### Guidelines

**Suitable dress:** Keep in mind that you will be entering someone else's worship space. Therefore, please dress appropriately and modestly (i.e., no shorts, short skirts, tank-tops, midriff baring shirts, or tight fitting clothes).

Please be sure to **call and verify information before visiting.**

**Temple Etiquette**

Dress modestly; remove shoes outside door of temple; do not point your feet towards the deity when seated on the ground. If you are close enough to the rituals being performed, you will be offered prasad at the end of the ritual. If your religious tradition dictates that you may not accept this, or you prefer not to for some other reason, it is acceptable to simply indicate this by a hand gesture or verbal comment of this nature.

[From Lee Weissman's unpublished "Temple Etiquette"]: "Hindu temples often violate Westerners' expectations about the "solemnity" of sacred places. Compared to the rows of chairs with a stage in the front which characterizes most Christian and Jewish liturgical spaces, the concentric web of open spaces which characterize most Hindu temples may strike us as not quite solemn. These spaces require that people move about from place to place to conduct their worship. Consequently, there is a lot of movement. Along with that movement, there is often plenty of socializing and noise if it is crowded. Worship in Hindu temples is generally non-communal. There are ... guidelines for worship in temples, but in any temple visit there is a substantial amount of improvisation. Which gods to see, when to see them, what to do when you see them, what to offer, all of this depends on the intents and interests of the devotee. I often think of temple visits as jazz jam sessions in which individual improvisations and group performance are creatively integrated with one another."

### Relevant Terms

**puja:** generalized term for worship; usually involves presentation of offerings to deity, arti, and the receiving of prasad
arti: flame offering; circling of oil lamps before the image of the deity; the flame is then brought to the worshipper who places both hands over the flame, palms down, and then sweeps hands over the eyes and top of head

archana: worship, devotion; offerings made on behalf of an individual to a deity by a priest (the priest asks the devotee the name of his/her lineage)

murti: image of the deity

abhishekm: bathing or anointing the murti with a series of substances, such as water, milk and honey

suprabhatam: waking up the deity with song, requesting him/her to get up, etc.

prasad: the food offered to the deity which is then returned, consecrated, as the 'grace" of the deity to the worshipper

homa (homam): offerings made into a firehearth

vahana: the animal "vehicle" for the deity

pujari: temple priest who officiates the archana, etc.

There are several Hindu temples and worship sites in Atlanta, and you are free to visit any of them. If you regularly attend one of the suggested temples, you are asked to attend one other for your site visit. All temples will have special festival celebrations; we will post details as announcements in this Blackboard site. Please call at the site for the timings of special functions.