

PUNK ROCK PUJA:
(MIS)APPROPRIATION, (RE)INTERPRETATION, AND DISSEMINATION OF HINDU
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN
UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE(S)

By

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To Lynn, my Sustenance and my Muse.

And, in the words of Jim Carroll, to “the people who died”:

Carroll Ray Wilson,

Carma Leah Isbelle Currie,

Steven “Donny the Punk” Donaldson,

Donald “Big Don” Hawley.

The world is a little smaller and colder without you.

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Although there has been a great deal of academic analysis of both the punk/alternative subculture(s) and western (re)interpretation of Hindu religious traditions, to date no major work has delved at length into the intersection of these strains of thought and practice save the recent analysis of one element of the Hindu-oriented punk and post-punk subculture(s), the 'Krishnacore' phenomenon, currently being carried out by Associate Professor of Religious Studies Sarah Pike, at California State University at Chico.

The notion of punk and post-punk as (a) revolutionary postmodern social movement(s)—supported by Curry Mallott and Milagros Peña, among others—provides a template for understanding the negotiatory tactics employed by adherents to punk ethos. This thesis, then, will explore one of those tactics—the attempt to synthesize ostensibly Hindu elements and punk identity/ies—along the way illustrating punk/alternative subcultural modalities—practical and ideological—which have coalesced in such ways as to dovetail with existing, negotiated, or perceived Hindu religious worldviews. In so doing, this thesis will further support extant theories regarding postmodern approaches to religion via illustration of (re)negotiation of identity via

religious tropes, and expose the practices and ideologies of a small but vibrant, religious subculture.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: RELIGION, (POST-)SUBCULTURE, AND MUSIC

‘Crossings’

The *tīrtha*, or ‘crossing,’ is a common South Asian religio-cultural concept. Employed with varying degrees of interpretation by all of the major religious traditions that sprang from the Indian subcontinent—Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Hinduism—this Sanskrit term refers, in its most immediate and materialistic uses, to a *river* crossing or ford. More broadly, it is used to identify pilgrimage sites that in the South Asian context are traditionally situated at fords, confluences, or on riverbanks deemed particularly auspicious.

But like many Sanskrit words, *tīrtha* is a multivalent term, implying far more than its most utilitarian meanings might convey. As a religious concept, it also signals a larger metaphysical and/or metaphorical reality, a place and/or time where and when the physical realm comes closest to meeting with the spiritual realm. This hierophany is manifest at the point where the ‘banks’ of the profane, or at least the mundane world, come closest to the ‘banks’ of the holy, sacred, or—some pilgrims would say—the transcendent or actual world beyond the illusory, everyday world. Regardless of the manner in which these claims are expressed, a critical component of the *tīrtha* is the presence of rivers or other aquatic formations—that is, water—sustainer of both spiritual and material life; fluid and yielding yet, given enough time, able to overcome all resistance.

I speak of the concept of *tīrtha* because I believe it is an especially appropriate metaphor for the task at hand. In this thesis I will be investigating a type of crossing, a meeting of the worldly—and often aggressively Marxian materialist—punk and post-punk alternative music subculture(s) with Hindu religious and spiritual elements. In spite of their many differences, the individuals I investigate herein are often engaged in their own journeys—pilgrimages of sorts—

in search of meaning, self-discovery, or simply because it ‘feels right.’ Like the pilgrims of South Asia, their philosophies and their approaches vary widely, but those who seek to bring these two worlds—worlds that seem to many outsiders and insiders alike, radically opposed—do so where their ‘banks’ come closest, negotiating their religious and subcultural identities carefully, consciously, fluidly as if they are, themselves, the tīrtha which brings together these two worlds.

As noted previously, in this thesis I will explore some of the ways in which Hinduism and Hindu concepts have been appropriated¹ and/or expressed in punk and post-punk ‘underground’ subculture(s). It is, in a way, an examination of tīrthas—crossings between cultures and identities, crossings between the erstwhile profane world of punk rock and some of its myriad spin-off subcultures with the sacred world of the family of religions and practices we generally call Hinduism.

As odd a pairing as punk and Hinduism may seem, their relationship is one that is growing, and its growth seems to me to be consistent with a patterns of growth in a number of other previously ‘invisible’ underground phenomena I had observed over the years that eventually ‘broke out,’ so to speak, and became fairly widespread in popular culture.

Study of these phenomena of course requires an understanding of both the religious and the music subculture elements. A more complete dissertation on the genealogy of punk and post-punk music and subcultures appears later in this chapter, but briefly, I would like to provide some working definitions of the terms ‘punk,’ ‘post-punk,’ and ‘alternative’ as I use them in relation to the music forms and subcultures being described. By punk I mean the music and

¹ Note that I use the terms ‘appropriated’ and ‘appropriation’ ambivalently. Not only am I aware that all appropriation of elements of ‘other’ cultures is open to criticism—especially in a postcolonial context—but I will more fully explore the issue later in this thesis. Although I will dispense with the parenthetical ‘mis-’ before these terms, please note that all of these appropriations are potential *misappropriations*.

(sub)culture spawned by the various mid-1970's bands and their fan bases which rejected the progressive rock (or 'prog rock'), 'Top 40' pop, and (especially) 'soft rock' dominant at the time. Disco would later be added to this list. (Later I will discuss why, although this is certainly an aesthetic choice, there are some deeper socio-political reasons for this move.) The punk revolution peaked in 1976-1979, but its associated (post-)subcultures(s) has/have continued to this day.

It is difficult to define punk using one clear paradigm, but in general it developed from a philosophy that emphasized spectacle in a Debordian² sense, but also emphasized—in stark contrast to the 'craft' approach (and many punks would argue pretension) of progressive rock—energy and enthusiasm over talent, a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic. Punk is often hard, fast music but the music and the subcultures should not be confused with that of prog rock's progeny, heavy metal.

