.
- vii. Hence the interval between the birth of Parīksit and the end of the Andhra dynasty is $1015 + 1672 = 2687$ years.

The further passage quoted from the Viṣṇu Purāna in the last subsection may similarly be seen to contain the following information:

- i. Yudhiṣṭhira was ruling before the start of the Kali Yuga.
- ii. When Kṛṣṇa died, the Kali Yuga commenced.
- iii. When the Kali Yuga commenced, Yudhiṣṭhira renounced his throne and consecrated Parīksit.
- iv. The Saptarsis were still in Maghā when (Janamejaya) Pārīksita was ruling.

All of the preceding statements may thus be seen to accord with the previously-outlined chronological system of the Saptarsi Yuga, as reconstructed from the statement of Varāhamihira and as set out in Table 7.

If it were to be proposed that the Purānic writers accepted the date of 3102 B.C. for the start of the Kali Yuga, then it must similarly be held that they placed the times of Yudhiṣṭhira, Parīksit and the Mahābhārata war before this date. Thus on this basis the

Mahābhārata war and the birth of Parīksit would be placed some 35 years earlier than this date, namely in 3137 B.C.: the consecration of Nanda would be placed in $3137 - 1015 = 2122$ B.C.: and the end of the Andhra dynasty would be placed in $2122 - 1672 = 450$ B.C. Similarly, by the further argument, the end of the Andhra dynasty must then be placed within the century some 2700 years after the period of 3176-3076 B.C., namely between 476 and 376 B.C. Such dates are thus some 650 years earlier than the known period of the end of the Andhra dynasty, close to which time these texts are usually held to have been composed: and they also contradict the statement of Varāhamihira that Yudhiṣṭhira was ruling 2526 years before the Śaka era, namely in 2448 B.C. - a statement which witnesses that such a scheme of chronology as has been followed in the above analysis was known in at least Gupta times, namely again at a period close to which these texts are usually held to have been composed and scarcely a century after the end of the Andhra dynasty which is itself mentioned in these texts.

It may accordingly be inferred from the above observations that the Purānic texts follow the same system of chronology of the Saptarṣi Yuga as that used by Varāhamihira. According to this system, the Saptarṣis are to be placed in Maghā from 2476 B.C. to 2376 B.C., and again from A.D. 225 to A.D. 325; similarly the Mahābhārata war and the birth of Parīksit are to be placed in 2449 B.C., and the start of the Kali Yuga in 2414 B.C.: the reign of Nanda in 2449 - 1015 = 1434 B.C.: and the end of the Andhra dynasty in 1434 - 1672 = A.D. 238.

The accounts of the Saptarṣi Yuga in the early Purānic texts form the concluding section to the lists of Kings of the Kali Yuga. Since these accounts themselves speak of the end of the Andhra dynasty, which they place in A.D. 238, it may be concluded that the incorporation of the Saptarṣi Yuga within these texts occurred

at some time after A.D. 238. Moreover, since the lists of Kings in these texts fail to make any noteworthy mention of the Gupta dynasty - the Matsya Purāna for example completely omitting to make any mention at all of that dynasty - it would seem likely that these sections of the Purānic texts were composed at a period prior to or very shortly after the founding of the Gupta dynasty in A.D. 320 - or conversely that they were composed in a region well outside the main influence of the Gupta dynasty. The likelihood may therefore be expressed that the accounts of the Saptarsi Yuga in the early Purānic texts were incorporated into those texts between approximately A.D. 250 and 350: the former of these dates being perhaps the more likely, in view of the extent to which these accounts are closely connected with the ending of the Andhra dynasty which is placed by these accounts in A.D. 238. It may accordingly be inferred that this system of chronology of the Saptarsi Yuga is likely to have been known and in use by at least the end of the 2nd century A.D., prior to its incorporation within the Purānic texts.

(d) The Saptarsi Yuga according to Vrddha Garga.

Attention may now be turned to the date of 3102 B.C. which is alternatively proposed as being the date of the start of the Kali Yuga. As was noted in sub-section (b), the later astronomers such as Parāśara, Āryabhata and Varāhamihira all accept this date as designating the start of the Kali Yuga: while at the same time attempting to harmonise this date with the later dates of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Mahābhārata war - placed for example by Varāhamihira in 2449-2448 B.C. - by proposing a time-interval of approximately 650 years between the start of the Kali Yuga and the time of Yudhiṣṭhira and the Mahābhārata war. Such a scheme is clearly at variance with the Epic and Purānic traditions, both of which maintain that the Kali Yuga commenced after - rather than before - the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira, upon the death of Kṛṣṇa and with the accession of Parīkṣit, in the 36th year after the end of the Mahābhārata war.

It is thus evident that in the times of Parāśara, Āryabhata and Varāhamihira there were already two rival dates for the start of the Kali Yuga: one of which - namely the date of 2414 B.C. - had been adopted in the early Purānic texts, probably before the establishment of the Gupta dynasty in A.D. 320. It may also be seen that Varāhamihira and the other astronomers, while agreeing with the system adopted in the early Purānic texts that the Mahābhārata war and the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira belong to the years 2449-2448 B.C., nevertheless disagree with the Purānic equation of that period with the start of the Kali Yuga and accept instead the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. Thus, by accepting that the Saptarsis were in Maghā during the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira in 2448 B.C., Varāhamihira therefore disagrees with his predecessor Vrddha Garga - whom he claims to be following - who states that the Saptarsis were in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga (see sub-section (b)). For according to the system of chronology adopted by both Varāhamihira and the

early Purānic texts, the Saptar̥sis would have been in Kṛttikā at the date of 3102 B.C. which Varāhamihira and the later astronomers hold as being the date of the start of the Kali Yuga (see Table 7). It may accordingly be inferred that the system of chronology which the early Purānic texts reject - by placing the Mahābhārata war and the start of the Kali Yuga in 2449 B.C. and 2414 B.C. respectively - and which the later astronomers accept only in part - by accepting the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C., but nonetheless placing the Mahābhārata war in 2449 B.C. - placed the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C., placed the Mahābhārata war some 35 years earlier in 3137 B.C., and thus placed the Saptar̥sis in Maghā from 3176 B.C. to 3076 B.C. On the basis that Maghā is the 8th Nakṣatra according to the Nakṣatra lists of the Vedic Saṃhitās, the Brāhmanas and the Sūtras, it may be seen that according to this system the start of the complete cycle of the Saptar̥sis would have commenced in Kṛttikā some 700 years earlier than these dates, namely in 3876 B.C.

