

The Ishta Devata



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There are four main goals of human existence: dharma, artha, kama and moksha. In order to achieve them, people are advised to worship various devatas. Among all the devatas one can worship, the Ishta Devata is the foremost.

Defining the Ishta Devata

The term 'Ishta Devata' literally means 'the main deity'. This Deity can bless one with good passage through life. What is more, Ishta Devata is responsible for granting moksha to the native. Hence, its worship not only ensures that one's whole life is taken care of, but also makes it certain that one is moving towards liberation.

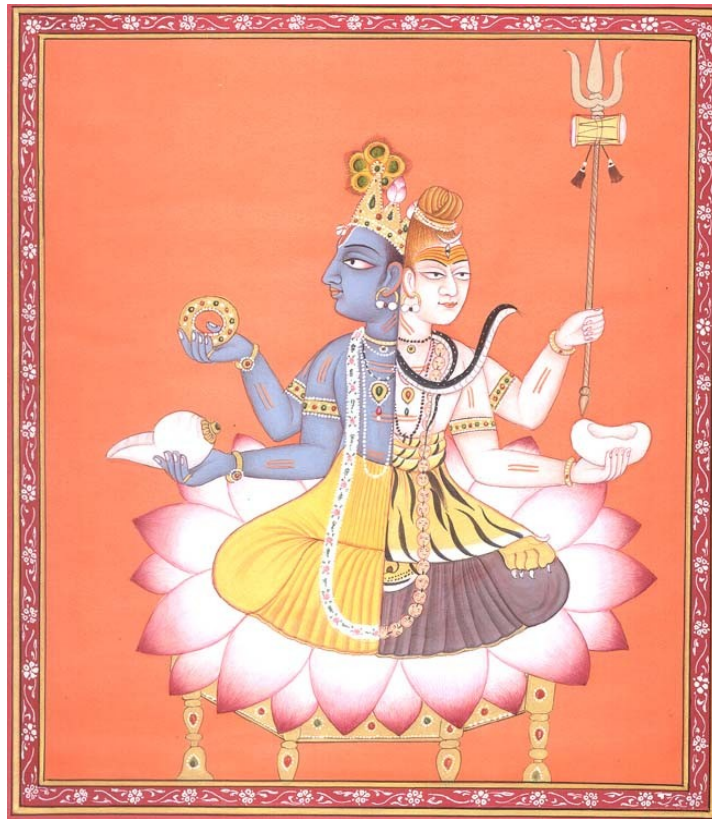
Among all the different devatas it is Vishnu, who is capable of bestowing moksha. He alone carries the sudarshana chakra and uses it specifically for that purpose. If one is hit by this astra of Lord Vishnu he achieves final emancipation as sudarshana chakra has the power to separate one's atma from the mana. For these reasons the worship of an appropriate Vishnu Avatara as one's Ishta Devata is generally recommended.

However, it has to be borne in mind that one's Ishta Devata may not necessarily be Vishnu. The achievement of perfection is also possible for those who are worshipping other Deities, like Shiva or Durga Devi. Still, in such situations, moksha is granted by the via medium of Sri Vishnu and His sudarshana chakra, as it is Vishnu alone, who takes on the task of giving moksha.

The enmity between Sri Rama and Ravana depicted in the

Ramayana clearly illustrates this point. It is a well-known fact that Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He was blessed by the Lord and no weapon used by Sri Ramachandra could kill him. This was so, because Lord Shiva wanted to grant His devotee mukti. Ravana died only when Lord Rama threw His chakra and in this way granted him liberation.

Therefore both statements made in Shastras are right: that only Vishnu is the giver of moksha and that the other Devatas (like Lord Shiva or Devi) are also capable of blessing their devotees with mukti.



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The form of Ishta Devata and its worship

Lord Vishnu appears in this world through different grahas and those grahas indicate the appropriate Avatara that should be worshipped as one's Ishta Devata. The list of those various incarnations and planets associated with them is given in the Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra, chapter 2, verses 5-7:

'From Surya the avatara of Rama, from Chandra that of Krishna, from Mangal that of Narasimha, from Buddha that of Lord Buddha, from Guru that of Vamana, from Shukra that of Parashurama, from Shani that of Kurma, from Rahu that of Varaha and from Ketu that of Meena occurred. All other incarnations (than these) are also through the grahas (...)'

As far as the worship of other Devatas is concerned, the list of those Deities and their corresponding planets was given by Parashara Muni in his Brihat Parashara Hora Shastra in the chapter on Karakamsa. It was also presented by Jaimini Maharishi in his Upadesha Sutras (1.2.72-79): Surya indicates Lord Shiva, Chandra indicates Gouri, Shukra indicates Lakshmi, Mangal indicates Skanda, Buddha and Shani both indicate Lord Vishnu, Guru indicates Samba Shiva, Rahu indicates Tamasi or Durga and Ketu indicates Lord Ganesha.

