**1. Episode Title: Episode 57 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 1, Episode 57)**

**2. Topics & Tags:**

* **TOPICS:** The beneficial nature of bitter advice, the importance of kula (caste) and varna (occupation-based group), the concept of ancestors (pitrus) and offerings (pindas and tarpanas), the purpose of these rituals as a means of debt repayment, the logical defense of Vedic procedures against modern objections, the role of women as the foundation of society, and the Bhagavad Gita as a protective shield for society.
* **TAGS:** Arjuna, Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Hitham (beneficial), Priyam (favorable), Sankaryam (union of races), Kula (caste), Varna (occupation), Parampara (lineage), Jiva (soul), Atma (soul), Karma, Moksha (liberation), Pitara (ancestors), Pinda Pradana (food offerings), Tarpana (water offerings), Go:thra (lineage), Sastra (scripture), Veda, Pancha Bhutas (five elements), Stri (woman), Griha (family), Samajika (social), Vedavyasa.

**3. Main Content:**

Jai Srimannarayana! Priya Bhagavad Bandhulara (Dear Devotees of God),

Bhagavad Gita is a message designed to benefit society as a whole. Anything hitham (beneficial) is always bitter. Anything priyam (favorable) is always tasty although not necessarily healthy. Hitham always gives good ‘health’ but may not be tasty. Bitter gourd is healthy but tastes bitter. It takes a little extra effort to accept and understand a beneficial message.

In the first chapter of Bhagavad Gita, while Arjuna was questioning Sri Krishna, he spoke about sankaryam (union of two people from different races). He says that kulas (birth based groups), and varnas (occupation based groups), should continue to exist. If there is war, they will be lost. Why should they exist? Because if people of each group following certain dharmas (righteous practices), are diluted or mixed up, society’s inherent strength weakens. Additionally, many women end up engaging in inter-group relationships - sankaryam. This is not kshemam (beneficial). When this happens, all the ancestors fall back to the earth from higher worlds.

Everyone on earth belongs to a parampara (lineage). We have a mother and a father. The mother has a mother and a father. The father has a mother and a father and so on. We do not know when and how long ago all this began. All of them are jivas (souls). We are all jivas. This means that we have a body on the surface which will ultimately become a dead body. The one talking now is a jiva, also called an atma. This atma stays in this body for some time and then exits. In the same way, the souls of ancestors also have come and gone. They continue to do so because of karma. As long as they are executing karmas, rebirth continues. When karma is exhausted, it is known as moksha (liberation). As long as there is karma, souls keep roaming between patala loka (underworlds) and brahma loka (the highest celestial world). Departed souls are usually added into a category named pitras (ancestors) — regardless of age, gender, kula or varna. It means that they attain a state to live in that world - pitru loka. They move to a different world from pitru loka based on their karma.

When they are in the pitru loka, they attain a body named aryama or pitru:deha:. That body also needs food. What kind of food is a different topic, but food is essential for that body too. How are those bodies fed? They are fed when their family members (here) make offerings to them, tarpanas (water offerings) and pinda pradanam (solid food offerings), by mentioning their name and gotra (lineage). Tarpanas are offerings of water through certain fingers in a prescribed manner on the ancestor's name at the advent of an eclipse, no moon day, anniversary, etc. Similarly, pinda pradanas are annual offerings on their name in the form of solid food. It is said that when the departed souls receive these offerings, they are happy and are able to travel to their next destination.

There are certain objections to this concept... “Can that person in the other world drink the water or eat the food that is offered here in this world?!” “First let a person living on an upper floor feed someone on the ground level. Then, we can think about how things reach other worlds!” “You can’t even feed someone who can be seen using this procedure, let alone those souls who are not seen.”

Logically, these objections sound correct. It is not about whether something is seen or unseen because when there is a defined procedure to attain something, it is possible for it to be attained that way. How does it get implemented? Aren’t we seeing it nowadays? Aren’t you using electronic means via your phone to transfer money to other countries? Do you have to see the person to do it? Therefore, such aforesaid arguments are foolish.

Sastra (scripture) clearly states that tarpanas and pinda pradanas are effective. The energy used in the act reaches the target soul, not the object used. Just like a specific set of actions on a phone allows money transfer from one to another, a specific Vedic procedure allows the intended transfer to departed souls. You may wonder what happens if the departed soul takes yet another birth? The offerings will reach the new body of the departed soul as required food. Hence, they do not go to waste. You may question what happens if the departed soul attains liberation? Then, is the offering a waste? No. Why not? It is true that liberated souls have bodies that do not need these offerings. However, there are so many other departed souls whose families do not perform offering rituals. Those souls are niraharas (starving). Offerings then get utilized for them and are therefore useful. You may say, “Oh! Why should I do it for someone else?” You are not required to do this for anyone else.

In case of the departed ancestor attaining liberation, the corresponding offering will return to you multi-fold. If you send 10 to someone who isn’t reachable at a given address, and cannot be redirected to the actual address because he has attained liberation, it will then be redirected to you multifold as 100. You can at least do it for that sake. Thus, it is not a waste. The procedure and rules on how to offer and what to offer are defined. If you respect it, follow it. Otherwise, ignore it.

