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## PANTHIC DIGITAL VOICE SOUTHERN CA PILOT PROGRAM

### 2015 Topic – “CHARDIKALA”

*Cultivating original Sikh-Centric short films  
that convey important Sikh messages through examples*

#### Recommended Explanation for Junior Group (9-13 yrs)

Chardikala means courage in the face of danger; it means never giving up even when things go wrong. "Behind every cloud is a silver lining," and Chardikala helps you see it. Chardikala gives you energy when people around you are feeling down and out. Chardikala means you're afraid of nothing. **Chardikala "keeps hope alive."**

#### Recommended Explanation for Intermediate Group (14-18 yrs)

**Excerpts taken from - The Power of Chardi Kala : By Kiran Kaur Ahluwalia**

Chardi Kala is something everyone has read, heard or seen before but we don't always take the time to understand the true power of the concept. We hear it at the end of every Ardaas, "Nanak Naam Chardi Kala Tere Paane Sarbhat Da Bhalla." Its eternal optimism yes, but its not just going through life saying, "Yeah, its all good no worries. Saying this is easy on paper, but the challenge is about recognizing the struggles in life, the sorrow, the pain, the regret, and being able to look all that in the eye and still say, 'It's a good life, and that it's a blessing that Waheguru Ji has given me the opportunity to live such a life.'

In terms of Sikh History and sakhiaan, Chardi Kala is referenced as an outlook on life when the "going gets tough." Often, in sakhis about shaheedian and dying in the name of the Guru, Chardi Kala is the final emotion in their lives. It's mind boggling, actually, that these martyrs are sitting there on the brink of death, usually in some excruciatingly painful way, and they are able to maintain their composure and say that its all in the Guru's Hukam.

The best and one of the most incredible examples I have is the shaheedi of Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Guru Arjan Dev Ji was the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, and he was being given the option to surrender his faith and convert to Islam, or die. And he chose death, rather than to abandon his Sikhi. As he sat on a hot thavaa with hot sand being poured over him, he didn't cry or beg for mercy or say that Waheguru Ji had made him suffer. He said: Teraa Keeya Methe Laage, Har Naam Padarath Nanak Mange. Everything you do, everything in your hukam, Waheguru Ji, is sweet to me. All I could ever want is to live in your Hukam. And that if this is the life Guru wants for me then I am not one to argue with it. It's an otherworldly type of strength.

The challenge is, Chardi Kala is easy to talk about in vague hypotheticals about the life we “would” lead, but it isn’t easy to transcribe into everyday life. If Chardi Kala is the standard of the Gurus, we know that it’s more than likely going to be a difficult standard to live up to. The point is to try, put in the effort and aim high. Because I am not really in a position to preach, I can share my stories of Chardi Kala and maybe someone will relate to them and gain from them.

Sometimes life hits you with really bad days, heartbreak, hurdles, or tragedies. Sometimes the day brings death, for example. And these are the moments when the resilience within Chardi Kala is really tested.

I remember when my Nana Ji’s father passed away, and we travelled to Maryland for the Bhog. And I remember thinking that I would see my Nana Ji crying, and that he would be quiet, somber, or upset. But when we pulled up to his home, he came out to greet us with a big smile on his face and was so excited to just see us. I was shocked that in possibly one of the lowest of the lows of his life, he could still pull out a smile. And yes, the trip had its tears, but it shows the impact this had on me, because 5 years have passed, and this is still what comes to mind when I think of Chardi Kala.

However, I haven’t seen anyone in a permanent state of Chardi Kala. I don’t know if anyone can really perfect it, because we’re human after all. But the idea behind reaching for Chardi Kala, is that it’s an idea to implement as much as we can, as often as we can. For me, I try to look at every day as a chance to improve on the day before, and work towards being that high-spirited, resilient Kaur that I see is the piece of Panth that I want to represent.

Chardi Kala is like the Divine Light within us, everyone has the capacity for it, but it just takes a little introspection to find it. The times when I’ve felt an inkling of what Chardi Kala is, it’s when I see other people happy. When I see people pouring their heart and soul into whatever they’re doing, and their love for life is just oozing out of them.