Post-punk includes any number of musical forms that have descended in one way or another from the original punk revolution. Its most direct descendant is generally recognized as hardcore (punk), a more aggressive form of the music with a strong cultish fan base. The term 'new wave' has sometimes been applied (often retroflexively) to early post-punk music or punk bands which weren't as 'hard' and/or whose music relied more on electronic instruments, but ultimately these bands—many of whom were undeserving of their peers' derision—were rejected as sellouts by more 'orthodox' punk fans. Indeed, many new wave bands did get radio airplay at a time when punk bands rarely could. As a result of the desire to be more experimental but still keep a distance between themselves and the oft-maligned label new wave, some artists

²See: Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1995.

adopted the moniker ‘no wave’; however the term was even more ambiguous and short-lived than its predecessor.

Although they are often clearly performed by those who partook of the punk revolution’s aesthetics and ethics, the decisions of the various bands and their fans to explore different musical avenues often resulted in musical variants that (re-)incorporated aesthetics other musical forms, and which resulted in forms which were no longer recognizable as typically punk. Some of these forms even fraternized with the enemy, so to speak, incorporating elements of progressive rock and disco. Especially in post-punk variations labeled ‘alternative’, these forms are not even necessarily rock or ‘pop’.³ Post-punk bands, then, run the gamut, but the predominant gene they have inherited from punk is its DIY attitude. Forms of post-punk include, but are not limited to gothic, industrial, grunge, and various forms of music which pre-dated the punk revolution but which were incorporated into, and transformed, by the punk movement including ska, mod rock and Northern soul, and rockabilly.

As noted, ‘alternative’ is a term that often leaves the rock family completely. As a term it may simply mean music other than typical Top 40 pop—that is, a musical alternative to standard pop fare—but the term is problematic when one considers that much of the music topping the pop music charts is deemed alternative.

³ This trend was well illustrated in a satirical skit by the Canadian comedy troupe Kids in the Hall during the first season of their eponymously-titled HBO show. A high school teacher, Mr. Gorgonchuck [Dave Foley] confronts his student Bobby’s [Bruce McCulloch] mistaken assumption that “You and I are mortal, but rock and roll will never die!” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “Let’s see if I can’t put this into terms you’ll understand. Say you had 12 beers.” Bobby: “Oh, okay all right!” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “All right! Now let’s say that four of those beers represent the Pogues, another six represent the Gypsy Kings, and one beer is shared by The Chieftains and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.” Bobby: “Hold it—that only leaves one beer. I’ll never get drunk on one beer!” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “Exactly Bob. But learn to nurse that beer and before you know it, you’ll be loving jazz!” Bobby: “Jazz!?! Never!!” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “Tests don’t lie Bob.” Bobby: “How long...has rock got?” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “According to a computer model, three years. About the time you’ll be graduating.” Bobby: “Then I’ll live each day like my rockin’ last!” Mr. Gorgonchuck: “Whereas I will look forward to the dominance of jazz!” Bobby: “Then you, sir, are my nemesis!”

As a matter of full disclosure and to explain my interest in the subject: I grew up listening to punk, hardcore, and various other underground music forms, and I identified myself, first as a punk from the early 1980s-1988, and then later as a non-racist ‘unity’ skinhead 1988-onward. My interest in Hinduism developed in large part because of my exposure to appropriated Hindu identities and Hindu cultural markers within the underground music scene—primarily, but not limited to, the Hare Krishna movement. My first exposure to the hybrid punk-Hindu identity occurred when I was a freshman at Appalachian State University in 1986. On speculation I purchased the album *Age of Quarrel* by New York City’s Cro-Mags, one of a few up-and-coming hardcore punk bands whose ‘crossover’ sounds blended heavy metal-style guitar riffs with punk sensibilities and lyrics inspired by the band’s central members’ Hare Krishna devotional beliefs. They were the first of what would later become known as ‘Krishnacore’ bands. (I will discuss the Cro-Mags and Krishnacore in greater detail in the third chapter.)

Later, through an advertisement for pen pals that I’d placed in a punk-interest magazine (or ‘zine’) I met the legendary New York scenester, Stephen Donaldson (nee Robert Martin, Jr.), better known through his *nom de plume*, Donny the Punk. A South India-trained VīraŚaiva pūjari and part-time instructor of Sanskrit who wrote for literally hundreds of zines in his lifetime, Donny was the first to expose me to some of the more substantial and intricate thinking of Hinduism and other eastern religious traditions and, especially, Śaivism. (I will also discuss Donaldson’s case in the next chapter.)

This thesis is meant, first and foremost, to be a work of (primarily qualitative) religious ethnography with an emphasis on a humanities-oriented breakdown of sociological theories of religiosity. The purpose of this research is to track uses of Hindu religious traditions—either appropriation of elements or wholesale adoption of Hindu identity—within punk and post-punk

subculture(s). I will examine ways in which these elements/identities are idealized, incorporated, and lived among western subcultural actors and/or fans of alternative forms of music. In the conclusion of this thesis I will propose a theory of the origins and likely growing influence of the punk and post-punk musical ‘underground’ as a source of sustenance for Hindu-oriented and other New Religious Movements, as well a source of inspiration for other diverse religious permutations, in ostensibly secular liberal democracies.

Subjects of research include high-profile figures in the world of alternative music such as members of well-known punk and post-punk bands but, in keeping with the ethnographic cant, more anonymously representative—and therefore potentially more statistically characteristic—punk and post-punk subculture adherents will also be interviewed or otherwise discussed.

My theoretical basis is grounded the basic premises of modern and/or analytic social theorists, such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, as they relate to both religion and more ostensibly ‘secular’ social phenomena. However, I will still question some of these theorists’ ideas and augment their claims with elements of postmodern and/or ‘continental’ theory—relying on, in particular, Michel de Certeau’s strategy-tactic dialectic, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, Michele Foucault’s understandings of power relationships, and Jean Baudrillard’s notion of simulation/simulacra.

Finally, I will also consider the ‘(post)subculture studies’ theories that found their genesis in Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and which were formalized by sociologists associated with the Birmingham, UK, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies such as Dick Hebdige; and critiqued and reformulated under the auspices of ‘post-subculture’ theory via postmodern sociologists such as the self-professed ‘neo-Weberian,’ David Muggleton. To wit, although I will still label groups of people dedicated to particular practices, beliefs, and aesthetics (‘style’) who

tend to associate with one another to resist dominant social paradigms to a considerable degree as ‘subcultures,’ it would be a mistake to believe that this thesis rests on a wholehearted acceptance of the modernist subcultural studies approach.