In order to examine the precise natures of - and the differences between - the two systems, the statements of Vṛddha Garga and of the Epic texts may at this stage be consulted once again. As was seen in section 3(b) of this Chapter, passages in several different contexts speak of the existence of two main separate orderings or listings of the Nakṣatras. On the one hand, the Nakṣatras are thought of as commencing with Kṛttikā - as in the lists in the Vedic texts. On the other hand, further contexts speak of them as commencing with either Śravisthā/Dhanisthā or Śronā/Śravanā. Vṛddha Garga, writing around the end of the 1st century B.C., observed that the list commencing with Kṛttikā was used in sacrifices, while another list commencing with Śravisthā was used in other reckonings:

"tesāṃ ca sarvesāṃ nakṣatrāṇāṃ karmasu kṛttikāḥ prathamam ācakṣate |
śravisthā tu saṃkhyāyāḥ pūrvā lagnāṇāṃ" || (156)

Varāhamihira similarly indicates in several passages in his works that

Dhanisṭhā is to be considered as the first of the Nakṣatras:

"diggrahabhāgaiḥ saptabhir ūnaṃ śaśibhaṃ dhanisṭhādyam" || (157)

"śeṣam trinavakabhaktān nakṣatram tad dhanisṭhādi" || (157a)

When - according to a passage in the Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata - the Kṛttikās are allotted a place in the sky by Skanda, they are said to take the place formerly occupied by Abhijit, namely the place adjacent to Śravaṇā; (158) and in this same context it is said that Brahmā originally created the Nakṣatras as commencing with Dhanisṭhā:

"dhanisṭhādis tadā kālo brahmanā pariniraitah" | (159)

A further passage in the Āśvamedhika Parvan of the Mahābhārata once again opines that the Nakṣatras commence with Śraviṣṭhā - although many manuscript recensions read Śravaṇā in place of Śraviṣṭhā:

"śraviṣṭhādīni rksāni rtavaḥ śiśirādayah" || (160)

The BORI Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata refers to 28 Manuscripts: 14 of these contain the reading śraviṣṭhā-, these being 4 Kashmiri, 1 Bengali, and all 9 Southern recensions; and 12 of these contain the reading śravaṇā-, these being 1 Śāradā, 4 Bengali, and 7 Devanāgarī Manuscripts. Of the remaining 2 Manuscripts, 1 Kashmiri contains the variant reading bhaviṣyā-; and 1 Devanāgarī contains the variant reading avisṭhā-. In addition to these 28 Manuscripts, the Commentary of Vādirāja (ex MSS from Madras) reads śraviṣṭhā-: while it may also be noted that in the cases of 1 Devanāgarī and 1 Kashmiri Manuscript, a later hand has added the reading aśvinyā- in the margin of the text. Thus there would appear to be good evidence in favour of both readings śraviṣṭhā and śravaṇā.

The Epic myth of Triśaṅku relates that Viśvāmitra created in the

(157) Pañcasiddhāntikā 12.3.

(157a) Brhājñātaka 26.15: cf. 26.16.

(158) e.g. Mahābhārata 3.219.1-11.

(159) Mahābhārata 3.219.10.

(160) Mahābhārata 14.44.2.

southern region a second set of Saptarṣis and Nakṣatras, the latter of which is said to have begun with Śravanā:

"srjan daksinamārgasthan saptarṣin aparān pūnah ||
nakṣatramālam aparān asrjat krodhamūrchitah" | (161)

"ati nakṣatravamsāmś ca kruddho nakṣatrasampadā |
prati śravanapūrvāni nakṣatrāni sasarja yah" || (162)

As was quoted in section 3(b), the Gods subsequently decree that the new set of Saptarṣis and Nakṣatras created by Visvamitra should remain as long as the worlds endure.⁽¹⁶³⁾

It may accordingly be inferred from all of these references and passages that from at least the time of Vṛddha Garga around the end of the 1st century B.C. there were considered to be two main separate enumerations of the Nakṣatras: and that while one was deemed to be that commencing with Kṛttikā, the other was deemed to commence with either Śraviṣṭhā/Dhanīṣṭhā (the 22nd of the 28 Nakṣatras, or the 21st of the 27 Nakṣatras) or Śronā/Śravanā (the 21st of the 28 Nakṣatras, or the 20th of the 27 Nakṣatras).

The differing systems or versions of the Saptarṣi Yuga may accordingly be seen to correspond to the differing systems of enumeration of the Nakṣatras. It has been seen that one version of the Saptarṣi Yuga places the Saptarṣis in Maghā for the start of the Kali Yuga in 2414 B.C. -- namely during the period 2476-2376 B.C.: while the other version places them in Maghā for the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. -- namely during the period 3176-3076 B.C. Similarly one version of the Nakṣatra lists is deemed to commence with Kṛttikā, and the other with either Śraviṣṭhā/Dhanīṣṭhā or Śronā/Śravanā. Therefore the period of the Saptarṣis being in Kṛttikā in the one version of the Saptarṣi Yuga should on this basis correspond to the period of the Saptarṣis being in either Śraviṣṭhā/Dhanīṣṭhā or Śronā/Śravanā in the other version of the Saptarṣi Yuga.

(161) Rāmāyana 1.59.20-21.

(162) Mahābhārata 1.65.34.

(163) Rāmāyana 1.59.25-28.

Referring to Table 7, it will be observed that - according to the version of the Saptarṣi Yuga followed by Varāhamihira and the early Purāṇic texts - the Saptarṣis are in Kṛttikā in 5376 B.C., in 3176 B.C., and in 476 B.C.: they are in Śravisthā/Dhanisthā in 6576 B.C., in 3876 B.C., and in 1176 B.C.: and they are in Śronā/Śravaṇā in 6676 B.C., in 3976 B.C., and in 1276 B.C.

