Langar in Transition: A Sikh Socialists Reflection

Sikh Socialists

Introduction

We are Sikh Socialists, a collective of Sikhs (meaning 'learners') who identify with socialist politics broadly conceived. We formed to create a space to reflect on, think about, and engage with radical anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics; how we understand these commitments as formed through *Gurmat* (the teachings and practices of being a Sikh); and our frustrations at seeing Sikhi collude with power structures rather than contest them.[1] The following article offers a series of reflections on a virtual workshop series in 2021 in which we critically engaged with the act of *Langar* – hegemonically understood as a 'community kitchen' – and its place within Sikh histories, the present, and futures. A year on from these conversations, we – Arjun, Uppy, Harjivan and Mandeep[2] – reflect on the context which prompted these *Langar* reflection sessions, the competing interests currently seeking to define *Langar*, and some case studies which reflect how some of us have embodied *Langar* in our futures since the sessions.

Why did we collectively reflect on Langar?

The concept and act of *Langar* has been wielded in multiple spaces unique to our time. Whether on university campus, through charitable organisations, and even on protest sites, *Langar* has featured heavily and its meaning has been constituted, constructed and some may say constricted depending on the context of its use. Particularly in times of crisis such as the unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic and the now ever-growing cost of living crisis in the UK, *Langar* has become a word on the tongues of many who had previously been unaware of its existence. With this has come the propensity to define and determine what *Langar* is and what it isn't. We noticed that this landscape was quickly becoming a free-for-all in defining and

[1] Our Collective Statement can be found here: <https://twitter.com/SikhSocialists/status/1383781054050291720?s=20&t=YxSwy67jqH401e9ZKpmqhg> [accessed 1 October 2022].
[2] Some members have chosen to use a pseudonym.

operationalising *Langar;* there was little space for reflection amidst the urgency of gathering resources for acting upon and potentially impacting the world through what was being framed as *Langar*.

It was in this context that Sikh Socialists demonstrated a level of curiosity, wanting to understand and unpack the multifaceted and multidimensional perceptions of *Langar* which were emerging from various corners of Sikh communities and beyond. To do so, the team organised three interactive workshops which focused on different aspects of *Langar*: its past, its present, and its future. Facilitated by members of Sikh Socialists and associates, these engagements were an opportunity to speak openly, honestly and even anonymously. Questions were posed, collaborative whiteboard tools were used to allow for de-identified comments, and participants were able to understand the multiple and complex perspectives around what may typically be perceived as a single, linear topic.

Through these sessions, the group developed an appreciation for *Langar* and its past beyond the Sikh *Dharam* (path), its complex manifestations in the present, and what they aspired *Langar* to be in the future. The data from these sessions has been used to inform some reflections in this piece; in other words, our approach in this reflection is to critically engage with how *Langar* has operated across histories and geographies, rather than seeking to provide an unlocated, disembodied, abstract definition. We ask forgiveness for any mistakes we have made, and we hope to continue engaging around *Langar* in these discussions and beyond.

Who is seeking to define *Langar* and how/why is it happening?

History

Langar is a Persian word, and as a concept has existed for over 2,000 years, practised by many different Eastern Asian cultures. The practice of preparing and sharing meals to nourish the body as part of devotional practices was implemented by many Sufi saints prior to Sikhi's inception, as well as being present in some Hindu festivals. In Sikhi, *Langar* exists to challenge hierarchical social divisions such as gender, race, caste, class, disability, or socio-economic statuses. It is not exclusive to any single community or ideology, though each tradition engages in *Langar* in complex ways. This is not to collapse the specific history of Sikh *Langar* into a singular linear narrative, but rather to signal its resonance across histories and communities. The practice was introduced into Sikhi by the first Guru, Nanak, as the act of preparing and blessing food for spiritual and physical nourishment, but was further developed by the second Guru, Angad, with his wife Mata Khivi (Kaur, 2018), who emphasised the importance of socio-

spiritual discipline for those who performed the *Seva* of providing *Langar*.[3] This included acting in humility, remaining hospitable, and treating the space as a place of social and spiritual refuge. It was the third Guru, Amar Das, who established *Langar* as a centralised institution within Sikh spaces, making all those who visited Sikh spaces attend *Langar*, before granting them an audience despite their social status.