Since this is a work on appropriation of elements from religious traditions of subalterns by a predominantly affluent, white population, I will also consider cultural and ethnic issues, in light of postcolonial theory, via a variety of theorists. I will also consider elements of New Religious Movement (NRM) theory that I will augment, again, with postmodern power-autonomy discourses. I will also take into consideration the strong influence the growth of New Age/(neo-)paganism has exerted upon punk and post-punk subcultural habitus. Finally, I will consider the considerable roles women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gendered, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals play in Hinduism, punk and post-punk subculture(s), and hybrid Hindu-punk identities.

Throughout this work I will refer to a process I refer to as ‘negotiation,’ a term which is meant to imply a level of autonomy on the part of social actors in the face of pressures to conform to social norms including those of their subcultural peers. This resistance is best explained as a tactical reaction to strategic circumstances—and on this point I appeal to de Certeau’s understandings of the tactic-strategy dialectic. Although the idea of negotiation represents an endorsement of the (neo-)Weberian model which emphasizes autonomy, however broad or limited that autonomy might be, it should be understood that the Durkheimian concept of “social facts” is also tacit, in direct conflict with the criticism of Weber and his neo-Weberian progeny against the Durkheimian social model—a challenge which I will explain shortly. Although I do take seriously many of the neo-Weberian charges—particularly those of David

Muggleton—against the Durkheimian model, I believe rejection of the concept of social facts is unwarranted.

In Defense of ‘Social Facts’

Weber and others were perhaps correct to point out that Durkheim never fully substantiated his idea of social facts even though they were a crucial element of his social theory. Yet since the 1970’s we have been able to better account for the pressures Durkheim labeled under the auspices of social facts in at least two ways. One way they can be demonstrated empirically is through *habitus*, a concept that Bourdieu demonstrated in his landmark study of French tastes, *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 2006), and which I will further explain in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Yet another way that we might account for social facts is through meme theory, first proposed by the neo-Darwinian evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene* (1976), and later expanded upon by psychologist Susan Blackmore in *The Meme Machine*, published in 1999. The meme theory, in essence, maintains that social pressure is exerted by dominant mnemonic systems—particularly ideas or sets of ideas—that are propagated particularly well by humans and which are often evolutionarily advantageous. They are passed down analogously to genes and, like genes, can be either advantageous or disadvantageous, depending upon circumstances/environment. Humans are loathe to abandon cherished memes, however, and may often maintain faith in a meme even when that meme appears to be ill-adapted to current circumstances as is illustrated, for example, by the failure of Nordic immigrants to Iceland to abandon their traditional agrarian methods for methods employed by natives that had demonstrably superior survival value in their new environment.

It is the tactic-strategy elements, however, that are of greatest interest to me here, however, especially since they are critical to an understanding of the dynamics of punk social

discourse—the ongoing attempts to tactically wrest a living space from strategic circumstances—and the ways in which older, oversimplified ‘rational choice’ theoretical models of religion and other social concerns might best be modified to explain choices made against a social facts-laden milieu. More to the point, borrowing from the thinking of both Foucault and de Certeau: when overt choices do not work due to the social costs of challenging the strategic panopticon, there are always tactical blind spots which one can (covertly) exploit. These choices are made incrementally, and when successful tactics are discovered they may become incorporated into strategic plans—that is, they may become social facts.

As noted, I will be relying to a large extent upon to the theories and analytic tools pioneered by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham (U.K.)—known colloquially as the Birmingham School—and modified to account for a post-modern accounting of some subcultural phenomena which orthodox CCCS views may have overlooked. CCCS theories are largely Marxian, although the sociological perspectives of Emile Durkheim and Claude Levi-Strauss, among others, have also played pivotal roles. However, I will counter-balance CCCS theoretical perspectives with the neo-Weberian social science approach of David Muggleton, which emphasizes, as he puts it, “the need for sociological explanations to recognize the subjective goals, values, and motivations of social actors” (Muggleton, 2000: 5).

In attempting to accomplish this mission, then, I will attempt to draw together two areas of interest to social scientists—study of religion and cultural studies. Let me be clear in acknowledging that the academic study of religion necessarily entails the study of cultures, but in the sense in which I am considering my subject matter, and in the sense in which cultural studies has been identified with a certain strain of ethnology, further distinctions have been made

between these academic pursuits. To a large extent, I wish to blur these distinctions, but first it is necessary to acknowledge where the differences lay. In particular, I point to that concept of cultural studies most closely identified with the CCCS. Each of these domains has its specialists who, although in dialogue with specialists in other disciplines/fields, nonetheless subscribe to theories and methods that often are particular to their own area of study. Thus, in order to proceed responsibly with my project, it becomes necessary to reconcile certain aspects of these fields, while acknowledging that other core theories and methods to which the bulk of the respective fields/disciplines may not be bridged.

In this thesis I will use the term ‘cult’ to refer to certain religious groups and subcultural groups. However, these terms are employed in different ways, depending upon context, even within religious studies and sociology discourses, so I must take care to clarify what qualifies as a cult. Common pejorative usage aside, I am particularly concerned with clarity due to the fact that, although both religious studies and cultural studies are the progeny of sociology, they tend to employ the term to describe related but different sociological phenomena. Often these disciplines/fields draw from the very same taxonomic sources—such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Rodney Starke—for their understandings of what qualifies as a cult, yet scholars of religion will perhaps view with suspicion ethnologists’ appropriation of the term in cultural studies. Furthermore, while British use of the term in both academic and non-academic discourse has long since established the use of ‘cult’ to describe a group of adherents to various subcultures as acceptable—particularly ‘youth cults’ such as mods, rockers, skinheads, punks, etc.—the term has not been as comfortably accommodated in its non-pejorative and non-religious connotations in the United States, either popularly or, to a large extent, academically. Thus, in order to avoid potentially equivocal usage, I will attempt to define these terms now, and to not

only distinguish what I mean by these usages, but also to distinguish when and how they are employed in their different implications.

