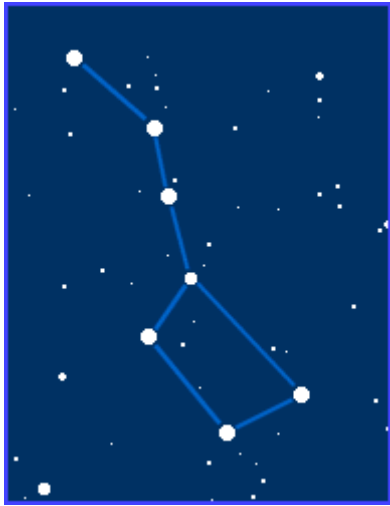


Ursa Major - The Seven Rishis (Hindu)



The stars of the Big Dipper were the seven sages called Rishis. These seven sages are said to be those who made the Sun rise and shine. They were happily married to seven sisters named Krttika. They originally all lived together in the northern sky.

But one day, the god of fire, Agni, emerged from the flames of a sacrificial offering performed by the seven Rishis and immediately fell in love with the seven Krttika. Trying to forget his hopeless love for the Krttika, Agni wandered in the forest where he met Svaha, the star Zeta Tauri. Svaha was at once infatuated with Agni.

To conquer Agni's love, Svaha disguised herself as six of the seven Krttika. For six times, Svaha made love to Agni who believed that he had conquered the attractive wives of the seven Rishis. Svaha could mimic only six of the Krttika because the seventh sister, Arundhati, was too devoted to her husband to be imitated. After a while, Svaha gave birth to a child that she named Skanda. With his birth, rumors began to spread that six of the Rishis' wives were his mother.

Six of the Rishis divorced their wives. Arundhati was the only one that remained with her husband as the star Alcor. The other six Krttika went away to become the Pleiades.