

# **Guidelines for Puja and Religious Activities at the Hindu Temple of Greater Cincinnati**

## **Section 1.0 Priest Responsibilities**

- 1.1 All priests report to the Puja Committee Chairperson of the Temple.

The foremost responsibilities of priests are to be at the Temple during the scheduled hours, perform the Temple's Religious Rituals described in Appendix # 1 on page 6, and then take care of needs of the community. Priests must be accountable for all applicable puja charges from individual devotees. Put all puja incomes (inside, outside, and car puja) in clearly marked envelopes and give them to the puja committee chairperson or its appointee. For current puja charges, refer to the latest ARADHANA.

One of the priests on duty must greet every devotee who comes to the Temple, perform puja, and give holy water and prasada.

During the working hours at the temple, all priests must wear appropriate attire suitable to the Temple's atmosphere. Wearing lungis, pants, jeans, or street clothing while conducting Pujas and religious ceremonies in the temple is strictly prohibited.

- 1.2 Attendance:  
Attendance and punctuality are expected from all Priests and will be taken into consideration during a performance review. If you are going to be absent from work, please contact your chairperson at least 24 hours prior to your scheduled shift. If you are going to be late, contact your chairperson a minimum of one (1) hour prior to the start of your shift.
- 1.3 Scheduled Hours of Worship at the Temple:  
Scheduled hours of Worship at the temple are specified in Appendix # 1 and are also published in ARADHANA.  
To ensure the punctual opening of the Temple, the priests on duty shall be at the Temple 15 minutes prior to the opening of the Temple. Before closing and leaving the Temple, the priests must make sure that all non-required utilities and lights are turned off and the security system is activated.
- 1.4 The priests are not to make any appointments with devotees for inside and/or outside Temple puja at any time.
- 1.5 Temple priest shall perform the main ARATI of all deities during the general ARATI

- 1.6 Every day, the priest on duty must prepare and offer cooked Bhog to the deities as per Temple Religious Rituals in Appendix # 1
- 1.7 After performing a morning outside puja within the Greater Cincinnati area, the priest should be back at the temple by 3:00 PM on weekends/holidays and by 4:45 PM on weekdays.
- 1.8 Deity Decoration:  
The dress of each Deity should be changed and appropriately decorated “Sringar” at least once every TWO WEEKS by the priests.
- 1.9 Puja Samagri and Puja Utensils:  
The custody and cleaning of the daily Puja Samagri and Puja utensils are the responsibility of the priests on duty.

On special sponsored puja and abhisheka days; the custody of Temple Puja utensils and puja samagri are the responsibility of a sponsor of the event as well as the priest on duty.

## **Section 2.0** **Temple Cleanup**

- 2.1 Daily Cleanup:  
It is the responsibility of the priest to make sure that the upstairs (Main Temple) is clean and pleasant before and after the puja at the Temple.

The priests on duty must clean the Deity platform, Deepak, Hawankund, Agarbatti holder, Temple kitchen, and two sinks (both sides of the deity platform) everyday.

- 2.2 Cleanup After Special Puja:  
On special sponsored puja and abhisheka days; the cleanup of Temple, puja utensils, and puja samagri are the responsibilities of a sponsor of the event as well as the priests on duty.

The sponsors of special pujas at the Temple must make sure that the temple is cleaned after the ceremony is over. It is the responsibility of the priests and the sponsors of the event to see that the temple is cleaned and kept in order for the next event.

All broken coconuts used for puja inside and/or outside the Temple must be taken home by the respective devotee or disposed off properly. The puja place, with coconut ceremony, should be cleaned immediately.

### Section 3.0 Devotee Services

#### 3.1 Appointment Procedures:

It is the sincere desire of the Temple to accommodate the wishes of all the devotees – even on an emergency basis. To avoid confusion and conflicts of time, **all PUJA appointments must be made through the Puja Committee Chairperson or the designated appointee, and shall be arranged and confirmed at least 3 days prior to the schedule PUJA.** Any devotees leaving a message on an answering machine does not confirm a puja appointment.

Devotees are requested to call the Puja Committee Chairperson for any and all Temple puja reservations. The names and numbers of the responsible personnel for making reservations are posted in the Temple and are published regularly in our temple newsletter “ARADHANA”.

1. Reservation for a private religious service inside the Temple:  
A devotee can make a reservation to conduct a special puja of his/her choice in the temple. The devotee may request the DAY OF RESERVATION, THE PRIEST OF HIS/HER CHOICE, AND THE TIME OF THE DAY TO PERFORM THE PUJA. Such puja must not hinder the regular Temple puja and must be performed and completed within the Temple’s operating hours.
2. Reservation for a private religious service outside the Temple:  
A devotee can make a reservation to conduct a special puja of his/her choice outside the temple. The devotee may request the DAY OF RESERVATION, THE PRIEST OF HIS/HER CHOICE, AND THE TIME OF THE DAY TO PERFORM THE PUJA. It is the responsibility of the devotee to see to it that the puja is completed in time (usually within 3 to 4 hours) and the priest has sufficient time to return to the temple in specified time.