Contemporary scholars of religion will recognize that groups designated as cults are an integral part of Weber's (hierarchical) taxonomy of religious social systems—later augmented by theorists such as Starke—which are distinguishable from 'church' and 'sect' due to their tactical employment of doxa and/or praxis in consistent opposition to the larger society/ies of which they are a part, or from which they wish to distinguish themselves. Furthermore—as in the case of Catholic cults of saints—adherents generally focus on figures to such a degree that their influence/authority may arguably overshadow the figure(s) considered central by the church(es) from which cults can be distinguished. And although these figures may generally be considered marginal to churches and sects, one can readily identify cultic groups not by their emphasis on these figures alone, but often by adherence to particular ideological stances or by a series of practices—although this is often a distinguishing characteristic of sects as well. Indeed, it is the case that sociologists identify as cult groups that are not only secular, but which are also focused almost exclusively on ideology and practice.

Having associated with punk, its underground and mainstream forerunners, and its (post-punk) progeny for much of my youth and all of my adult life, and having shared views and cultural hallmarks of those most closely identified with the punk and post-punk rock subculture(s), I have made some of the same observations about the potential problems 'classic' CCCS-style subculture theories present. One of the points upon which these theorists—even post-subcultural theorists—generally agree is the self-defining nature of cults by their own adherents, but the emphasis of Marx and, especially Durkheim, is a top-down view that often robs the social actor of autonomy. My etically-derived observations have led me to favor the

neo-Weberian perspective somewhat, but this approach does not necessarily equate to a rejection of some of the more salient points of Marx and Durkheim.

Let me be clear, however: what I am describing is neither a purely etic approach, nor is it a purely phenomenological one. Rather, I am attempting to bring to bear a more robust theory regarding the autonomy of social actors that moves beyond even ‘deep’ socio-anthropological methods. This I will attempt to accomplish by counter-balancing more conventional approaches with previously emic perspectives viewed through an etic lens. This is precisely the approach that neo-Weberian researchers have generally advocated, and often for the selfsame reasons: social actors who have been involved with groups—particularly those which engage in social tactics—often provide valid testimony to their activities and motivations which are in keeping with responsible, non-phenomenological etic scholarship, but which otherwise might be squelched—intentionally or not—by scholars’ misinterpretation of those factors.

Another potential problem with modernist subculture theory is its tendency to reify cults and to fail to take into consideration individual participants’ perspectives, particularly in a postmodern context. Consequently, not only may the nuances and subtleties of the views and practices of those who are otherwise self-defined adherents or ‘members’ actively participating in subcultures be overlooked, but those whose interests/activities are more passive, or who seek more hybridized understandings of their use of subcultural ‘markers’ or patronage of various bands and other subculturally-oriented expressions, may be too readily viewed as either purely ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of an essentially-defined group. And while it is true that members of many of these subcultural groups do, themselves, enforce these essentialized distinctions of who is inside or outside of their peer group, it is also true that in actual practice these idealized essences are often less rigid than even their most stalwart supporters might recognize or want to admit.

Thus, the essentialized and modernist notions of subculture potentially do injustice to the richly hybridized environment of the subcultural milieu in which these markers are present.

This brings me to my next point about the value of viewing all of the social phenomena from more of a Wittgensteinian family relationship-based perspective than from an essential-definition one.

Using the ‘Family Resemblance’ Model of Ludwig Wittgenstein

As noted, essential definitions, while precise, often do injustice to the often porous and contingent boundaries of those things they attempt to define. This is especially true where normative human social systems such as religion and subcultures are concerned, but it is likewise problematic in cases where attempts are made to bring precision to such fuzzy taxonomic categories as ‘alive,’ etc. (For example, is a virus alive or not?)

In attempting to understand the differences between the ‘family resemblances’ (*Familienähnlichkeit*) pattern of Ludwig Wittgenstein (31-34 [§65-71]), further promoted by the likes of George Lakoff in discussions of linguistic logic versus essential definitions, it is helpful to think of the difference between the strike of a single bullet and the scattering of buckshot in a shotgun blast. In this analogy I will use the taxon ‘religion,’ but this model applies to subculture as well.

Essential definitions are like bullets hitting a target. The bullet strikes and leaves a clear and precise hole. There is little doubt as to what is inside and what is outside that profile. Something either is or isn't within the strike zone. Likewise, using essential definitions, something is, or isn't a religion, or a subculture, period. But the problem is twofold: first, it is assumed that ‘essences’ exist or, at least, that essences are structured by humans in a consistent, unequivocal manner.

Second, essential definitions present problems in their scope. Over-definition results from the attempt to make a definition large enough to include all the systems we want to call religion. This is like employing an artillery round against a squirrel: one is likely to vaporize the poor creature and take a lot of its neighbors with it. In other words, one might employ a definition that encompasses all religions (the squirrel), but one also encompasses systems (or groups, or individuals) one doesn't want to call religion (the squirrel's neighbors), such as philosophies, cultural traditions, and even secular humanism. For example, this is the source of the problem of taking functional equivalents to religion as *de facto* religions.

On the other hand, under-definition results from the attempt to make a more concise definition. This is like shooting an elephant with a low-caliber pistol round. The shooter—and not the elephant—is likely to wind up dead. With these under-definitions one ends up rejecting systems or traditions (the parts of the elephant unaffected by the small gun) that one definitely wants to call religion (the entire elephant, who is now entirely irritated).

Family resemblance-based definitions are more like a shotgun's buckshot blast, which spreads tiny lead pellets across the area targeted. The center of the shot profile tends to be concentrated, but as the profile spreads out, the impressions are more diffuse. Clearly, anything in the center is 'shot' or 'religion,' or outside and 'not shot' or 'not religion'. Eventually it is clear one has no impressions at all—one is no longer dealing with the family relationship of 'shot' or, by analogy, 'religion'. But those areas of the profile in between are where one can make fine distinctions, and one can do so by considering the distribution of the pellets. Each pellet-mark can be thought of as representing a specific point we associate with religions—say, supernatural concepts, cosmology/cosmogony, ritual, soteriology, cultural markers, etc. Enough of these pellet points together, under certain conditions, may mark something as a religion. If one

critical pellet-mark is missing, one may no longer wish to call something a religion but, perhaps, a philosophy, ritual, a functional equivalent of religion, a culture, or what have you.