Throughout history, there are countless examples which demonstrate how *Langar* practised by Sikhs embodies the instructions of the Gurus to challenge hierarchical social divisions. One notable *Sakhi* (oral histories and stories of the Gurus' teachings passed down through generations) explains how Emperor Akbar, the powerful ruler of the Mughal Empire, attended and adhered to the rules of the Guru's *Langar* in order to have an audience with the then Guru Amar Das Ji. The emperor sat communally amongst his subjects, locals, and ate the same meal prepared by the same people as a way of humbling himself before the Guru. There are at least two teachings worth noting in this *Sakhi:* firstly, having wealth and geopolitical power does not entitle you to 'special treatment' compared with those who are poor and lacking power – the egalitarian practice of *Langar* brings all together on equal terms within the space. Secondly, the practice of being handed a meal which has been prepared by those devoted to Sikhi, regardless of someone's caste, is significant in the context of India and South Asia more broadly. *Langar* in this sense aims at disrupting deeply entrenched, oppressive casteist practices which socially and spiritually condemns those of 'lower' castes as being 'polluted' and thus unworthy of living in community with those of 'higher' castes – from eating the same food, to even being looked at and touched – and in turn unworthy of spiritual liberation. These *Sakhis* hold specific importance as they embody the radical aspects of the Guru's instructions to us.

During the development of violent European colonialism from the sixteenth century across South Asia and its global world system founded on racial capitalism which remains hegemonic today, many Sikh practices and understandings have been erased or warped by those who seek power and domination over others – including from within our own communities. The Sikh understanding of *Langar* now typically manifests mainly as a form of 'free food', understood and reduced through the lens of charity. Much like charity, *Langar* is increasingly being used as a surface-level, temporary sticking plaster to cover over the structural effects of the global economic and political systems we live and operate under. Rather than seeing our current complex social, economic, and political problems as failures of a system designed for the common

[3] *Seva* and *Langar* are often used interchangeably in Sikh spaces and discourse. The relationality between *Seva* and *Langar* was raised during our sessions; a summary of our collective conversation on this was that we think of *Seva* as selfless practice, free from ego and worldly delusions (*Maya*). *Langar* offers one manifestation of *Seva,* but is not confined to this. For reasons of clarity, we focus on the term *Langar* in this article.

good which can be reformed with charitable actions, it is important to reflect that our present system is functioning exactly as intended. Specifically, these problems are inbuilt into the fabric of global racial capitalism; its logic relies on exploiting, oppressing, and disciplining people and resources which are functions established during modern European colonialism. We will now explore specific instances of how *Langar* has operated in this contemporary context.

Our collective reflections

During our discussions, we found that the majority of instances where we, as Sikhs, saw *Langar* being practised and performed fell into two camps. The first, were in community spaces, both within *Gurdwaras* (socio-spiritual Sikh space) and larger-scale *Nagar Kirtans* (devotional processions); the second, however, was through the lens of charity when *Langar* is practised in non-Sikh spaces, whereby *Langar* is expressed through responses to local and global humanitarian crises (such as homeless 'feeds'[4] and international aid), "outreach events"[5] on University campuses, and "in performing to whiteness" when putting on events for state agents and bodies.

Within these conversations, we identified the several limitations in these forms of expression, whereby *Langar* is "losing its power of solidarity, and being reduced to a transaction". It was also identified as a "re-secularisation of Sikh practice", whereby the socio-spiritual practice of the Sikh faith has seemingly been reinterpreted, perhaps as a "re-contextualisation during the migration process". That is, when Sikhs are displaced across the diaspora, they may feel pressured to orient the performance of *Langar* towards the hegemonic stage of colonial capitalist modernity. One key example that was brought up during these conversations was the "selective" nature of the performance of *Langar*, where Sikh groups were lauded and praised for their humanitarian efforts in response to the Australian wildfires. Despite this mainstream coverage, there was little to be seen regarding solidarity building with indigenous communities, who are often at the forefront of the climate crisis – from centuries-long practices of living in harmony with the earth, to having to face the harms resulting from others' structures. A key limitation of this approach is that the radical potential of *Langar* instead becomes reduced to a PR (public relations) tactic.

[4] As a group, we collectively noted the dehumanising, patronising language of 'homeless street feeds', a phrase readily used by groups performing *Seva* of sharing warm meals with those in need. It is important to think constructively about how such signifiers can relate to the oppressive ways in which those who are homeless are mistreated by society, and the dangers of reducing *Langar* to the act of eating or being fed.'