The version of the Saptarṣi Yuga referred to by Vṛddha Garga - which places the Saptarṣis in Maghā during the period 3176-3076 B.C. - thus opines that the Saptarṣis are in Kṛttikā in 6576 B.C., in 3876 B.C., and in 1176 B.C.: that they are in Śravisthā/Dhanisthā in 4576 B.C., in 1876 B.C., and in A.D. 825: and that they are in Śronā/Śravaṇā in 4676 B.C., in 1976 B.C., and in A.D. 725.

It may thus be seen that there occurs an exact correspondence on this basis between Kṛttikā in the one version and Śravisthā in the other version: in the case of Kṛttikā in the version followed by Vṛddha Garga, and Śravisthā/Dhanisthā in the version followed by Varāhamihira and the early Purāṇic texts. This is moreover the only such correspondence to occur between the two versions. It may accordingly be concluded that the version of the Saptarṣi Yuga in which the Nakṣatras are said to commence with Śravisthā is that which was adopted in practice by Varāhamihira and in the early Purāṇic texts: as opposed to the version used by Vṛddha Garga, in which the Nakṣatras commenced with Kṛttikā.

It may next be asked whence arose the apparent confusion between the commencement of the "new" set of Nakṣatras with either Śravisthā/Dhanisthā or Śronā/Śravaṇā, corresponding to Kṛttikā in the "old" version of the system followed by Vṛddha Garga. It will be observed that, in both versions, the Saptarṣis are in Śravaṇā during the century preceding that in which they are in Śravisthā: and they are thus in Śravaṇā in the version followed by Varāhamihira during the century preceding that in which they are in Kṛttikā in

the version followed by Vrddha Garga. However, dates have been established for only one complete cycle of the Saptarsis: namely for that in which they are in Kṛttikā-Śraviṣṭhā in 3876 B.C., as based upon the dates during which they were in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga according to each of the two different versions. It may accordingly be suggested that the correspondence referred to in the passages cited earlier as between the Saptarsis being in Kṛttikā in the one version at the same time as they were in Śravānā - rather than Śraviṣṭhā - in the other version arises from the fact that there occurs a difference of 100 years, or one Nakṣatra, between the two versions during a complete cycle of the Saptarsis. In other words, one of the versions employs a total of 27 Nakṣatras, while the other version employs a total of 28 Nakṣatras.

It has already been seen in preceding sub-sections that the version of the Saptarsi Yuga used by Varāhamihira and in the early Purānic texts employs a total of 27 Nakṣatras - as is stated explicitly for example in the early Purānic texts:

"saptaviṃṣatiparyante kṛtsne nakṣatramandale |
saptarsayas tu tiṣṭhanti paryāyena śatam śatam" || (164)

Similarly in the Epic and early Purānic texts it is invariably related that Soma/Candra gains as wives 27 - rather than 28 - of the daughters of Dakṣa, who are the Nakṣatras.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Therefore, since the version followed by Varāhamihira and the early Purānic texts employs a total of 27 Nakṣatras, it may be inferred that the version followed by Vrddha Garga employs a total of 28 Nakṣatras, with the addition of Abhijit. Such a conclusion may be seen to be implied in the statement of Vrddha Garga that the list of Nakṣatras commencing with Kṛttikā is that used in connection with sacrifices (karmasu). For the Nakṣatra lists of the Vedic Samhitās, the Brāhmanas and the

(164) e.g. Brahmānda Purāna 2.3.74.231 : Vāyu Purāna 2.37.413 : Matsya Purāna 273.40 : cf. Brhatsamhitā chs. 14, 15 : etc.

(165) e.g. Mahābhārata 1.60.15-18: 1.70.7-10: 12.200.17-28: 12.329.46: Harivanśa 2.47 : Brahmānda Purāna 1.2.37.44 : Vāyu Purāna 2.40-42 : etc.

Sūtras - namely in the sacrificial literature - invariably commence with Kṛttikā, and generally employ a total of 28 Nakṣatras⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ - in common with the Chinese Sieou and Arabic Manāzil systems. Similarly Vṛddha Garga's use of the term Śravisthā (as it appears in the early Nakṣatra lists) rather than Dhanisthā (as it appears in the later Nakṣatra lists, and as is used by Varāhamihira) might be seen to imply that Vṛddha Garga is speaking with reference to the earlier or sacrificial lists of Nakṣatras.

It may also be noted that, of the later astronomers, Āryabhata continues to use in places all 28 of the Nakṣatras in his calculations, with the inclusion of Abhijit:⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ while, as has been noted above, Varāhamihira generally uses only 27. Moreover, Brahmagupta in one passage in the Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta refers to the Jain tradition of there being 2 suns, 2 moons, and 54 Nakṣatras:

"bhāni catuspañcāśad dvau dvāv arkaindavau jinoktam yat" | (168)

Yet while Brahmagupta refers to a system of 54 (= 2 x 27) Nakṣatras, it is noteworthy that most Jain texts on cosmography refer to there being 56 (= 2 x 28) Nakṣatras in Jambudvīpa.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Thus it might be inferred that Brahmagupta - as also Varāhamihira - attempted to assert that the number of Nakṣatras was 27 - rather than 28, as had been held by most Vedic texts, and as may be suggested to have been held by the earlier astronomer Vṛddha Garga, just as it was held by the later astronomer Āryabhata whose ideas were themselves greatly criticised in many respects by Brahmagupta.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

(166) e.g. Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā 2.13.20 : Taittirīya Saṁhitā 3.1.1-2: 3.1.4.1ff : Ātharvaveda 19.7.1: 19.8.2 : Śākhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra 1.26; etc.

(167) e.g. Āryabhatīya 12.1-8.

(168) Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta 11.3.

(169) e.g. Jīvābhigamasūtra 875ff : cf. W. Kirfel - Die Kosmographie der Inder, pp.270ff.

(170) e.g. Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta ch.11.