**If the priest of a devotee’s choice has a day off, then it is at the desecration of the respective priest to perform such puja. Compensation time will be decided at the desecration of the Puja Committee Chairperson and it must be taken within the same calendar year.**

#### 3.2 Rental Procedures for the Temple’s Downstairs Hall:

The attached document in Appendix # 3 describes in detail the procedures of how to rent the Temple’s downstairs hall for private functions. The current rental rates for private functions are published regularly in ARADHANA.

## Section 4.0 General Guidelines

- 4.1 On all Sundays, there will be a community Puja and Bhajan at the Temple. **TWO PRIESTS must be present at the Temple on every SUNDAY until 2:00PM.**
- 4.2 **On special Puja and/or religious function days at the Temple, at least two or more Priests must be present.**
- 4.3 All major religious events must be scheduled and published in ARADHANA two months prior to the events.
- 4.4 All religious events will take place at the Temple's upper level. All cultural events will take place at the Temple's lower level. Any religious events (e.g. Swamiji talks etc.) that conflict with the Temple's regular functions/events will take place at the lower level.
- 4.5 Monthly Satyanarayana Katha (every PURNIMA) will be performed at the lower level if it is conflicting with temple's regular functions/events at the upper level.
- 4.6 Religious Ritual Puja of a Deity, other than 16 DEITIES installed at the temple, brought by a devotee or a group of devotees from outside will not be performed at the Temple's premises.
- 4.7 Dresses brought by devotees for a Deity to be garnished with will belong to the temple. However, if they are offered as PRASAD only then they can be taken back by the respective devotees after the offering.
- 4.8 If a devotee wishes to perform a special puja in the Temple with the help of an outside priest, who is not associated with the Hindu Temple of Greater Cincinnati, the priest from the Hindu Temple of Greater Cincinnati must be the head Priest for such private puja. The outside Priest can only perform as an assisting Priest helping the head Priest.
- 4.9 If two or more pujas are performed in the Temple simultaneously; then the priests should coordinate and perform **one and only one common** Arati for both or more pujas.
- 4.10 A special puja, performed in the Temple for a devotee, must be completed within the operating hours of the temple and shall not hinder any regular religious Rituals of the Temple.
- 4.11 In the morning, any private religious service inside the Temple can be performed after regular religious Rituals of the temple (morning PUJA and Bhog)

- 4.12 Any personal Shradh Puja performed at the lower level on **SUNDAY** morning must finish by 10:00 AM
- 4.13 No Archana of any DEITY will take place on SUNDAY between 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM.
- 4.14 Any private religious service inside the Temple on **SUNDAY** morning must be finished by 10:00 AM and the respective cleaning must be finished by 10:30 AM. It is the duty of the priest performing such puja to explain the devotee if the puja can be done by 10:00 AM or not. If not, then such puja can not be performed on SUNDAY morning and must be scheduled for some other day. However, if the devotee sponsors the regular SUNDAY puja with lunch & PRASHAD along with the personal private puja, then such religious service inside the Temple can be continued but must be finished by 11:30 AM.

These guidelines were prepared after collective inputs from puja committee members. The guidelines are subject to modify/change to maintain the integrity of the Temple and satisfy needs of the community.

Note: Appendix 2 and 3 may be seen at request by Puja Committee Chairperson

## Appendix No. 1

### Monday-Friday

9:00 AM	Suprabhatam (waking up deities) and BALYA BHOGA offering
9:05 AM	DHUPA ARATI (5 minutes)
9:30 AM	Dressing the deities and SRINGAR-ARATI (Greeting the deities). Every TWO WEEKS
11:00 AM	RAJA-BHOGA offering with a glass of water: All cooking must be finished by 10:30 so that the Lord's plate can be made. Approximately 10:50 offerings and a glass of water should be brought on to the altar. Offering should be removed at 11:00.
11:30 PM	RAJA-BHOGA ARATI* (20 minutes)
12:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Temple closed.
5:00 PM	DHUPA ARATI (5 minutes)
6:30 PM	SUNDARA-BHOGA offering with a glass of water: All cooking must be finished by 6:00 so that the Lord's plate can be made. Approximately 6:20 offerings and a glass of water should be brought on to the altar. Offering should be removed at 6:30.
7:00PM	Special Weekly Puja
7:30 PM	SUNDARA ARATI* (20 minutes)
8:00 PM	SAYANA-SEVA close curtain and put deities to rest by 8:00 pm.

### Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays

9:00 AM	Suprabhatam (waking up deities) and BALYA BHOGA offering
9:05 AM	DHUPA ARATI (5 minutes)
11:00 AM	Sponsored Puja & Hawan
12:00 PM	Bhajan
12:30 PM	RAJA-BHOGA offering with a glass of water: All cooking must be finished by 12:00 so that the Lord's plate can be made. Approximately 12:20 offerings and a glass of water should be brought on to the altar. Offering should be removed at 12:30.
12:30 PM	Religious discourse
1:00 PM	RAJA-BHOGA ARATI* (20 minutes)
5:00 PM	DHUPA ARATI (5 minutes)
7:30 PM	SUNDARA-BHOGA offering with a glass of water: All cooking must be finished by 7:00 so that the Lord's plate can be made. Approximately 7:20 offerings and a glass of water should be brought on to the altar. Offering should be removed at 7:30.
7:30 PM	SUNDARA ARATI* (20 minutes)
8:00 PM	SAYANA-SEVA close curtain and put deities to rest by 8:00pm.

- See Appendix # 2 for Arati details