Now let me be clear here: family resemblance-based definitions still do rely on some essential elements. They have to do so if one is to apply them in any linguistically coherent manner. (And after all, pellets are still like small, finite bullets.) But in the family relationship-based definition context these elements are used in a different way, in order to increase their punch where the target is ‘religion’ while still defining their overlap into ‘not religion, but closely related’ territory.

So, one can note that the shotgun blast radiates outward and that candidates for the label ‘religion’ may fall in various places. They’re all related in some way, but not all get the label ‘religion’ under all circumstances—only those toward the taxonomic center get this distinction universally.

The family resemblance model works not only to contextually define what is or isn’t to be considered a religion, it also helps define relationships among those things one does label religion. Thus, Samaritans may be included in the family of traditions we call ‘Judaism’ under some circumstances, but not under others—probably not under most conditions. But their family relationship is clearly established as being close.

(Post-)Subcultures, Cults, and Resistance

As previously noted, the term ‘youth cult’ has been routinely applied by cultural theorists to a number of groups, not least of which are of adherents to punk and its derivative musically-oriented subcultures. Theorists acknowledge that groups that can be defined as subcultures have existed for millennia, and I generally agree. However, subcultures such as the pre-World War II *Swingjugend* (Swing Kids) of Berlin and Hamburg aside, it is also generally acknowledged that the proliferation of musically-oriented youth styles and subcultures are an explicitly post-World

War II capitalist phenomenon. These groups, although often loosely-knit and by no means centrally organized, exist in collusion with, and in opposition to, the dominant socio-economic paradigm.

The term subculture came into use as early as 1950 when sociologist David Riesman, author of the watershed *The Lonely Crowd*⁴, distinguished certain groups of social actors from mainstream social groups. In “Listening to Popular Music,” an article he published the same year, Riesman made explicit the role music plays in subcultures’ tactical approach toward the mainstream. In that article he notes that the (mainstream-oriented) music industry “seems to be able to mold popular taste and to eliminate free choice by consumers.” But he also adds, “Even in the field of popular music, there is always a minority channel over which less popular tastes get a hearing, eventually perhaps to become majority tastes” (Riesman, 1950: 361). This is precisely what has occurred, for example, in the case where ‘alternative’ bands came to dominate popular ‘Top 40’ radio and music video venues. For, although much of what is labeled as alternative music is still relatively obscure and resistant to mainstreaming in the classical Certeauian sense, a great deal of alternative music has become the de facto mainstream popular music of today.

While it is clear that the term subculture has been applied to a much larger demographic range, the postwar context of ‘subculture’ is primarily one of teen- and young adult-oriented groups, as that demographic emerged as a more or less distinct population with what is recognized a definable ‘voice’, based upon values such as aesthetic style and philosophy, and which in some way sets them apart from dominant social paradigms. This increased autonomy of both of the groups, and of the individual actors of whom the groups are comprised, hinges upon

⁴ Riesman, David, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, revised edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001 [1950]).

their increased access to expendable capital in the years since the war. Indeed, the very terms ‘youth’ and ‘teen’ are post-war constructs which reflect the unprecedented socio-economic empowerment of the demographic they are meant to represent—generally adolescents, or minors, and post-adolescent adults in their early twenties.⁵ Again, however, this demographic is by no means exhaustive in respect to the youth cults and especially in respect to subcultures in general. This point is important to bear in mind when I turn to the ethnographic element of my research and introduce respondents who actively engage in subculturally-oriented beliefs and practices, and who are well into their thirties, forties and fifties.

Although there were musically-oriented subcultures prior to the postwar era—for example the previously mentioned Swing Kids—the age of the youth cults blossomed beginning in the late 1950’s and lasted into the postmodern period when the idea of a monolithic mainstream culture with unified subcultural resistance came to be seen as less and less tenable. Prior to the punk revolution, high-profile cults such as Britain’s Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers, and Skinheads; Jamaica’s Rude Boys and (religiously-oriented) Rastafarians; and America’s Beats and Hippies, came of age. Many of these cults continue to exist—sometimes may even be seen to thrive—although the level to which they can still be described in purely subcultural ways may vary depending upon how many of the elements of their cult/movement have been (re-)integrated into more or less mainstream culture.

This latter point—the (re-)integration of subcultural elements—philosophy, styles, music—into mainstream culture is in keeping with Riesman’s prediction. It is also a reflection of

⁵ Of course the term “youth” previously existed, but with different connotations. The adjectival application of the term was common enough prior to the war, but its use as noun to refer to individuals of a specifically (empowered) age group was explicit only following the war. “Teenager” and, especially, “teen” as applied to a specific demographic, were virtually unheard.

the classic de Certeau tactic-strategy dynamic⁶, although it is critical that one understands that tactics are not the sole purview of some, while strategies the purview of others, but that they are combined and utilized in fluid situations. (Furthermore, post-subculturalists point out that to propose a pure mainstream-subculture dichotomy is misleading, if not entirely false.)

At any rate, acceptance by mainstream audiences is ‘fatal’ to many subcultures, often robbing the subcultures of their very *raison d’être*. This is especially true of those subcultures which are the most mainstream-culture resistant, such as is the case of punk, to which I will now draw my readers’ attention

Establishing a Genealogy of the Punk and Post-Punk Movements

To clarify, the original punk revolution spanned, roughly, the years 1974-1979, as the hippie movement ebbed and/or mainstream appropriation of its myriad values. As the original punk movement waned, it fragmented into a number of post-punk movements and styles, most of which were explicitly musically oriented.