On the basis that the version of the Saptar̥ṣi Yuga followed by Vr̥ddha Garga employs a total of 28 Nakṣatras, and places the Saptar̥ṣis in Maghā during the period 3176-3076 B.C. (namely for the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C.), then it may be seen that the complete cycle of the Saptar̥ṣis will commence with Kṛttikā in 3876 B.C.: while the preceding complete cycle will commence some 2800 years earlier, with the Saptar̥ṣis in Kṛttikā in 6676 B.C.: and the following complete cycle will commence with the Saptar̥ṣis in Kṛttikā in 1076 B.C. Thus the Saptar̥ṣis would have been in both Kṛttikā - according to the version followed by Vr̥ddha Garga - and also Śravanā - according to the version followed by Varāhamihira and the early Purāṇic texts - in 6676 B.C.: while at the start of the next complete cycle there would be a difference of 100 years between the two versions (with Kṛttikā in the one version corresponding to Śraviṣṭhā/Dhaniṣṭhā in the other version): and at the start of the next complete cycle after that there would be a difference of 200 years between the two versions.

Such a conclusion would imply that the date of 6676 B.C. was in some sense regarded as being a starting-point of Indian chronology. Confirmation of this inference is provided in part by Greek and Roman writers. Pliny for example makes the observation that:

"Colliguntur a Libero Patre ad Alexandrum Magnum reges eorum
CLIV, annis sex millia CCCCLI adjiciunt et menses tres" (171)

"From Father Liber/Bacchus to Alexander the Great they reckon the number of their kings to have been 154, and they reckon (the time as) 6451 years and 3 months".

Since Alexander entered the Panjāb in 326 B.C. and left again at the end of the same year, Pliny's statement therefore indicates that the first king was thought to have reigned in India in $6451\frac{1}{2} + 326 = 6777$ B.C. Solinus also makes a similar observation: stating that 6451 years and 3 months were reckoned from Father Bacchus - the first

who invaded India - to Alexander the Great, and that 153 kings were thought to have reigned in the intermediate period. (172)

Arrian also makes a comment on such chronology. The text is unfortunately somewhat corrupt at this point, but reads as follows:

" ἀπὸ μὲν δὴ Διονύσου βασιλέας ἠρίθμεον Ἴνδοι εἰς Σανδράκοττον τρεῖς καὶ πεντήκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν ἕτεα δὲ δύο καὶ τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἑξακισχίλια· ἐν δὲ τούτοισι τρίς τὸ πᾶν εἰς ἐλευθερίην * * τὴν δὲ καὶ εἰς τριηκόσια· τὴν δὲ εἴκοσί τε ἑτέων καὶ ἑκατὸν· " (173)

"From Dionysos to Sandrocottos the Indians count 153 kings, and more than 6042 years: and during this time thrice for liberty * * this for 300 years, the other for 120 years".

Although the text is somewhat unclear as to which represents the total number of years to be counted between Dionysos (i.e. the first king) and Sandrocottos (i.e. Candragupta Maurya), it may be inferred that the first king was on this basis thought to have reigned in India between 6042 years before Sandrocottos on the one hand, and $6042 + 300 + 120 = 6462$ years before Sandrocottos on the other hand. Taking again a date of 326 B.C. as the provisional date of Sandrocottos - corresponding to the date of Alexander as given in the works of Pliny and Solinus - the first king was thus thought to have reigned in India between 6368 B.C. and 6788 B.C. It may be noted that Arrian's date of 6788 B.C. is only some 11 years earlier than the date of 6777 B.C. given by Pliny and Solinus: and it may be suggested that, since Arrian reckons to Sandrocottos rather than to Alexander (as do Pliny and Solinus), it is possible that Arrian may here be preserving a tradition wherein Sandrocottos or Candragupta Maurya was thought to have come to the throne some 11 years after the campaigns of Alexander in 326 B.C. In this event, all three writers would thus be in agreement on the point that the first king was thought to have reigned in India in 6777 B.C. Since all three

(172) Compendium 52.5.

(173) Indica 9.9.

writers most probably derived their accounts from Megasthenes, who resided at the court of Candragupta Maurya, it would therefore seem possible that Arrian preserves in this instance a further tradition recorded by Megasthenes to the effect that Candragupta or Sandrocottos became an undisputed ruler in 326 - 11 = 315 B.C. The present state of preservation of the text of the Indica would unfortunately seem to make it impossible to draw any more definite conclusions on this point.

It will be observed that the date of 6777 B.C. which is given by these writers comes to within virtually a single century of the date of 6676 B.C. which is suggested in the Indian texts to represent a starting-point of Indian chronology, as based upon the system of the Saptarṣi Yuga. It may accordingly be inferred that such a date was indeed regarded - from at least the 4th century B.C. - as being a starting-point of Indian chronology: namely when the Saptarṣis were thought to have been in the Nakṣatra Kṛttikā according to one version of the system, and in the Nakṣatra Śravaṇā according to the other version of the system. Subsequently, when dates were more generally reckoned from the start of the Kali Yuga - which fell within the next complete cycle of the Saptarṣis - the starting-point of the system was accordingly transferred to the following complete cycle: namely when the Saptarṣis were thought to have been in the Nakṣatra Kṛttikā according to one version of the system, and in the Nakṣatra Śraviṣṭhā according to the other version of the system. This accordingly gave rise in turn to the different reckonings of the start of the Nakṣatras with either Kṛttikā, Śravaṇā, or Śraviṣṭhā.

The version of the Saptarṣi Yuga followed by Vṛddha Garga - which places the Saptarṣis in Maghā at the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. - may now be set out in tabulated form, giving the initial year of each Christian century during which the Saptarṣis were thought to enter each of the 28 Nakṣatras in turn. The order

of enumeration of each of the 27 Nakṣatras in the version of the Saptarṣi Yuga followed by Varāhamihira and in the early Purānic texts may also be set out again in tabulated form, this time commencing with Śravaṇā - thus highlighting the correspondences and divergences between the two different versions of the Saptarṣi Yuga.

Table 9 : The Period of the Santarsi Yuga, according to Vrddha Garga.

