

# The *Vidhi* and *Rāga* Dynamic

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The *rāga* exhibited by the soul in the materially conditioned state is a perversion caused by the false bodily identification of the soul, and thus the perverted *raga* of the soul accepts material things as its objects. Directing this material *rāga* towards flowers, food, drink, intoxicants, clothing, shelter, or lover, the living entities end up bewildered in a world of illusion. For this reason the conditioned souls are situated far apart from *rāga* naturally directed to the Lord. Since *bhakti* instigated by *rāga* is therefore very rare, it is necessary to consider carefully what is beneficial and what is detrimental in the worship of the Lord. From this consideration arises the *vidhi*.

*Vidhi* monitors the state of *rāga*. *Vidhi* is not an opposing party to *rāga*. *Vidhi* may be called ritual, and *rāga* may be called spontaneous attachment. Though they are different conceptions, in the pure state they are one. *Vidhi* in its pure state is an assistant to *rāga*. Pure *rāga* follows the *vidhi*, which are the will of the Lord. For the Lord, *vidhi* predominates, and for the *jīvas*, *rāga* predominates. The opposition of *rāga* and *vidhi* that is seen in the material world is because of unhealthy condition of *rāga*. When *rāga* recuperates, *vidhi*, having fulfilled its function, retreats. Therefore, in the healthy state, *rāga* predominates for the *jīva*. As much as *rāga* for material things leads to degradation, so *rāga* for the Lord becomes the highest condition of existence.

The relation of *rāga* with *vidhi* is like the relation of the body to medicine. *Rāga* has many functions, but the function of *vidhi* is to protect and nourish *rāga*. When *rāga* is thoroughly nourished, it does not depend on *vidhi* any longer.

Pure *rāga* for the Lord takes shelter of only the pure soul, a soul who has been liberated from material contamination. That pure *rāga* is called *rāgatmikā-bhakti*. Only pure souls, who participate in the Lord's pastimes, are qualified for *rāgatmikā-bhakti*; none except the inhabitants of Vraja are qualified. When conditioned souls, by hearing the descriptions in the scriptures, develop a desire to follow in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vraja who offer *rāgatmikā-bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa, the *bhakti* that results is called *rāgānugā*.<sup>1</sup> The inspiration for this level *bhakti* is greed for its object, not the *vidhi*.<sup>2</sup> The *vidhi*, by various methods, attempts to stimulate the nature of the soul. However, when spiritual greed becomes the impetus for following the *vidhi*, the devotional practice is no longer called *vaidhī-bhakti*, but *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

That person who becomes greedy to attain the emotional state in which the *rāgatmikā* devotees serve Kṛṣṇa is qualified for *rāgānuga-bhakti*. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* includes all the same *aṅgas* as *vaidhī-bhakti*, but the devotee of *rāgānuga-bhakti* performs those activities with a spontaneous mood, rather than by following the guidelines of *vidhi*.<sup>3</sup> The conditioned soul living in the world must necessarily carry out physical, mental and social activities to maintain his body. The *vidhi* mentioned in the discussion of

*vaidhī-bhakti*, which serve to keep the devotee on the path of *bhakti* and prevent him from becoming materially contaminated, must also be followed by the practitioners of *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

The practice of *rāgānugā* is internal, so what external *vidhi* should the person follow? If devotees do not accept all the necessary rules of *vaidhī-bhakti* that serve to make them fit for practicing internally, they will finish their life untimely or revert to material life, and reduce their propensity for *rāga*. If the manner of cultivating *bhakti* is not accepted in full, internal practice cannot be maintained or grow. Though interest in *rāgānugā* may grow, but the *aṅgas* of *bhakti*, such as hearing and chanting should not be given up.

***Sādhana-bhaktas* who develop a greed for emotions similar to those of a particular inhabitant of Vraja, should internally fix themselves as servants of that person and with complete dedication to him or her, internally perform service in a suitable mentally conceived spiritual body. They should practice externally all the *aṅgas* of *vaidhī-bhakti* that are agreeable to their particular cultivation as long as they have not reached the beginning stages of *prema*. Thus, they should follow the *vidhi* that is favorable to their mood. Furthermore, they should serve Kṛṣṇa and His devotees with faith; they should regularly discuss about Kṛṣṇa and His devotees; and they should live in Vraja or a place where the Lord performed His pastimes. If they cannot do so physically, then they should do so mentally. The causes of *vaidhī-bhakti* are the scriptures and the *vidhi* therein that guides the performance of *bhakti*. In contrast, the causes of *rāgānuga-bhakti* are Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. As *vaidhī-bhakti* is the reverential form of *prema-bhakti*, it is sometimes called *maryādā-mārga*, the path of respect. As *rāgānuga-bhakti* nourishes *prema-bhakti*, it is sometimes called the *puṣṭi-mārga*, the path of nourishment.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Those who have lobhā (spiritual greed) to attain the emotional state of the inhabitants of Vraja situated in rāgātmikā-bhakti are qualified for rāgānuga-bhakti.*” (Brs 1.2.291)

<sup>2</sup> *“This lobhā for the object arises from hearing the sweet emotions of the inhabitants of Vraja in the Bhāgavatam, not from scriptural injunctions or reasoning.”* (Brs 1.2.292)

<sup>3</sup> *The devotee is qualified for only vaidhī-bhakti as long as rati does not appear. In vaidhī-bhakti, there is a dependence upon the rules of scripture and reasoning, thus leading to bhakti. The practicing devotee, remembering Kṛṣṇa and his dear most devotees, lives in Vraja relishing those matters. The rāgānuga devotee who wants to achieve a mood similar to the mood of the eternal associates serves the inhabitants of Vraja, using his material body externally and his spiritual body internally. The aṅgas of vaidhī-bhakti, such as hearing and chanting, are also aṅgas of rāgānuga-bhakti.*” (Brs 1.2.293-296)