The first generation of the post-punk scene was made up mostly of the very same musicians and fans that had been involved with the original punk movement. What exactly qualifies as post-punk varies depending upon who uses the term, and in what context it is used. For the purposes of this thesis, however, post-punk is defined fairly broadly as all music movements following, and peripheral to, the original punk movement, and those that generally conform to the primary punk values which emphasize a do-it-yourself ethic; accessibility of

⁶ See: de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life* translated by Steven Rendall. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). De Certeau’s argument was that tactics are used, particularly by subalterns, against overarching constructed social strategies where those strategies are unable to fully permeate. He wrote, “The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power” (36-7). This accords with both military and social sciences uses of the term, but unlike the military use of the term, social tactics are not meant to overcome and replace strategies—although they may eventually do so. Strategists, on the other hand, intentionally incorporate successful tactics in both the military and social sciences uses of the term. It should also be understood that although the tactic-strategy paradigm is particularly appropriate to subaltern contexts, it is applicable to virtually any power-differential dynamic, real or perceived, and it has thusly laid the foundations for punk (and other [post-]subcultural)an applied tactic ethos.

musical and lyrical content and styles over high-profile musicianship, obsequious lyrics, and expensive, highly-commoditized styles; egalitarianism and removal of ‘rock star’ status; smaller and more intimate performance spaces. Some or all of these elements may be present.

Ultimately, purely aesthetic elements—construction of the actual music—also marks post-punk styles.

Although it is misleading to pin the original punk ‘scene’ to one specific place or time, music historians and social scientists generally agree that what came to be known as the original punk scene developed in New York City, circa 1974, where musicians and fans found fertile ground in which they could experiment with, promote, and export their artistic, social, and political manifestos. Indeed, the use of the term ‘punk’ in association with the nascent genre and movement is generally believed to have begun there also, often credited—with some protest—to *Punk* magazine co-founders Roderick Edward ‘Legs’ McNeil and John Holmstrom (Heylin, 1993: 242), although it was previously used by *Creem* magazine’s Lester Bangs (1970), and Dave Marsh (Shapiro, 2006: 492), and—even earlier, by Ed Saunders of the New York ‘proto-punk’ band the Fugs. Evidence of the negotiatory aspects intrinsic to punk are palpable in an interview by media historian Clinton Heylin, in which Holmstrom described the genesis and evolution of the term in the early scene:

Punk was rock & roll, like [Iggy Pop and] the Stooges and garage-rock. Basically any hard rock & roll.... But the term got very narrowly defined. We thought that it was a general term for anything that was hard rock & roll. Then it became the Sex Pistols and everybody who sounded like the Sex Pistols (Heylin, 1993: 242).

Holmstrom highlights the transformation of the music culture that coalesced into the punk cult (and subsequently punk- and post-punk subgenres and subcultures), and he notes punk’s morphing definition as its meaning is negotiated by those who applied it to different bands, music, and cultural phenomena, to varying degrees of acceptance.

There were constituent elements that were central to punk in its inception, however, and they have remained fairly consistent—memetic features which spread and, although mutating, still resembled their myriad forebears, especially in terms of practices and their aesthetic underpinnings. Indeed, the very policy of negotiation is a feature implicit in these permutations, as the notion that one’s social status and the status of one’s subcultural peers can and should be open to re-definition by the individual and the subculture through the application of tactical means in the face of dominant cultural strategic paradigms. In other words, punks generally assume that in a quest for personal authenticity and autonomy, identity can and should be negotiated and ‘authority,’ a codeword for dominant paradigm(s), should be questioned and opposed—hence the philosophical emphasis on anarchism and not Marx (who is often perceived as being too ‘establishment’ despite the multiple Marxian elements embraced by punk and post-punk music movements). This tactical philosophy, I will later illustrate, has impacted both the decision of some involved in these subcultures to look outside dominant western paradigms with their often explicit or implicit Christian assumptions, and the actual process of incorporating ‘traditional’ religio-cultural elements, including those associated with Hinduism.

Although many punks do not necessarily recognize them as such, the punk movement and its associated subcultures operate on some basic Marxian assumptions. As Craig O’Hara correctly pointed out in his manifesto *The Philosophy of Punk*, most adherents of the various punk ethics identify, to one extent or another, with anarchism and/or social libertarianism, while few “promote the continuation of any form of capitalism or communism” (O’Hara 1999: 71).

But the class-related dialogues one encounters throughout the punk and hardcore music scenes are Marxian to one extent or another. Furthermore, the Marxian notion of alienation of workers from the commoditized fruits of their labor is also central to the genesis and

continuation of punk as a movement, and not merely a style or music distinguishable purely in terms of its aesthetic elements. The production and consumption of music subculture-related goods is probably more important to insiders where, at the very least, services are concerned. This has been the hallmark of punk and post-punk music and movements as well. Many of the original musicians who formed the nascent punk scene drew from radically different musical influences, but they shared an ‘outsider’ status, alienated from mainstream music that they generally regarded as tripe, major record labels, and most paying venues. Turning to their own resources, these musicians built a following, beginning, or at least developing most rapidly, in New York City. Their tactical gambit paid off. Many did accept contracts with major record labels, but others, particularly as the movement spread, resisted the ‘Big Six’ major labels, preferring to control their own means of production. (Thompson, 2004: 23-24). The idea that ‘small is beautiful’ was also a driving factor, and punks tended to prefer their venues small even when large venues were available. Punks usually tend to organize their own gigs and create their own press via zines, negotiating their way through the capitalist maze, particularly as the punk scene, and the scenes it spawned, became more established with cooperative schema and lines of communication.

Although one could draw upon any number of strands of Euro-American culture as seminal to the development of punk rock and the punk movement/subculture and its antecedents, the beat, or beatnik, subculture is probably the most logical choice as an early forerunner of many of the strains of thought that coalesced in the ethos of later subcultures, including the yippie, hippie, punk, and many post-punk movements. In choosing this emphasis, in no way do I intend to dismiss earlier precedents, such as the Dada and Situationist movements, which have

been highlighted as influences on punk, most notably by Greil Marcus⁷, but I wish to emphasize fully-developed subcultures, and not merely movements and, the cases where I do wish to discuss movements, I will emphasize those which are most closely associated with the post-war youth cults or Hinduism when discussing religious precedents, or both. However, the most direct, widespread and specifically Anglo-American of punk and post-punk movements (and after all, punk developed first in the United States, and then spread to and mutated in the United Kingdom where its more spectacular elements were emphasized) owe much of their existence, practices, and philosophies, to one extent or another, to the post-war Beat movement (which was also a subculture in its own right) and its immediate successor in the form of the hippie (or hippy) subculture. A number of genealogical and analogous connections do make it clear that punk subculture developed from the ashes, as it were, of these precedents. But more telling is the large number of early punks of the mid-to-late-70's—either self-defined or defined through their proximity to punk subculture—who were previously involved in the hippie subculture and who later became disillusioned with that movement or simply 'fell away' as its popularity waned and punk became the 'next big thing.'