1.	Kṛttikā	6676 B.C.	3876 B.C.	1076 B.C.
2.	Rohinī	6576	3776	976
3.	Mṛgaśiras	6476	3676	876
4.	Ārdra	6376	3576	776
5.	Punarvasū	6276	3476	676
6.	Puṣya	6176	3376	576
7.	Āślesā	6076	3276	476
8.	Maghā	5976	3176	376
9.	Pūrva-phalgunī	5876	3076	276
10.	Uttara-phalgunī	5776	2976	176
11.	Hastā	5676	2876	76
12.	Citrā	5576	2776	25 A.D.
13.	Svatī	5476	2676	125
14.	Viśakhā	5376	2576	225
15.	Anurādhā	5276	2476	325
16.	Jyesthā	5176	2376	425
17.	Mūlā	5076	2276	525
18.	Pūrvāśādhā	4976	2176	625
19.	Uttarāśādhā	4876	2076	725
20.	Abhijit	4776	1976	825
21.	Śravaṇā	4676	1876	925
22.	Dhanisthā	4576	1776	1025
23.	Śatabhiṣā	4476	1676	1125
24.	Pūrva-bhādrapadā	4376	1576	1225
25.	Uttara-bhādrapadā	4276	1476	1325
26.	Revatī	4176	1376	1425
27.	Āśvinī	4076	1276	1525
28.	Bharanī	3976	1176	1625

Table 10 : The Period of the Santarsi Yuga, according to Varahamihira and the Puranic texts. (Commencing with Śravana).

1.	Śravana	6676 B.C.	3976 B.C.	1276 B.C.
2.	Dhanistha	6576	3876	1176
3.	Śatabhisā	6476	3776	1076
4.	Pūrva-bhadrapadā	6376	3676	976
5.	Uttara-bhadrapadā	6276	3576	876
6.	Revatī	6176	3476	776
7.	Aśvinī	6076	3376	676
8.	Bharanī	5976	3276	576
9.	Kṛttikā	5876	3176	476
10.	Rohinī	5776	3076	376
11.	Mrgaśiras	5676	2976	276
12.	Ārdra	5576	2876	176
13.	Punarvasū	5476	2776	76
14.	Puṣyā	5376	2676	25 A.D.
15.	Āśleṣā	5276	2576	125
16.	Maghā	5176	2476	225
17.	Pūrva-phalgunī	5076	2376	325
18.	Uttara-phalgunī	4976	2276	425
19.	Hastā	4876	2176	525
20.	Citrā	4776	2076	625
21.	Svātī	4676	1976	725
22.	Viśākha	4576	1876	825
23.	Anurādhā	4476	1776	925
24.	Jyesthā	4376	1676	1025
25.	Mūlā	4276	1576	1125
26.	Pūrvāśādhā	4176	1476	1225
27.	Uttarāśādhā	4076	1376	1325

(e) Conclusion: The Two Versions of the Saptarsi Yuga.

i. On the basis of the observations and demonstrations in this section, it may be concluded that the system of chronology of the Saptarsi Yuga commencing with the Saptarsis in Kṛttikā in 6676 B.C. employed a total of 28 Nakṣatras, and placed the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. This version of the Saptarsi Yuga was in use in India from at least the 4th century B.C., as witnessed by the statements of Greek and Roman writers; and it was also the version used by Vṛddha Garga around the end of the 1st century B.C.

At a period prior to that of Vṛddha Garga, there had come into use a further version of the Saptarsi Yuga, which employed a total of 27 Nakṣatras, and which placed the start of the Kali Yuga in 2414 B.C. This version also used a method of computation wherein the start of the complete cycle of the Saptarsis in Kṛttikā in 6676 B.C. in the former version corresponded to the Saptarsis being in Śravana in this further version; while the start of the next complete Saptarsi cycle with Kṛttikā in 3876 B.C. in the former version corresponded to the Saptarsis being in Śravisthā/Dhanisthā in this further version. The further version is also that followed in the Epic and early Purānic texts.

Thereafter the later astronomers such as Varāhamihira, Parāśara and Āryabhata attempted to harmonise these two versions: by accepting the date of 3102 B.C. as the start of the Kali Yuga (as given in the former version) while yet in practice using the further version of the Saptarsi Yuga. They were consequently obliged to introduce a period of approximately 650 years as the interval separating the start of the Kali Yuga from the Mahābhārata war - a feature which is clearly at variance with both Epic and Purānic traditions. This latter compromise solution is that which is generally to be found in subsequent contexts: notably in the Rājatarāṅgīnī,

and also in such present-day usages of the system as that followed in Kashmir.

It may be observed that the former version is associated especially with the literature of the sacrificial cult -- namely primarily the Vedic texts -- as is indicated by Vrddha Garga's reference to karmasu or use in sacrifices, and as is indicated also by the employment in this version of a list of 28 Nakṣatras which frequently occurs also in the Vedic literature. The latter version is associated especially with the non-sacrificial literature, and with popular usages: as is indicated through its appearance in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts, and through its common designation as the Lok-Kāl or Laukika -- namely the popular or people's era.

The introduction of the latter version may be placed at a period prior to its recognition by Vrddha Garga around the end of the 1st century B.C.: while its full incorporation within the early Purāṇic texts may be placed -- as has been suggested especially in sub-section (c) -- most probably in the latter part of the 3rd century A.D.

ii. It is possible to draw certain further conclusions as to the origins of the latter version of the Saptarṣi Yuga. In general terms, it may be suggested that it owes its origin in some measure to a cultural context of a more southern geographical orientation than that usually associated with the sacrificial literature of the Vedic tradition, on the basis of the passage in the Bāla Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa which relates that Viśvāmitra created a second or new set of Saptarṣis and Nakṣatras in the southern regions:

"sr̥jan dakṣiṇamārgasthān saptarṣīn aparāṇ punah ||
nakṣatramāṇān aparāṇ asr̥jat krodhasūrchitah" | (174)