Everyone is eligible for the worship of one's Ishta Devata and everyone at least should know their Ishta Devata. The process of worship is simple and is based on the chanting of the dvadakshari mantra for the appropriate Deity. Although this chanting alone is very powerful, an ideal situation is

when one also performs panca upachara puja to one's Ishta Devata.

The term 'dvadakshari mantra' means 'the twelve syllable mantra'. An exemplary dvadakshari mantra for Lord Vishnu as Ishta Devata is given by the Parashara Muni in his Vishnu Purana. The ugra madhusudana mantra given there by the sage is as follows: *om namo bhagavate vasudevaya*.

Parashara Muni advises people to chant it and says that with this mantra we ask Lord Vishnu to pick up His sudarshana chakra and liberate us. The mantra bhoga of this particular mantra is mukti. Therefore it should be done for one's Ishta Devata with the purpose of making progress towards final emancipation.



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The Avatars of Lord Vishnu



Each Vishnu Avatar is worshipped with a different dvadakshari mantra. Herein I have presented each of these incarnations with a short description and the suggested mantra. One should know that there are often more than one dvadakshari mantra for a particular Vishnu Avatar. As some of them are not in line with the tradition and parampara it is advised to refer to authorities while choosing an appropriate one.

Sri Ramachandra

Lord Rama has appeared in the dynasty of Maharaja Khatvanga as the son of Maharaja Dasharatha. He broke the Hara-dhanu, married Sitadevi and defeated Ravana. Later on the Lord became the king of Ayodhya. His glories and pastimes are depicted in the famous Ramayana. The mantra that should be chanted for Sri Ramachandra Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RAMACHANDRAYA

Sri Krishna

Lord Krishna appeared in the dynasty of Yadu as the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. He has performed numerous pastimes during His presence in this world. He appeared on the plea of Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, mother Earth and the demigods in order to defeat the demons and help mother Earth and Her inhabitants. Sri Krishna is the speaker of the famous Bhagavad Gita. The mantra that should be chanted for Sri Krishna Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAYA

Sri Narasimha Avatara

Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of Sri Narasimha in order to save His devotee Prahlada Maharaja. Sri Prahlad was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and the son of a demon named Hiranyakashipu. Lord Narasimha appeared from

the pillar in order to save him and kill Hiranyakashipu. The mantra that should be chanted for Narasimha Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE NARASIMHAYA

Sri Buddha

Lord Buddha appeared in this world because people were performing sinful deeds on the strength of Vedic authority. That is why He has rejected the Vedas and preached buddhist philosophy, teaching people the basic dharmic principles. However, because He has rejected the Vedas He is not accepted as a worshipable incarnation. That is why, since the Buddha graha also signifies Vishnu, it is recommended to worship Lord Vishnu directly, instead of Lord Buddha. The mantra that should be chanted for Lord Vishnu Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAYA

Sri Vamanadeva

Lord Vamana appeared in this world as the son of Kashyapa Muni and Aditi. He took the form of a brahmachari dwarf. Lord Vamana appeared on the sacrificial arena of Bali Maharaja and asked him for a three-steps-long area of his land as a donation. Maharaja agreed and Sri Vamanadeva took the entire universe with his two steps. He made the third step by putting His foot on Bali

Maharaja's head. The mantra that should be chanted for Sri Vamanadeva Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE TRIVIKRAMAYA

Sri Parashurama

Rcika Muni and Satyavati devi had a son named Jamadagni. The son of Jamadagni was Parashurama. Once King Kartaviryarjuna has stolen Jamadagni his kamadhenu. He was therefore killed by Parashurama, who later on has slaughtered the dynasty of demoniac kshatriyas twenty one times . It is not recommended by the parampara to use the name 'Parashurama' directly in the dvadakshari mantra, hence the recommended mantra is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE HRISHIKESHAYA

Sri Kurma Avatara

Lord Vishnu has incarnated as a tortoise in order to become a base for the Mandara Mountain, which was used by the suras and the asuras for the churning of the ocean of milk. This took place because both parties desired the amrita. The mantra that should be chanted for the Kurma Avatara Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE AKUPARAYA

Sri Varahadeva

Lord Vishnu has took the form of a boar to save the Earth that has drowned in the water of the Garbhodaka ocean. This happened due to a demon named Hiranyaksha. The Lord has not only saved the Earth, but also killed the demon. The mantra that should be chanted for Sri Varaha Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SHRIVARAHAYA

Sri Matsya Avatara

At the end of the previous kalpa there was one demon who desired to steal the Vedic knowledge from Lord Brahma. For this reason, at the beginning of the era of Svayambhuva Manu, Lord Vishnu has incarnated in the form of a fish and saved the Vedas. During the era of Cakshusa Manu the Lord has appeared as a fish for the second time. He appeared to save the great and pious ruler Satyavrata. Later on Satyavrata took birth as a son of the Sun god, and became a Manu. The mantra that should be chanted for Matsya Ishta Devata is:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE MAHAMATSYAYA

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How to find Ishta Devata in a chart

The key role in revealing one's Ishta Devata plays the Atma Karaka. Atma Karaka is the planet that has the highest longitude. To find one's Ishta Devata we have to look at the Atma Karaka in Navamsa, since the Navamsa shows blessings of God onto the native and the way in which the native communicates with God. Navamsa is also known as the dharma-amsa, since it is the 9th division (ninth house signifies dharma). Therefore we should look for Ishta Devata in this Varga.

