

# Path to Siva

A Catechism for Youth

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Lesson 41

Rites of  
Passage

Dharma

Holy  
Days

Worship

Pilgrimage

**What Are Our Five Core Practices?**

# The five practices



**Worship, holy days, pilgrimage, dharma and rites of passage are the five practice that Gurudeva recommended for all Hindus.**

# How are they called in Sanskrit?

In Sanskrit they are called the *pancha nitya karmas*.



# 1. Upasana: daily worship

First and foremost is daily worship,  
*upasana*.

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This is the core of religious life, the  
soul's natural outpouring of love for God  
and the Gods.



## 2. Utsava, honoring holy days

Next is *utsava*, honoring holy days, when the blessings of the Deities are strongest.

We join with family and community in ceremony and feasting during the major Siva, Ganesha and Murugan festivals each year.

Monday is the Hindu holy day in the North of India, and Friday in the South.

On this day we attend the temple, clean and decorate the home shrine and spend extra time in prayer, japa and scriptural study. These are not days of rest; we carry on our usual work.



### 3. Tirthayatra: pilgrimage

Pilgrimage, *tirthayatra*, is our third area of practice.

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At least once a year, we make a special journey to a holy place.

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It is a complete break from our usual concerns, during which God, Gods and gurus become the singular focus.



# Our inner perfection

These three forms of worship—daily puja, holy days and pilgrimage—help us manifest our inner perfection in our inner nature.

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## 4. Dharma: Good conduct

Our fourth area is dharma, living an unselfish life of duty and good conduct.

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Here, the yamas and niyamas are our guide.

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Dharma includes being respectful of parents, elders, teachers and swamis.



## 5. Samskaras: rites of passage

Our fifth area of practice is rites of passage, called *samskaras*.

These are personal ceremonies that sanctify and celebrate crucial junctures in life, from birth to death.

The first major samskara is the name-giving rite.

Others follow, including first feeding, ear piercing and beginning of formal study.



# 5. Samskaras: rites of passage

As an adult, the most important ceremony is marriage.

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At death, the soul is released from the body during sacred funeral rites.

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Rites of passage draw to us special blessings from the devas and Deities, society and village, family and friends.



# Gurudeva says...

Performing daily sadhana, keeping good company, pilgrimaging to holy places, seeing to others' needs—these evoke the higher energies, direct the mind to useful thoughts and avoid the creation of troublesome new karmas.

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# QUESTIONS for Lesson 41



**41.1** Our five core practices are called in Sanskrit  
(Check the correct Sanskrit term)

- A. Pancha karmas
- B. Nitya karmas
- C. Pancha nitya karmas

**41.2** Enter the letter from below of A - E for the correct Sanskrit term for that practice.

- \_\_\_ Daily worship
- \_\_\_ Honoring holy days
- \_\_\_ Pilgrimage
- \_\_\_ Living a unselfish life of duty and good conduct
- \_\_\_ Rites of passage

(A ) Utsava(B ) Dharma (C ) Upasana (D ) Samskaras (E )  
Tirthayatra

**41.3** The practice of utsava includes  
(Check the correct answer)

- A. Attending temple festivals
- B. Attending the temple on your weekly holy day
- C. Attending the temple for festivals and for your weekly holy day

**41.4** The ideal frequency of pilgrimage is  
(Check the correct answer)

- A. At least once in three years
- B. At least twice in five years
- C. At least once a year

**41.5** The three forms of worship mentioned above help us manifest our outer perfection in our inner nature.

- True
- False