[5] This, and the following quotations, are data from the sessions which we recorded via online interactive whiteboard tools.

Some of the more detrimental issues with perceiving *Langar* as charity would be the extreme oversimplification of its socio-spiritual demands. It has become almost ritualised whereby the spiritual and physical aspects of the practice become second – if even present – to simply serving free food. This reduces *Langar* to a secularised transaction, resonating more with liberal capitalist practices of being motivated for individual gain, or socialising through transactional atomised practices centring the disconnected individual, rather than embodying a radical socio-spiritual practice to abolish hierarchies and create communities. In turn, this stifles any further developments that *Langar* could make – for instance, broader universal community-building practices centred around care could easily evolve from the provision of food alone to the creation of spaces for healthcare, education, and other basic needs that all deserve and need to flourish. Rather than simply a form of charity to grease the gears of capitalism, *Langar* understood more deeply could allow us to envision a world otherwise; free from the disciplining structures of race, gender, caste, class, disability, and so on.

As activist Shamsher Singh writes:

> Unfortunately, the significance of langar has been reduced to passive free food provision as a result, belying its radical roots and potential…While charity has its merits, the language around this sort of Sikh-affiliated charity represents a gross reduction of what langar can and should be, all to render Sikhs more palatable as a model diaspora community to a white state.
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> Our role as Sikhs isn't confined to fixing the broken people that capitalism churns out as a by-product of its economic model. We're not neo-colonialism's personal clean-up crew. It has to go beyond 'langar is the free meal service found in every gurdwara', 'hello langar, goodbye world hunger' – these aren't Sikh ideas, they're marketing slogans. 'Langar Week' is a capitalist response to a problem created by capitalism – it represents the death of an idea by commodification; tackling the root cause of these problems is apparently beyond the permissible scope of Sikh existence (Singh, 2021).

Given the complex nature and multiple layers of *Langar*, its practice is not easily assimilable into a single definition. There are many aspects that modern, English terms cannot adequately capture – particularly the spiritual aspects. Charity is often seen as something to be given sparingly with many of those who are in need being subjected to debilitating scrutiny from those who operate from positions of power. The hyper individualism that is promoted within a 'free market' system has led to an increase in competition amongst the average person. Despite history showing us that survival is a team effort, the development of global capitalism has led to the perception that everyone outside a certain group is an enemy to be defeated. Resonating with Singh's claims, many of our participants indicated that mainstream portrayals of *Langar* feed

into the continual model minoritisation of Sikhs, particularly in the UK, whereby 'Sikhs' signify a 'superior' form of minoritised existence, competing with other religious and racialised groups under a zero-sum game logic where only one group can succeed. *Langar's* co-optation and easy assimilation into the function of capital also represents a form of 'elite capture' (Táíwò, 2022) whereby the state is seen as accommodating of minority practices rather than *Langar* existing in opposition to state-created poverty. This also serves to give Sikhs a reputation of being 'charitable', which can serve to obscure many Sikhs' wealth and proximity to power.

It is important to note that these reflections are not claiming that the notion of 'charity' is inherently unhelpful, nor that those who engage in it in the name of *Langar* or *Seva* are innately malicious or reductionist in doing so. In fact, there are cases in which these actions have made material improvements to individuals and communities. However, this article's aim has been to instead problematise the hegemonic lens through which we view the expression of *Langar* on a day to day, and to critically understand the potential that comes from seeing beyond the boundaries of these definitions. The idea of 'charity' is incomplete when considering *Langar*, and therefore operating with this language within a capitalist system limits the scope of the revolutionary historical precedent laid out by the Gurus. What, then, could a radical, non-hegemonic *Langar* look like?

Imagining otherwise

Notwithstanding our hesitations about the limitations of English language concepts for understanding *Langar,* one radical notion that resonates the most with *Langar* is mutual aid. Mutual aid is a term used to refer to collective action undertaken by groups driven to challenge the systems that cause oppression. In essence, it manifests in various forms of collective action, revolving much less around the power dynamic between the 'donor' and the 'recipient', but instead centring people's needs whilst also challenging our conventional modes of production. Whilst seeing *Langar* through this lens still misses the integrated spiritual aspect, it presents us with an alternative lexicon in which to understand both the practice and impact of *Langar* in non-Sikh spaces. Establishing sovereign spaces outside and beyond the state's discipline, fuelled by *Langar* and collective action, represents a departure from the traditional exploitative modes of exchange.

