Langar

At the centre of Sikh teaching about equality is the langar (kitchen).

Every gurdwara has a langar where **all** people are welcome to a free meal regardless of their sex, colour of their skin or religion. There are no rituals observed in the langar and everyone eats together. All the food is vegetarian so that no religious group is offended. Everyone eats sitting on the floor, so no one is above anyone else. When the Queen visited a langar, she sat and ate on the floor too!

Guru Nanak Dev Ji established the langar because he rejected the Hindu caste system where people of different castes do not eat together. Guru Nanak wanted to stress the idea that everyone is equal. Everyone shares the tasks of preparation, cooking, serving and cleaning. This shows sewa - selfless service to the others in the sadhsangat (community), the gurdwara, and the world outside.

The teaching of the langar was continued by Guru Amar Das (the third Guru) who made a rule that no one, however important, could see him until they had first eaten in the langar.

The food served in the Langar must be simple, so as to prevent wealthy congregations turning it into a feast that shows off their superiority.

Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, only vegetarian food is served in the Gurdwaras. This ensures that any visitor to the Gurdwara, whatever the dietary restrictions of their faith, can eat in the Langar.

The meal may include chapati, daal (pulses), vegetables and rice pudding. Fish and eggs are counted as meat and excluded.

**Questions:**

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| 1. Who started the first langar? Why? |  |
| 2. What sort of food is served in a langar? Why? |  |
| 3. How does the langar show equality in Sikhism? Give as many reasons as you can think of and find. |  |
| 4. Does the langar reduce hunger in the community? Explain your response. |  |

Khalsa Aid

Khalsa Aid is a worldwide charity that provides aid to areas struck by war, natural disasters and famine. The organisation is based upon the Sikh principle of "Recognise the whole human race as one". This teaching encourages Sikhs to help all people, not only Sikhs. They distribute food, water, clothing and medical supplies, in addition to funding and building shelters. Khalsa Aid aim to save lives, reduce people’s suffering and maintain their dignity.

The charity was founded by Rajvinder Singh in 1999 after witnessing the Kosovo refugee crisis. 1999 was also the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa, the global community of Sikhs. Khalsa Aid was the first ever international humanitarian aid organisation based on the Sikh principles.

Since 1999, they have provided aid to millions of people: from victims of the Yemen Civil War, refugees in Greece, the Rohingya Muslims seeking refuge, earthquake, flood and hurricane-stricken areas in Nepal, Australia and the Caribbean. They have also helped residents in the UK cope with the flooding in Cumbria and the south-west of England and supported families who escaped the Grenfell Tower fires.

In the Summer of 2014, the rise of ISIS led the Yezidi and Assyrian communities to leave their homes and become refugees, creating a very difficult situation for the people there. These communities became homeless overnight with no access to drinking water or food. Approximately 14,000 people were affected including men, women and children. It was found that a significant refugee camp of 16,000 Yazidi refugees was located on the Iraq / Syria border. These refugees, persecuted by terrorist forces had no reliable source of nutrition.

Khalsa Aid immediately coordinated a project with local authorities and the Swedish Doctors Association. Khalsa Aid funded the establishment of an industrial scale bakery which would produce fresh loaves of bread, a staple in the traditional Yezidi diet.

This is just one example of the work Khalsa Aid does to reduce hunger and inequality of resources around the world, furthering the aim to help people regardless of their religion or place in the world.

Questions:

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| 1. Who founded Khalsa Aid, and why? |  |
| 1. What do Khalsa Aid do? Why is this important? |  |
| 1. Summarise an example of how Khalsa Aid reduces hunger. Why would they help people who don’t live in the same place or share their religion? |  |
| 1. Do Khalsa Aid effectively reduce worldwide hunger? Is it enough to ‘just’ give out food?   Explain your opinion. |  |

Zero Hunger with Langar

Zero Hunger with Langar started in 2016 as an initiative of the Nishkam Gurdwara in Birmingham. They decided to extend the concept of the langar, an inclusive kitchen where anyone who needs food can get it, to the rest of the world. They believe that the world already has what it needs to thrive, yet millions around the world are living in hunger, and that this can be solved through the Sikh values of truth, contentment, compassion, humility and love, alongside langar and sewa (selfless service of others). They believe that these values can be used to fix any problem our world faces today.

In December 2016, Zero Hunger with Langar started serving nutritious food daily, at places of education, across Southern Malawi, and are currently serving up to 150,000 meals a month in Malawi.

However, giving food is not the only way they help these people. They also believe it is important to make structural changes, so that people no longer rely on the help of external charities or agencies, such as Zero Hunger with Langar. They employ local people to carry out their building works, to give jobs to the local community, and buy all of the building materials from the area they work in. They also serve meals in places of education to encourage parents to send their children to school, believing that if the populace are better educated, then they will have better opportunities in the future to make positive changes in their own life and in their communities.

Questions:

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| 1. Why was Zero Hunger with Langar founded? |  |
| 1. What do Khalsa Aid do? Why is this important? |  |
| 1. Summarise an example of how Zero Hunger with Langar reduce hunger. |  |
| 1. Do Zero Hunger with Langar effectively reduce worldwide hunger? Why is it important to make ‘structural change’?   Explain your opinion. |  |