Atma Karaka in Navamsa is called the karakamsa. The twelfth house from Lagna shows that what releases one from the bonds of this world. The twelfth house from the karakamsa is called the jivanmuktamsa. This is the house signifying the emancipation of the soul and we have to examine this house in order to find one's Ishta Devata. If there is a graha in the jivanmuktamsa, it signifies the Devata. If there are more grahas than one, we choose the strongest. If there is no graha in the jivanmuktamsa, we take its Lord.

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Examples

Chart 1

Sy A11	Gk A6	HL A3	Ke
	Navamsa D-9		PP Md GL A4
Ma Sa Lg SL A9 A5			Ch UL A10
Ra A2	(Bu)	AL Gu A8	Sk A7

This is a chart of a devotee of Krishna. The Karakamsa of this person (Shukra) is debilitated in Kanya. The twelfth from the Karakamsa (jivanmuktamsa) is Simha Rasi, with Chandra placed in it. This suggests Sri Krishna as Ishta Devata. This person has been worshipping Sri Krishna for many years. She was also given the dvadakshari mantra 'om namo bhagavate vasudevaya'.

Chart 2

HL Ke UL	Md A2	PP GL	A10 A8
Navamsa D-9		Ma A9 A11 A4	
		(Sk) Bu A5	
Sy Lg Gk	Sa A3	Ch A7 A6	Ra Gu AL

The Atma Karaka of this person is Surya. It is placed in Navamsa Lagna. The jivanmuktamsa is Dhanus, with no grahas in it. The Lord of Dhanus is Guru and we find Guru in trikona to both, Karakamsa and Lagnamsa. As Surya suggests Lord Shiva and Guru suggests SadaaShiva this person has attraction to Lord Shiva and performs panca upachara puja to the Shivalingam daily. He also chants Lingashtakam and does sadhanas to various Shiva mantras.

Chart 3

Ma A6	Ra A9 A2	HL	A3
AL GL A5	Navamsa D-9		Gu A11 A10
Md			Bu
Sy Lg SL	A8 A4	(Sa) Sk Ke A7	PP Ch Gk UL

This is a chart of an astrologer. Her Karakamsa is Rahu, placed in Mesha. In the thwelfth house from it there is Mangal, indicating Sri Narasimha Bhagavan as Ishta Devata. This person has tried many mantras, but she always says that whenever she chants a Narasimha prayer or mantra she experiences that kind of potency she really can't experience in other mantras.

Chart 4

Ke (Bu) AL GL A8	(Sk)	Lg A4	A5
Ch	Navamsa D-9		A6
PP A7	Gk Sy		UL
Sa Ma A11	HL A9	Md A10	Ra Gu A3 A2

Here we can see that the Atma Karaka of this person, Mangal, is placed in Dhanus in the Navamsa. This would suggest Sri Narasimha Bhagavan as her Ishta Devata, since Vrischika is the jivanmuktamsa. However, according to the parampara, when the jivanmuktamsa is lorded by the Atma Karaka we either have to take the other lord of this house (Vrschika or Kumbha) or take a graha that is in the trikona to Karakamsa. Here Ketu, the other lord of Vrschika, is strong in Meena Rasi. Therefore this suggests either Sri Mahaganapati or Matsya Avatara.

Chart 5

Lg A10	Sy A4	Md Sk	HL Ke A2
Gu Ch A3	Navamsa D-9		
AL A9 A7			GL
Ra (Sa) A8 A6	Gk Bu Ma A11		PP UL A5

In this chart we can see that the Karakamsa Shani is in Dhanus. The jivanmuktamsa is Vrischika with Mangal and Buddha in it. Buddha suggests Sri Vishnu and Mangal, being stronger, suggests the form of Sri Vishnu – Narasimhadeva. This is person is a pious bhakta of Lord Vishnu, and he particularly has attraction for Lord Narasimha.

Chart 6

	Gu Gk Sa Ke Bu		Ma
	A2	A4	A3
A7	Navamsa Srila Prabhupada		Md
Sk			AL
A11			A5
SL Lg	PP HL	Ra	Ch Sy GL
	A10 A8	A9	UL A6

The last Navamsa is that of the founder and Acharya of ISCKON, Srila Prabhupad. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, and we can see Chandra (Sri Krishna) along with Surya (Sri Rama) in his jivanmuktamsa. The Atma Karaka of Srila Prabhupada was Rahu, suggesting a very spiritual person.

OM TAT SAT