During our conversations, one comparison that was repeatedly brought up was the Black Panther's Breakfast Programme. Despite the Black Panthers having limited interactions with Sikhs, the shared radical social-political practice resonated heavily with participants. The programme was understood as representing an alternative

approach that goes beyond simply the provision of free food, but instead a community space for children which centres wider revolutionary practices such as sharing the labour of childcare with mothers – as well as materially addressing the needs of the community. Our participants also identified the potential for *Langar* to address "food poverty", "ecological destruction", as well as overcoming boundaries between the self and the other – a yearning embedded deep within Sikh philosophy and the destruction of ego. As one respondent put it, *Langar* becomes a site for "political spirituality".

Embodying this ideal, Shamsher Singh identifies the 2020-21 *Kisaan Majdoor Morcha* (the Farmers' and Workers' Uprising, more commonly referred to as simply the 'Farmer's Protest') as one instance where this revolutionary potential was more fully realised, whereby:

> Protesting the imposition of neoliberal reforms opening up India's agricultural sector to further privatisation, a reported 250 million people went on strike in November, and since then tens of thousands of farmers have camped out on the highways into Delhi. They have survived on langar provided by each other, with farmers and labourers of different castes and religions eating side by side in the freezing winter.
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> As well as feeding themselves, Sikh farmers have extended langar to all those in need. This langar is the material solidarity that has enabled the protests to last months, with the protest site itself becoming a revolutionary space. As farmers face up to the brutality of India's police, protesters and locals alike have had three meals a day to sustain them. On the frontlines of struggle today, langar is a site of solidarity, a vision for social justice that rejects casteism and a source of material and spiritual nourishment (Singh, 2021).

This vision is also shared by organisations such as Seva4Everybody, a collective of Detroit-based Sikhs who embody Sikh principles to create radical material change within racialised communities (Seva4Everybody, n.d.). These examples evidence how the act of *Langar* can serve a revolutionary function in creating more caring, liberatory worlds; a spirit that remains true to *Langar*'s radical roots and socio-spiritual meaning. Having outlined a brief history of *Langar* and our collective reflections from the sessions, we end by focusing on two case studies from Sikh Socialists members reflecting on how, since these sessions, they have embodied *Langar* in their every day.

How is *Langar* embodied in our every day?

Case Study 1: Mandeep

Thinking about *Langar* should not be limited or conceived as something which can be easily 'calculated' or 'defined'. My intention here is simply to offer one personal understanding of *Langar* which by no means seeks to gatekeep or distort the richness and complexity of *Langar* and *Sikhi.* Rather, I seek to gesture towards this richness; specifically, the hope for an otherwise which I believe *Langar* offers. For me, *Langar* is not limited to, but could be understood as, a radical orientation towards the world which centres the Gurus' commitment to, and Sikhi's roots in, oneness: the oneness of all beings, and the unity of the socio-temporal (*Miri*) and spiritual *(Piri).* I understand this as a radical commitment to the socio-temporal world, focussed on abolishing *Maya* (temporal illusions) which fractures the world (e.g., social hierarchies, exploitation of beings, wealth and capital accumulation). Instead, our focus should be on creating a world where we are free to live otherwise: honestly, humbly, and being committed to caring for all.

Importantly, this focus is not self-determined but one I learnt through *Sakhis* my dad told me growing up. There is one *Sakhi* in particular that sticks with me. During one of Guru Nanak Ji's pilgrimages with their companion Bhai Mardana Ji, they stopped in a village they were passing through to rest. A local villager, Bhai Lalo, welcomed Guru Ji and Bhai Mardana Ji and invited them to sit, rest, and share a meal with him in his home. Guru Ji, after sharing this meal whilst sitting on the floor of Bhai Lalo's home with Lalo and Mardana, praised Bhai Lalo for his meal; it was made and shared honestly and humbly, and thus nourishing for the body and mind. Soon, news that Guru Ji was in the village and had shared a meal at Bhai Lalo's – who, under the village's strict social hierarchy was treated as lower-caste, and a peasant – spread to an upper-caste, wealthy bureaucrat in the village, Malik Bhago. Bhago, who perceived that Guru Ji should instead be indulging in lavish, elaborate and exclusive banquets, invited Guru Ji to one in the village. Guru Ji initially refused, which angered Bhago as caste and other strict social hierarchies stipulated that those who are constructed as superior ought to be treated better than those inferiorised. Guru Ji acquiesced, but on the condition that Bhai Lalo also attend. At the feast, Guru Ji took in each hand a roti – one made by Bhai Lalo, and the other from Malik Bhago. As Guru Ji tightened his grip, blood began to drip from Malik Bhago's roti whilst milk began to drip from Bhai Lalo's. Guru Ji explained that Malik Bhago's exclusionary feast was prepared by servants who Bhago exploited for the purposes of bolstering his ego and caste status in the eyes of other villagers and the Guru. The blood dripping was the blood of those Bhago harmed – not only his servants, but all those who were exploited to allow Bhago to accumulate his wealth. Bhago's commitment to perpetuating the