Additionally, the lesser-known and spectacle-oriented Yippies—more of a movement and an informal organization than a subculture, per se—were also a strong influence. Their name is derived from the Youth International Party, the brainchild of Paul Krassner and Anita and Abbie Hoffman. The Yippie movement was conceived to be a more politically radical alternative to the 'mainstream' hippie subculture. I will proroque discussion of the direct link between Yippies and punks for the time being, but do I wish to note here that when one compares the punk movement

⁷ See: Marcus, Greil. *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

in its most politically activist aspects with the Yippie movement, it bears a greater philosophical resemblance to the punk than its beat and hippie forebears.

As the punk movement has long been an explicit rejection of hippie values, embrace of the influence of hippies on punks might strike observers as ironic in light of the realization that for many self-defined punks the line “never trust a hippie” is practically a mantra, engendering in the punk ethos—so far as one can call any perspective in the context of punk and post-punk singular dogma—a deeply-engrained suspicion of, if not outright hostility toward, the ‘hippie generation’ and its real or perceived failings. This is not so unusual, however, when one reflects on numerous other encounters of hostile rejection of genealogical precedents despite a shared history and a number of values in common, such as the historical antagonism between Protestants and Catholics. And indulging in a measure of blatant reification, the more amiable relationship between punk subculture and Beat subculture, despite open antagonism toward the interim hippie generation is not unreasonably analogous to the stereotypical close relationship between a child and his or her grandparents at the expense of the child’s parent. I will later address how actors in the punk and post-punk subculture broach the taboo of the perceived ‘hippie-like’ nature of Hinduism, and the hippies’ subcultural embrace of Hinduism and other eastern religious traditions, vis-à-vis emphasis/de-emphasis of the punk paradigm particularly engendered in post-punk subcultures (or alternately, according to many neo-Weberian theorists, *post-subculture*) and/or emphasis of Beat elements still extant in punk subculture.

So to clarify, there are two salient points here. First, a large number of individuals who made up what eventually became identified as the punk subculture were reacting not only against dominant social norms (however they may have seen them as defined and expressed), they were also reacting against other subcultural norms—particularly those of the hippies—or at least the

failure of adherents to precedent subcultures to live up to their own presumed aims and value systems. Second, despite stated rejection of norms of both the dominant ‘mainstream’ and other counter-cultures/subcultures, even the punk subculture accepted many of its nemesis’ assumptions including (the) modernist paradigm(s), often revealing itself as a negative reflection of those values. Situated though it was on the cusp of the postmodern era and self-consciously testing many theories held in common with postmodernism(s), punk subculture has nonetheless historically reflected a predominantly modernist worldview. In its most politically-oriented expressions, this perspective is fundamentally rooted in modernist (and western) notions of political liberalism, but with a radically libertarian twist. Although much of its central impetus hinges on Marxian or neo-Marxian dialectical interpretations of class, race and gender, as Peña and Malott (2004) observe punks, like their hippie precedents, have executed this pedagogy imperfectly, and this failure is rooted, in part, in punks’ emphasis on independence of thought and action. Orthodox Marxists in punk are generally rare, however, and the overt emphasis of most actors in the punk and hardcore scenes has been on anarchism as the socio-political ideal.

Straightforward histories of the 1960’s which use a strict 1960-1969 decade-based chronologies as their basis aside, many historians who have focused on the “social history” aspects of the era have suggested that alternate chronological breakdowns might be better suited to explain the post-liberal socio-political and cultural shift from the ‘consciousness’ and events of that time. One traditional chronology traces this era only as far as 1968, yet some histories—the most notable being recent revisions being supplied by Philip Jenkins (2006) and Mark Lytle (2006)—have questioned the usefulness of such a timeline. They argue that the sixties era is better understood if one extends it well into the seventies. For example, Jenkins, author of *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, rightly

declares that while these distinctions are fairly arbitrary since ‘history’ is a continuum, if one is to assign such benchmarks it is more useful to mark the ‘end of the sixties’ circa 1974-75 because any timeline which omits such critical events as the Woodstock festival of 1969 and the end of American involvement in the Vietnam War, with the ‘Vietnamization’ of the War occurring 1973-75, is bound to seem incomplete. Furthermore, he notes that the Watergate scandal and other events of the early- to mid-seventies are better understood in reference to their extension from the Vietnam war and the sixties, and that the years and events following the Watergate era took on a markedly different tenor, one in which political and social conservatism, pervaded by a growing sense of cynicism, (re-)established their dominance. Jenkins adds,

Political rhetoric was permeated by themes of external threat, national vulnerability, subversion, and internal decadence. These concerns focused on a number of outside enemies, most obviously the Soviet Union, but there were countless enemies within. In the political rhetoric of the time, these diverse groups personified the morality and outright evil that had arisen in consequence of the moral and political decadence of recent years. Conditions were bad, it seemed, because sixties values had let them get so bad (11).

Adding to the sense of disorientation and lack of grounding many Americans felt was the shock and disappointment of the loss of the long and unpopular war in Indochina. Culturally, then, the post-Vietnam United States (and by proxy North America in general) underwent a cooling period following the socio-political radicalism, scandals, and stagflation of the mid-sixties to mid-seventies. While it is clear that increasing post-World War II liberalization of American society continued—and in many respects the social engineering ‘60’s and ‘70’s civil rights radicalism had advocated had only just begun to gain momentum—a general attitude which was particularly palpable in the growing conservative and neo-conservative political movements that took root.