It may be noted in this respect that the earliest epigraphic use of

the Saptarsi Yuga occurs in a recently-discovered Vākātaka inscription which comes from a region well to the south of the Vindhyas: namely from the village of Hisse-Borālā, some six miles to the south of Bassin/Washim - the former capital of the so-called Basim branch of the Vākātaka dynasty.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ The inscription belongs to king Devasena, whose reign had previously been placed somewhat conjecturally by Altekar and others around A.D. 455-475:⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ and one of the dates given in the inscription is that of Śaka 380 or A.D. 458 - thereby constituting the earliest example known so far of the use of the Śaka era, and also tending to confirm the previously conjectural date of Devasena proposed by Altekar and others. The inscription also contains a reference to the Saptarsi Yuga: and since this has been a matter of considerable conjectural interpretation, reference may be made to the first line of the inscription which contains the system of dating. The text of the first line is damaged in two places, and two parts of it are consequently either difficult or impossible to read: but as best reconstructed,⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ it reads as follows:

"siddham || (- - -)tasya vrittasya dhru 20 saptarsaya ūttarāsu
(pha - - su) śakānām 380 vākātakanām śrī devāsanasya" ||

The content of the first lacuna is unknown: while that of the second lacuna may almost certainly be read as phalgunīsu - as has been suggested by Kolte, Gai and Sankaranarayanan. As has been seen in the examination in preceding sub-sections of the two versions of the Saptarsi Yuga, during the period A.D. 425-525 within which the inscription is dated (i.e. in A.D. 458), the Saptarsis would be in Jyesthā according to the version followed by Vṛddha Garga, but in Uttara Phalgunī according to the version followed by Varāhamihira and the early Purānic texts. It may accordingly be inferred that

(175) Documented by S. Gokhale - The Hisse-Borala Inscription of Devasena : in Ep.Ind. vol.37 part 1, pp.1ff.

(176) e.g. in Majumdar and Altekar - The Vākātaka-Gupta Age, p.121.

(177) Accounts of V.B. Kolte and of G.S. Gai & S. Sankaranarayanan in Ep.Ind. vol.37 part 1, pp.3-8: also cf. Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume, pp.372ff.

the inscription follows the same version of the Saptarṣi Yuga as that used by Varāhamihira and in the early Purāṇic texts.

The meaning of the expression ()ta.sya vrittasya in the inscription is unclear - due probably to the loss of the preceding words or syllables: and the next word dhru has been transliterated as vr̄a by Gokhale, has been read also as vr̄u or vri by Kolte, and has been read as the numeral 3000 by Gai and Sankaranarayanan. The sign for the numeral 20 may also be read as dhi.

In interpreting this line of the inscription, Kolte has taken the statement of Varāhamihira in the Brhatsamhitā (13.3-4) as indicating that the date when Yudhiṣṭhira was ruling in 2526 pre-Śaka indicates the first year wherein the Saptarṣis entered Maghā. However, the discussion during the course of this section - as also the researches of Cunningham and others - will have demonstrated that the Saptarṣis would have entered each Nakṣatra in the year 76 of each Christian century B.C., and in the year 25 of each Christian century A.D. Hence the resulting interpretation offered by Kolte - whereby he deems that the Saptarṣis would have spent six years in the Nakṣatra Uttara Phalgunī in A.D. 458 - would appear to be based upon an initial misconception. Further criticisms of Kolte's interpretation have been made by Gai and Sankaranarayanan. The alternative interpretation offered by these two writers would similarly appear to rest upon a misconception. By interpreting the third clear word in the inscription as the numeral 3000 - rather than as dhru - they attempt to harmonise the resulting date of 3020 with the date of Śaka 380 by suggesting that the statement of Varāhamihira relates to the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira being not in 2526 pre-Śaka A.D. 78, but rather in pre-Śaka-Śālivāhana - or in other words in 2526 pre-Vikrama 57 B.C. They also reinterpret the figures ṣaḍ-dvika of Varāhamihira (13.3) as meaning 6 x 2 rather than 26: and they would thus place the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira some 2512 years

before 57 B.C., namely in 2569 B.C. Thereafter, by incorporating santa (in saptarsava) in the inscription with the preceding numerals 3000 + 20, the conclusion is reached that 3027 years after the date of Yudhiṣṭhira in 2569 B.C. indicates the year A.D. 458 - which is also that stated in the inscription in the form Śaka 380. The attempted interpretation is an ingenious one: yet it contradicts the statements of Varāhamihira, Parāśara and Āryabhata - as also of Kalhana - that there occurred an interval of approximately 650 years between the commencement of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. and the times of the Mahābhārata war and the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira - the latter of which must therefore be placed, according to Varāhamihira and others, around 2448 B.C., rather than in 2569 B.C. as suggested by Gai and Sankaranarayanan. Hence this interpretation of the statement of Varāhamihira - thus also of the system of dating used in the inscription - cannot therefore be accepted as valid.

An alternative interpretation may be proposed. It may firstly be observed that neither of the figures 3020 or 20 - if indeed either or both is in fact intended to designate a numerical rather than a consonantal form in the inscription - would appear to harmonise satisfactorily with the period of the Saptarsi Yuga: the former since it would thus refer back to a date of $3020 - 458 = 2562$ B.C., which would not appear to be a significant date: the latter since it would thus refer to the 20th year of the Saptarsis being in the Nakṣatra Uttara Phalgunī, namely to A.D. 445 - which is some 13 years prior to the date of the inscription in the year Śaka 380 or A.D. 458. It would be possible to suggest that the latter date of A.D. 445 might be intended to refer - together with the lacuna at the start of the line - to the commencement of the reign of Devasena. But it may also be suggested that - as occurs in a very large number of other inscriptions, and as is the case with the following figure 380 - the numerical forms 3020 or 20 are connected in some way with

what precedes them in the inscription - rather than with the statement concerning the Saptarsis being in Uttara Phalgunī, which follows them. On this basis it would be possible that the figure 20 refers - together with the missing first part of the inscription - to the 20th year of the reign of Devasena, or to some further type of information such as the day of the month. Thus the first line of the inscription might be divided into the following separate informational categories:

- a. siddham
- b. (_ _ _)tasya vrittasya dhru 20
- c. saptarṣaya ūttarāsu phalgunīṣu
- d. śakanām 380
- e. vakātakanām śrī devasenasya

On this basis, therefore, the inscription will contain no reference to the precise year of the Saptarsi Yuga, but will merely state the Nakṣatra which the Saptarsis were thought to be occupying at that time.