oppression of the caste and feudal system, fuelled by his *Maya,* was no way to live. Lalo's roti, on the other hand, was prepared from an approach to the world which centred humility and care, without harming others. The milk flowing from Lalo's food represented the purity and honesty of Lalo's everyday existence and way of life.

To me, this specific *Sakhi* is illustrative not only of specific individuals, but of how the world is structured. Living in our contemporary world fractured by hegemonic oppressive hierarchies such as caste, class, race, gender, disability and the like makes oneness particularly important because it subverts the disunity which disciplines our world and its beings. This is how I understand *Langar*; as the embodiment of this radical oneness which offers hope for an otherwise. One way in which I have tried to embody *Langar in* this broader structural sense is through community and solidarity building with my local Copwatch group. Copwatch groups were specifically set up across Britain following the police murder of Sarah Everard in 2021 but follow a long historical tradition of grassroots groups set up to resist oppression, from anti-colonial movements and slave rebellions to the Black Panthers and police monitoring groups of the 1970s and 1980s.

Contrary to top-down narratives about law and order, police and other state institutions which are granted the powers of violence and criminalisation have never operated to protect everyone. Policing as we know it in Britain was born out of maintaining class hierarchies, global colonialism and slavery, with colonisers and elites prioritising what they deemed their rightful 'private property' interests. The very structures which enabled centuries of such violent oppression by elites continue to thrive in our present day; these criminalise people along racialised, gendered, class, and other hierarchies. This means that not all communities are policed the same. Just as elites are the 'perpetrators' of global colonialism and slavery, police are the 'perpetrators' of violence across histories and territories – from countless deaths in police custody to shooting people dead, the most prolific violence in our world comes from the police and other violent state institutions. We needn't look further than the criminalisation and incarceration of Jagtar "Jaggi" Singh Johal, a Scottish Sikh activist who was kidnapped in broad daylight in India by police and has been held and tortured over the past four years on false terrorist charges (Johal 2021; Reprieve, n.d.). Rather than individualising this as a problem of 'India' alone or something that can be changed 'from within' by individual minoritised 'representatives', we should understand that so long as the structures which criminalise and incarcerate Jaggi and countless others continue to be resourced and respected globally, the violence will continue.

Rather than implicitly consenting to policing's increasing monopoly on violence i.e., by doing nothing to resist, Copwatch is building a mass movement to actively

withdraw our consent from policing. Some ways we do this is by intervening in police stop and searches, filming police activity, and sharing resources with communities about knowing your rights when being stopped by police. Ultimately, Copwatch is committed to a world otherwise – free from policing and focussed instead on caring and liberation of all beings. It is in the spirit of *Langar*'s spiritual-political groundings that I understand my commitment to abolition.

Case Study 2: Harjivan

To work towards a world which is more equitable, inclusive, and ultimately compassionate means making significant changes to our existing systems and ways of thinking. Advocacy, activism and organising spaces offer unique approaches to radical change. Whether such practice is enabled through *Sikhi*, Black feminism, queer abolitionism, or disability justice – or any intersection of these knowledge systems – our world and its systems are being actively resisted, reimagined and redistributed.

However, as we know, the language of advocacy and activism is readily co-opted by dominant knowledge systems which look to warp and redefine words of radical resistance, turning them into receptacles which merely strengthen existing systems and the status quo. I have already seen this with one particular concept, and I wish for us to be more prepared so as not to lose other approaches to the all-consuming-and-all-distorting hole that is neoliberalism.