It is not right to criticize something without knowing it well. When you don’t know about something well enough, let’s not say it doesn’t exist, or isn’t of value, or isn’t scientific. What can ‘science’ talk about or what level of understanding do you have in these topics? How can we say something doesn’t exist because we don’t understand it?

For example, do you know that there is prana (life force), within you? Can we prove its existence scientifically? Can we use any instrument to see what is controlling the entire bodily system? No one has appropriately tried to discover such topics. Even if they tried, they have not managed to find out. How and why is prana giving energy to function even during sleep? Why is it working at times and stopping at other times? Even those who say it happens mechanically, do not understand why life stops functioning at different times. Prana does not leave at old age for everyone, some folks lose it in mid-age. We don’t understand or we do not have an instrument to prove what prana is, why it makes the body function, or why it stops functioning for someone. It is illogical to say prana doesn’t exist because we do not know about it. Instead, it is appropriate to say that we don’t know. It needs to be understood or investigated or researched to understand further.

The same is true for pinda prada:na:s, they have a purpose. At the least, through pinda pradana, you are also feeding birds, crows, cows or fish. It is a compassionate deed. It is not a waste to feed those animals contributing to our lives. Even if you do not believe in this Vedic procedure, it is still a useful act because it allows you to give back to one or more of the pancha bhutas (five elements of nature). It is definitely not a wrongful act. Thus, pinda-pradana is a practice that must prevail. If one does not perform this activity properly, families can face difficult dangerous situations, experience unexpected blockers in planned activities and unexpected outcomes even after every effort is made. When pinda pradana is performed properly as per scriptures, many types of obstacles will vanish and one can carry on with planned work, hassle-free.

What’s the hesitation in performing the activity when there is no loss, easy, not harmful to others, and beneficial to nature? Is pinda pradhana worse than playing certain sports or producing bad movies? Hence the ritual of pinda pradana is required for society. It reflects the gratitude within you, being a human. Isn’t it your duty to remember and be thankful to your ancestors for being part of your birth and life? Pinda pradana is a process that gives us an opportunity to do something for our ancestors. It is a ritual to show your gratitude.

Veda clearly says, in the case of a righteous spiritual ancestor, he does not need anything from his descendants. yadi ha:sya chavyam kurvanthi yadi cha na archisha me:vabhi sambhavanthi. He reaches God’s abode directly influenced with knowledge, without any concern for such offerings from any material-world family. Final rites or pinda pradana for such souls is not for them. They are for you as you are indebted to them. You are indebted to pancha bhutas because your bodies, their bodies, your life support system, and new bodies are all supported by the pancha bhutas. It’s therefore your responsibility to pay back to the pancha bhutas, not the responsibility of the panchabhutas or ancestors. Thus, perform tarpanas and pinda pradanas for paying your debt to the pancha bhutas. The offerings are to the bodies, not for the souls, which releases you from your debt.

When the body is formed, we automatically enter into debt. We don’t know what the interest rate is for the principal, it could be simple or compound. You have received something, you are using it. Isn’t it your responsibility to pay back that debt? So if you want to clear the dues, you must perform these ancestral offerings. With material debt, one may get tension, BP, sugar etc, right? Clearing the debt relieves us from all such burdens.

Don’t think that you are doing a favor to ancestors. Don’t worry about the purpose of the ritual if the ancestors are in the same world, different worlds, higher or lower, or have attained moksha, etc. There is no need for those kinds of questions. When an ancestral soul departs, the debt that your body accrued because of their body has to be paid. To clear that debt, it’s recommended to perform such prescribed offerings for some time, say for 40 years or for three generations. Perform these offerings without considering what they are getting. Instead utilize them to clear your own debt, bit-by-bit. However, we have now lost this practice and thereby, the debt clearing system as well. Thus, man ultimately becomes a loser.

Arjuna says in the first chapter.. pathanthi pitharo:hpye:shya:m luptha pindo:daka kriya:. There won’t be any ancestral offerings, thus both people here and in other worlds will suffer. The whole system gets broken down. Women begin crossing all limits. This is not good for society. The woman is a ‘supporting stem’ for society. She holds the husband, kids, and relatives together in a bond. They all revolve around her as a base. As long as the woman is stable, the family will do well. If she faces troubles or if she gets spoiled, the whole family will run into a disastrous state. For the welfare of the family, we need to protect a woman as carefully as we protect a flower. Parents protect her when she is a child, husband protects her in middle age and children protect her as she ages. Thus, if we take care of women carefully, all practices of griha (family), kula (caste), ja:thi (race), varna (group), samajika (social) and Vedic practices will follow and everyone will be happy.

Bhagavad Gita chapter one states there is a lot dependent on a woman. Arjuna said if war happens, we will experience these kinds of issues. Since similar events like war have taken place earlier, we already have such disturbances. Sri Krishna explains what needs to be done to get out of these and what to do to build a protective shield from them. This becomes Bhagavad Gita. Let’s learn how so as we move ahead.

Jai Srimannarayana!