In more general terms it may be observed that among the important features of the inscription are firstly that it is dated in the Śaka era - thereby affording the earliest example of the use of that era - and secondly that it affords evidence of the use of the second version of the Saptarsi Yuga - namely that used also by Varāhamihira and in the early Purānic texts, as opposed to that used by Vrddha Garga. It may further be observed that this first inscriptional use of the Saptarsi Yuga comes from a region to the south of the Vindhya, between the Narmadā and Godāvarī rivers - namely from the region formerly ruled over by the Śātavāhanas or Andhras, the ending of whose dynasty has been seen to provide one of the main dates (namely A.D. 238) in the Purānic reckoning and account of the Saptarsi Yuga.

iii. The conclusion may now be proposed that the version of the Saptarsi Yuga which is used by Varāhamihira and in the early Purānic texts -- and which is used also in the Hisse-Borālā inscription of the Vākātaka king Devasena -- was current during the 3rd to the 6th centuries A.D. especially in the region of Eastern Madhya Pradesh and Northern Maharashtra, to the south of the Vindhya. It may accordingly be suggested that the reference in the Bāla Kānda of the Rāmāyana to the creation of a "new" series of Saptarsis and Naksatras in the southern region relates in effect to this latter version of the Saptarsi Yuga, which was gradually coming to supersede the former version as used by Vrddha Garga.

Reference may here be made to the conclusion reached at the end of Chapter 3: namely that the origin and development of the second main list of the Saptarsi group may itself be linked in some measure with social and cultural changes which were occurring during the late centuries B.C. and the early centuries A.D. in a region generally to the south of the Vindhya. The later version of the Saptarsi Yuga -- which appears during that period and within that region -- may on this basis be seen as a further illustration of such cultural changes and innovations which originated in the region to the south of the Vindhya, and which gradually came to influence and even supersede the traditions previously current in the Indo-Gangetic valleys: even as the version of the Saptarsi Yuga used by Vrddha Garga was largely superseded by that used by Varāhamihira and in the early Purānic texts, and as the Rsis of the second main list of the Saptarsi group came to replace in importance those of the first main list of the group. In this respect it may accordingly be inferred in more general terms that the region of the Western Deccan, to the south of the Vindhya and around the Narmadā and Godāvarī valleys, witnessed during especially the early centuries of the Christian era dynamic cultural changes under the Śātavāhana and

Vākātaka dynasties: changes which included not only the emergence of a "new" version of the Saptarṣi Yuga - which in practice came to virtually replace that formerly used by Vṛddha Garga - but also the appearance of Ṛsis who came to be incorporated within the Saptarṣi group and to constitute the second main list of the Saptarṣi group. In view of the importance of the Ṛsis of the second main list of the Saptarṣi group in the Epic and early Purāṇic texts - as compared with the relatively minor importance of the Ṛsis of the first main list of the Saptarṣi group - and in view also of the "new" version of the Saptarṣi Yuga which is presented in the early Purāṇic texts, it may be inferred that the formulation of the Epic and early Purāṇic traditions of the Saptarṣis are to be associated especially with this cultural centre of the Western Deccan during especially the early centuries of the Christian era. The likelihood may moreover be expressed that many further Epic and Purāṇic traditions, which have no clear Vedic antecedents - as for example many topics in Śaiva mythology and tradition - may similarly owe their appearance in those texts to the growing influence of cultural milieus of a more southern orientation than that of the Indo-Gangetic valleys which may be said to constitute the epicentre or mainstream of Vedic culture: and in particular to the cultural milieus associated with the Śātavāhana and Vākātaka dynasties of the Western Deccan during the early centuries of the Christian era.

CONCLUSION.

The traditions of the Saptarsi group may be seen to have undergone a number of changes - and to have been expanded in a number of different directions - during the course of their development from the Vedic Saṁhitās to the early Purānic texts. One of the main periods of change is evident between the Vedic texts on the one hand and the Epic and early Purānic texts on the other hand: but other changes are also evident within the Vedic literature itself.

One of the earliest changes occurs in connection with the tradition which identifies the Saptarsis with the seven stars of Ursa Major: wherein it is said that the R̥sis were in former times called R̥ksas or bears. This reference may be seen to indicate that early ideas concerning the constellation Ursa Major were derived primarily from an essentially Indo-European context: while other terms used of the Saptarsis - such as their designation as Ukṣanas or oxen - may again be taken as indications of essentially Indo-European ideas within the traditions of the Saptarsi group. The change which occurs within the Vedic Saṁhitās from the designation R̥kṣa to the designation R̥si for this constellation may be said to have occurred primarily as a result both of the growing influence over the Indo-Āryan cult of essentially non-Indo-European ideas and concepts, and also of the increasingly important role which the R̥si was coming to occupy within Vedic culture - as is indicated primarily through his revelation of R̥ks or hymns of praise to the Gods, which came to be regarded as embodiments of divine knowledge.

A change which occurs between the various Vedic Saṁhitās concerns the type of status which is accorded to the Saptarsis. In the R̥gveda they are regarded firstly as revealers of hymns, and secondly as those who come from heaven to earth in order to attend the sacrifices of men: while in the later Vedic Saṁhitās there appears

a tradition which is further to be found in the Brāhmana and Upanisadic texts, wherein the Saptarṣis are seen as residing within men - being identified with the seven Prāṇas, the vital breaths or the sense-organs in the head. This indicates what may be termed the identification of macrocosm and microcosm within the traditions of the Saptarṣis - the identification of the Saptarṣis as stars in the sky with the Saptarṣis as residing within the heads: and as such it may be paralleled to further similar examples of the identification of macrocosm and microcosm which occur within these texts.