When I see my Dadi Ji painting, and capturing what she sees as the beauty in the world, I see Chardi Kala. When I see my dear friend Katherine sing her heart out at a restaurant performance, I see Chardi Kala. When I see people like Harleen Bhain Ji, a woman I met at Sidak, talking about Bani, with such enthusiasm and love and passion, I see Chardi Kala. When I see people living, truly LIVING, those are the times that I see Chardi Kala. Chardi Kala can also be illustrated by a glass half full.

And yes, sometimes that requires extra time or effort. But that is also Chardi Kala, the life of Kirat Karni, of solid, honest work. Making an impact. Making a difference. Making use of the life that I’ve been granted.

So when I’m at my hundredth birthday party, looking back on my life seeing what it was made up of, I want to be able to step back and see that while it may not have been full to the brim of immaculate success, reward or ease, it was one where my attitude was that of resilience and of high spirits and of Chardi Kala.

### ***Recommended Explanation for Senior Groups (19-25 yrs & 26-30 yrs)***

*Reproduced from "BEING & BECOMING A SIKH 2003 By I.J. Singh (Pages 165-168) 173 pp. The Centennial Foundation, Toronto.*

### **WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU A LEMON**

What kind of an attitude will carry one through the muck and the suffering of life? Sikhs have a cliché for it — chardikala. Like all clichés, it takes much more than a sentence or two to explain, and even then I have never seen a satisfactory exposition of it.

I have seen chardikala translated literally as “eternal optimism” or “cheerfulness.” What does it really mean to always be in a state of chardikala as Sikhism asks of its followers?

History tells us that two Sikh Gurus were martyred in the cause of freedom of religion. When Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted torture, suffering and finally martyrdom, they still rejoiced in God’s will. The last words of Guru Arjan as he underwent inhuman torture, history tells us, were of cheerful acceptance of the will of God. He did not lament his suffering, nor did he think that God had abandoned him. He did not complain, “God, why have you forsaken me?” But this does not mean that the Gurus were unfeeling of pain. If they felt no pain, they would understand no suffering and would have little to teach us. They showed the way to accept the ultimate in suffering and transcend it with grace, humility and dignity.

Each of us must die — that is inevitable — but death is never welcome to anyone except the suicidal. Normal people rarely look forward to the end of life, and death remains for most the ultimate in mystery and uninvited suffering. It is in the manner that one accepts the reality of death that courage is measured. No one can walk away from death or suffering, defeat, pain and regret. Gurbani reminds us that pain and pleasure are like two robes hanging in the wardrobe, robes that each of us must wear in turn. No one is exempt. It follows, then, that the measure of a person is in wearing the robe of suffering with dignity, nobility, grace and calm good humor. This is how chardikala is defined.

Chardikala then becomes a state of mind. It does not derive its life from the size of the bank account, Armani suits in the closet, a fleet of Porsches or even looks that can launch a thousand ships. Instead, it springs from and is defined by a life of hope and faith. There can be no chardikala without faith in bhana and hukum. God does not burden us with more than we can handle. When this principle becomes integrated into our existence and consciousness, it transforms ordinary living into a life of faith. Chardi kala asks a Sikh to feel and to know that God and Guru are always within you, beside you and around you.

Sikhism teaches a message of active participation in life in which the best prayer is honest self-effort. When such efforts are accompanied with an attitude of faith, the results, no matter what, will be accepted with grace — that is the meaning of accepting and internalizing bhana and hukum.

People living with bhana (willing and graceful acceptance of reality) and hukum as their driving forces live in chardikala; such lives can work miracles and attain the impossible. It isn’t chardikala if it is found only in victory, never in defeat. This way guarantees more suffering. Chardikala is easy in victory, even inevitable. It is in defeat that it must be sought, cultivated, nurtured and harnessed. It is in the depths that chardikala defines character. And that is the essence of Sikh teaching.

At one time in my life I was working at night and going to graduate school during the day. Life was hard. My research advisor and I often talked about all kinds of things, including Sikhs and Sikhism. Even though he was not a Sikh, we also talked about the Sikh teaching on chardikala and how difficult it was to always walk the path. One day after thinking awhile he said he understood and then summarized the concept in one simple sentence:

***When life gives you a lemon, make lemonade.***