

Voluntary & Selfless Service

The **Langar** is run by voluntary selfless Sikhs and others who wish to help. It is a community kitchen and anybody can help in its running. This function of Sewa brings a *community feeling* in the persons mind and destroy their ego and the feeling of "I" or "me" by the performing of this valuable service to humanity.



Rules concerning the tradition of Langar

The Langar must be:

- simple and vegetarian
- prepared by devotees who recite Gurbani (Divine word) while preparing the langar
- served after performing prayer
- distributed in pangat (row) without any prejudice or discrimination
- fresh, clean and hygienically prepared

Simple, High Quality Food served Free

An essential part of any Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) is the Langar, or free kitchen. Here the food is cooked by voluntaries and is served without discrimination to all. The food served in Langar is always vegetarian, and traditionally is made up of simple, nourishing food. Strict rules of hygiene and cleanliness are important when preparing the Langar



IRISH SIKH COUNCIL
2 Tullyhall Court, Lucan, Co. Dublin
Republic of Ireland
Phone: +353 (01) 437 0950
E-mail: info@irishsikhcouncil.com
Website: www.irishsikhcouncil.com



LANGAR



*Community Kitchen
A Service to Humanity*

LANGAR

The Background

The **Langar** or **free kitchen** was started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It is designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of Langar expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. *"..the Light of God is in all hearts"* (SGGS 282)

For the first time in history, Sikh Guru's designed an institution in which all people would sit on the floor together, as equals, to eat the same simple food. It is here that all people high or low, rich or poor, male or female, all sit in the same pangat (literally "row" or "line") to share and enjoy the food together.

Every Gurdwara (Sikh Place of Worship) has a community kitchen. Besides the **Langar** attached to Gurdwara, there are improvised open-air **Langars** at the time of festivals. Wherever Sikhs are, they have established their community kitchen. Everyone is welcome to share the food and no one is turned away.



Importance of Langar in Sikhism

Sikh Code of Conduct says, *"A Sikh who is well to do must look to the needs of a poor neighbour."*

Whenever he meets a traveller or a pilgrim from a foreign country, he must serve him devotedly." Today, practically



every gurdwara has a langar supported by the community in general. No pilgrim or visitor will miss food at meal time in a gurdwara. Sharing a common meal sitting in a pangat is for a Sikh an act of piety. The Sikh ideal of charity is essentially social in conception. A Sikh is under a religious obligation to contribute one-tenth of his earning for the welfare of the community. He must also contribute the service of his hands whenever he can, that rendered in a langar being the

most meritorious.

Gurus direct Contribution

Guru Nanak Dev Ji and his successors attached a great deal of importance to langar and it became, in their hands, a potent means of social reform. The Sikh Gurus gave community kitchen the central place in the Sikh Place of Worship.

Guru Angad, Nanak II, further extended the scope of the institution. His wife, Mata Khivi, looked after the pilgrims and visitors with the utmost attention. Such was her dedication to work in the langar that it came to be known after her name as **Mata Khivi Ji ka Langar**. Mata Khivi has the distinction of being mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib (divine Word). During the time of 3rd Guru of Sikhs, Guru Amar Das Ji, a rule was instituted that anyone who wanted to have a meeting with the Guru would have to eat food from the Langar.

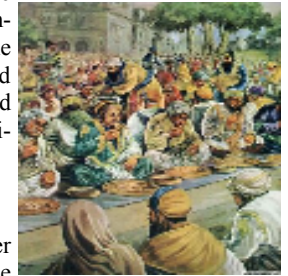
A Means of Social Reform

Community kitchens came into existence with the Sangat or holy fellowships of disciples which sprang up at many places. Sikhs sat in pangat (literally a **row**) without distinctions of caste or status, to share a common meal prepared in the langar. The disciples brought the offerings and contributed the labour of their hands to prepare and serve the food. The institution of Langar had thus demolished the long established caste barriers and gender prejudices of the time. High caste Brahmins

wouldn't eat from the hands of low caste Sudar and vice-versa. The institution of Langar removed all these barriers in the culture of Northern India.

Prominent Visitors

The principle of **Guru Ka Langar** is so important that even when the ruler of India Emperor Akbar (16th Century) visited third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Das Ji, he too sat in the pangat (row) to take **Langar** before he went to see Guru Ji. Hence the mighty ruler of India also sat amongst the common people as an equal and had the same simple food. So impressed was he by the **Langar** that he offered a great amount of land and wealth as a contribution to its running.



When President Nasser of Egypt visited the Golden Temple he was so touched to see so many Kashmiri Muslims, Hindu's, Christians and Sikhs sitting together to eat in the **Langar** that his party left all the money they carried with them as a contribution to its running