The actual identities of the Rṣis who are included within the Saptarṣi group may be said to have been largely in the process of formulation in the Vedic Saṁhitās and the Brāhmanas: while in the subsequent texts, most notably in the Sūtras, these have been established in a more or less standardised form as Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kaśyapa - together with Agastya as the eighth Rṣi. Such identities are more or less consistently adhered to throughout the later Vedic texts. However, further changes are already evident in certain of the Śrauta Sūtra texts: where, in the sections on Gotra and Pravara, the same group is called the Saptarṣis, but the seven who are regarded as founders of Gotras are now Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Atri, Viśvāmitra, Vasistha, Kaśyapa, and Agastya. These changes which occur in the context of the Gotra organisation may be seen as precursors of the change in identities which occurs in the Epic and early Purānic texts: wherein the identity of the Rṣis who are included in the Saptarṣi group is generally given as Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasistha - while Bhṛgu is additionally frequently appended to or included within the group. This change in identities may be examined at a number of different levels: firstly through the lists of Saptarṣis in the Gotra organisation in both the Śrauta Sūtra and

the early Purānic texts; secondly through further lists which are given of Rsis under different headings - such as the Prajāpatis and the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā; thirdly through the family relationships which are said to exist between the various Rsis - whereby it may be seen that a Rsi who appears in the first main list of the Saptarsi group but not in the second is invariably said to be the "son" of a Rsi in the second main list; and fourthly through the geographical regions with which the various Rsis are associated - whereby it may be seen that the Rsis who appear in the first main list, as also the first main group as a whole, are associated predominantly with the northern region of India: while the Rsis who appear in the second main list, as also the second main group as a whole, are associated predominantly with the southern region of India to the south of the Vindhya. The change in identities which occurs between the Vedic texts on the one hand and the Epic and early Purānic texts on the other hand may on this basis be said to be due in some measure to the growing influence of certain Brahmin groups or priestly families associated with a region or regions to the south of the Vindhya - thereby suggesting the increasing importance of such social and cultural influences from trans-Vindhyan regions during especially the late centuries B.C. and the early centuries A.D.

An almost exclusively Purānic tradition of the Saptarsi group occurs in connection with the Manvantara theory: wherein each of the 14 Manvantaras is said to be presided over by a Saptarsi group, and thus the number of Saptarsi groups is expanded from two to fourteen. In this theory, the Rsis of the two main lists of the Saptarsi group consistently appear in the 1st and 7th Manvantaras - those of the second main list, headed by Marīci, in the 1st Manvantara, and those of the first main list, headed by Viśvāmitra, in the 7th Manvantara: while the Rsis of the 8th Manvantara are additionally especially those who are said in the Epic and early Purānic texts to be the "sons"

of the Ṛsis in the 7th Manvantara, and who are said to have taken part in the Mahābhārata war. The various groups of Saptarṣis are variously said to appear on the earth during either the Kṛta, Tretā, or Dvāpara Yugas: and in this respect the Manvantara traditions of the Saptarṣis may be said to have evolved from a scheme wherein the Ṛsis of the 1st Manvantara were previously thought to have appeared on the earth during the Kṛta Yuga, while their "sons" of the 7th Manvantara were thought to have appeared during the Tretā Yuga, and their "sons" in turn during the Dvāpara Yuga of the same Kalpa or day of Brahmā - wherein a Kalpa consisted of a single succession of the four Yugas, as in the Mahābhārata, prior to the assimilation of the Manvantara to the scheme of Yugas and Kalpas as occurs in the early Purānic texts. Thus the tradition of the different Saptarṣi groups in the 14 Manvantaras may be said to have evolved from an earlier association of groups of Saptarṣis with particular Yugas, wherein the number of Saptarṣi groups was expanded firstly from two to three before being expanded to fourteen: and the length of time separating the appearances of the different groups was at first deemed to be of relatively short duration, rather than of the vastly increased durations as given in the developed Manvantara tradition of the early Purānic texts.

Apart from such changes in the identity of the Ṛsis who are included in the Saptarṣi group, a further important tradition of the Saptarṣis in the Epic and more especially early Purānic and astronomical texts is that wherein, as the seven stars of Ursa Major, they are thought to remain for 100 years in each of the Nakṣatras: an idea which accordingly gives rise to a system of chronology - termed the Saptarṣi Yuga in the early Purānic texts - of which two variant versions may be discerned. The first of these is evident in the works of Vrddha Garga around the end of the 1st century B.C., and was noted by Greek and Roman writers as early as the 4th century B.C.:

while the existence of the second version was noted by Vrddha Garga, and it was subsequently used in the early Purānic texts. An essential difference between the two versions may be seen to lie in the number of Nakṣatras used in each version: for while the latter version employed a total of 27 Nakṣatras, the former version employed a total of 28 Nakṣatras, and thus differs fundamentally in character from the latter version. In addition, both versions differ from each other in the period ascribed to the Saptarṣis being in a particular Nakṣatra in any given cycle: thus while the former version placed the start of the Kali Yuga - when the Saptarṣis were in Maghā - in 3102 B.C. and commenced each complete cycle with Kṛttikā, the latter version placed the start of the Kali Yuga - when the Saptarṣis were in Maghā - in 2414 B.C., whence the start of the complete cycle with Kṛttikā in the former version corresponded to the start of the same complete cycle with Śravisthā in the latter version, and of the preceding complete cycle with Śravanā. Such later astronomers as Varāhamihira and Āryabhata attempted to combine the two versions, by accepting the start of the Kali Yuga in 3102 B.C. while at the same time placing the Saptarṣis in Maghā in 2414 B.C.: and the resulting scheme of chronology which they adopted may be found also in the works of Kalhana, and is employed to the present day in Kashmir.

The change which occurs between the two different versions of the Saptarṣi Yuga may be seen - as with the identities of the Rsis included in the two main lists of the Saptarṣi group - to be due in large measure to the influence of ideas originating from a region to the south of the Vindhya: and more specifically from the region of the Western Deccan, around the Narmadā and Godāvarī valleys, during the rule of the Śātavāhana and Vākāṭaka dynasties in the early centuries of the Christian era. On this basis it may be concluded that the changes between the Vedic traditions of the Saptarṣi group

on the one hand and the Epic and early Purānic traditions of the Saptarṣi group on the other hand have been brought about due in considerable measure to the increasingly important role of Brahmin groups or priestly families in the region of the Western Deccan during the early centuries of the Christian era in influencing and formulating such Epic and early Purānic traditions.

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