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Standardising prasad at temples good idea, but implementation tough

Standardising prasadam is a good idea, but getting it implemented could be a difficult exercise

After mortals, it is now the turn of the gods. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is now looking to regulate and standardize prasadam/offerings at temples, mosques, churches and other places of worship. Not that the divine need a FSSAI certificate, but given 300 million faithful—as per the 2001 Census—visit places of worship daily and partake of the food offerings, receiving it as a ‘blessing’, there is a need to ensure quality. With temples, churches, gurudwaras, etc, largely left to manage themselves with very little regulation from the state, there is absolutely no checking of standards of the prasadam—though temples insist that they use the best ingredients and produce the prasadam in a safe manner. Even so, there is no standardization; from packaging to expiration dates, everything varies from temple to temple, church to church. The food regulator, which zealously wants to get religious institutions or the vendors they source from to apply for FSSAI licences. It has already started working with Mumbai’s Siddhivinayaka temple, Venkateshwara Swamy temple in Tirupati and the Sai Baba temple in Shirdi.

The move, in principle, is a necessary one, but the problem lies in implementing it. As per a report in Mint, not all religious institutions favour a licensing regime; rather, they say, the FSSAI should issue a set of guidelines and encourage

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voluntary compliance. Given the prasadam/offerings aren't just food—they come with deeply-held beliefs about culture and divinity—any regulation will have to come only after the faithful as well as place-of-worship administrations have been duly sensitised. And for FSSAI, that is already short of manpower and resources, it will prove a tough challenge.