Growing up in an *Amritdari* (initiated) Sikh household, I was equipped with approaches and tools which from a young age would hugely support me navigating this world. One of those tools was engaging in *Naam Simran* – that is reciting and contemplating upon the names of *Akaal Purakh* (that presence which is timeless and formless). *Naam Simran* could be done individually or as a group, but ultimately one is looking to concentrate, contemplate and work towards connecting with *Akaal Purakh*. Some may describe the process of *Naam Simran* as meditative, as an opportunity to shut-out or transcend the external world to explore something greater. Either way, *Naam Simran* is a key aspect of Sikh practice and one which has supported Sikhs for centuries.

Growing up and eventually advocating within the social change space I quickly realised that the landscape was fraught with often competing knowledge systems. These systems inform how topics like mental health are seen and understood, and subsequently how we can best enable better mental health and social change. The mental health landscape, for example, is broad and includes formalised academic study, to the wellness industry and movements which seek abolition of psychiatry as

well as diagnostic criteria. Within the context of public mental health, the wellness industry is one of the most dominant voices. It was through the wellness industry that I realised how concepts and practices can be so readily consumed and regurgitated to create a language and a discourse which perpetuated the status quo.

With a focus on the individual and their practices, behaviours and actions, the wellness industry often shares that the key to better mental well-being is through connecting with your individual self to build 'positive' habits and think 'positive' thoughts. On the face of it these suggestions seem useful, but the wellness industry completely ignores any broader considerations of the issues which negatively impact mental health – precarious working, multiple forms of discrimination, the cost of living, and harm experienced at the hand of the state and its institutions. As such, the wellness industry often tries to sell a quick fix to layered issues.

Within the wellness industry, an important concept is that of practising 'Mindfulness' – which is actively taking notice of yourself in the present moment. Mindfulness is often seen and sold as an individual action and a solution to connecting deeper within. For some, mindfulness comes with great benefits as it shares important tools from which they may have been previously excluded from accessing. For others, mindfulness takes centuries-old knowledge and strips it for parts, reconfigures it and resells it to those from whose knowledge it was taken.

Our lives as Sikhs involve regular *Naam Simran*, many components of which have been consumed and regurgitated in approaches to Mindfulness. But, most importantly, the centrality of the *Guru*, of *Akaal Purakh*, had been stripped away and replaced with a connection to the individual self.

Over the following years I saw more and more people from Sikh backgrounds talking about mindfulness in a way that completely negated Sikhi. They said they practise mindfulness to connect with themselves, to feel a sense of clarity and calm. However, they are unable to make the connection between existent, centuries-old practices which focused on clarity, calm and connection with the Guru at the centre. As such, much of what makes *Naam Simran* unique is taken away. This creates a relationship in which mindfulness can actively redirect people away from the Sikh faith and into its own system of knowledge.

Subsequently, many people ask whether the Sikh faith 'talks about mental health' or has any 'solutions' for mental health challenges. The simple answer is that *Sikhi* includes all of that and infinitely more. However, the radical change Sikhi presents is often perceived as a threat to the status quo, meaning Sikh practices are often reduced, redefined and regurgitated to serve those with and in power.

This active process is called co-optation, where practices or actions from a culture or community are taken, redefined and resold to those from whom it has been taken. Within this process, the knowledge is extracted from groups who receive no credit after the 'product' has been created. We have seen co-optation happen with many Sikh practices, elements of which are visible in discussions around *Naam Simran* and Mindfulness. We must ask ourselves how we can systematically prevent such issues from arising in the future. *Langar*, too, is a concept at the centre of *Sikhi* and it is one which centres the Guru – whose resources, knowledge, and unconditional love is available to all regardless of their context. We must remember this as we see *Langar* being mentioned and used more widely: is *Langar* in our society still centring the Guru or is it deviating from the radical roots from whence it came?

Conclusion

We have collectively reflected on how *Langar* is conveyed, coordinated and some may say co-opted, in multiple ways in our current time. While this attention on *Langar* may seem positive and welcome, it is important to recognise how *Langar* is being defined, who is defining *Langar*, and what it is being used to enable. Having some tools to ask critical questions is essential if we want *Langar* to stay connected and its definitions to remain based in the knowledge systems and hands of those communities within which its practice is founded. To ask questions with compassion and approach topics with careful consideration can help us and our communities to prevent casting *Langar* in an inappropriate way. We can take inspiration from *Langar,* but we must also ask ourselves, is it appropriate to call what we are doing or seeing *'Langar'* in its own right?

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