Meanwhile, the other major center of punk, Great Britain, had been subject to a long bout of economic recession, and record levels of unemployment and citizens on the dole. Labour's approach to Keynesian democratic socialism, it seemed, had failed the British. Added to this mix were 'race riots' involving newly immigrated West Indians and South Asians (to which I will later refer in Chapters 2 and 3).

Although thinking of punk as monolithically anti-racist is problematic—as Roger Sabin (1999, 120-39), Peña and Mallott (2004, 80-1), and others have illustrated—there was a marked lack of overt patriotism and race consciousness among the bulk of those who would later make up Britain's burgeoning punk movement other than the case of much of the working-class-oriented 'Oi!' punk subgenre popular among skinheads and some punks. Particularly in the case with punk identity, sympathy for, and identification with, subaltern populations sometimes was markedly strong. Indeed, West Indian immigrant contributions—through either bilateral exchange or cultural appropriation—have contributed much to the music and styles of punk and other British cults, and many involved in these cults were keenly aware of that fact.

While beats more explicitly identified with African-Americans in terms of their aesthetic values, including their name, derived from African-Americans slang for 'downtrodden' (although also communicating a quasi-religious, sanctified tone, as in *beatified*) and the hippies drew upon an idea of universal brotherhood, punks, too, tend to identify with those disenfranchised and alienated elements at the social margins, albeit with a less explicitly racially-framed and more postmodern take on the human condition. Their ideals tend to focus on liberal notions of freedom, although these notions are often couched in apocalyptic and/or nihilistic terms.

Punk's New York Roots

Most of the early New York punk scene centered on a club with the ungainly name 'Country Bluegrass Blues and Other Music For Uplifting Gormandizers,' but shortened on its awning as CBGB & OMFUG and better known to its patrons simply as CBGB. Eulogizing CBGB founder Hilly Kristal who died in August 2007, musician and actor 'Little Steven' Van Zandt acknowledged the central role the club played in the formation and dissemination of punk music and subcultural identity, simultaneously acknowledging the sometimes disparate genres and aesthetic strains which were grouped in its domain.

He loved Country music, Bluegrass, and Blues, you know as in CBGB, and had no interest whatsoever in young tattered misfits playing bad Rock and Roll but that's what he got. There must have been some pride later on, knowing on your little stage, in your little joint, in the sleaziest part of town, Richard Hell, Television, and Patti Smith would invent Indie-Art-Punk. Blondie and Talking Heads would invent Pop-Art-Punk, and The Ramones would invent Punk. But in the beginning the club's clientele pretty much matched it's [sic] talent. Junkies, drunks, transvestite hookers, the homeless, the tired, the poor ('Little Steven' [Van Zandt], 2007).

In the same eulogy Van Zandt went on to tie the early punk bands to their subsequent post-punk relatives. "Anyone who digs Green Day, Pearl Jam, Arcade Fire or U2 owes him a lot. We all owe him a lot" (Ibid.)

The first wave of punk spread from the United States to the United Kingdom, where many of its most archetypal stylistic features developed, aided by the active imagination of such art school graduates as Malcolm McLaren and fashion designer Vivienne Westwood. McLaren had been so inspired by the U.S. punk movement he resolved to import it to the U.K. via managing a European tour of the (early/proto-) punk band New York Dolls, but when the tour fell apart, he began to promote a local band, the Sex Pistols, whose style he carefully cultivated for the British context. It was the Sex Pistols who became the emblematic punk band. McLaren's and others' obvious commoditization of the bands and other elements aside, the movement was

strikingly successful in terms of its ability to reclaim a music industry which had failed to appreciate their aesthetic tastes and socio-political sensitivities.

The original punk movement, although never homogenous, eventually fragmented even more into new styles and subcultures. The earliest breakaway ‘sects’ often incorporated the punk descriptor and so, for example, such post-punk forms as hardcore (punk) and gothic (punk) acknowledged their roots. Some, especially the second- and third-generation permutations, did not necessarily make explicit their roots and, furthermore, often borrowed heavily from styles—both in terms of the music and other subcultural elements—of the very trends against which most punks claimed to be reacting, such as progressive and even disco. (Some of the highest-profile post-punk alternative music came in the form of hardcore, gothic and industrial, emo, grunge, and the Riot Grrl movement, but it is the hardcore scene—arguably punk’s most direct descendent—that I am most interested in as a first generation post-punk movement.)

Hardcore developed primarily in the United States, as a harder, faster, more aggressive form of the punk popular in the late 1970’s. The hardcore scene is generally agreed to have arisen just as the original punk scene ebbed in about 1978 or 1979, only to later ebb in the mid- to late-1980’s. However, vibrant hardcore punk scenes still exist in every major U.S. city and across the globe, and furthermore, hardcore spawned other major movements, one of which is the basis for most of the so-called ‘Krishnacore’ phenomenon, a major source of dissemination of Hindu religious identity in the post-punk era.

Other post-punk movements, however, also promoted Hindu elements. Dance music which—inexplicably as far as early punks would have been concerned—mixed disco and other dance styles with alternative beats, hip-hop, and, often, with indigenous ‘world music’ sounds developed a cult following in the United Kingdom in the early 1990’s, spread globally, and

remains very popular today. Generally termed 'rave,' 'house music,' or 'techno,' and associated with raves and raver culture, this music appealed to South Asian immigrants who often performed it. Most of this new music, far from merely expressing (token) solidarity with subalterns, actually actively incorporated ethnic and religious minorities, including Hindus.

CHAPTER 2
PUNK ROCK HOMO RELIGIOSUS: PUNK/POST-PUNK AND RELIGION

What Do I Mean by ‘Religion’?

Before moving on to incorporation of Hinduism and/or Hindu-related elements into punk and post-punk genres by performers¹ and fans—who, typically in the DIY-oriented (post-)subcultural milieu, are performers as well—I will address the presence, or lack thereof, of religious elements in punk and post-punk (sub)genres and (post-)subcultures. Before embarking on this task, however, it is necessary to address how I use the term ‘religion’ and to note the problems that inherent in this, and other, uses of the term.

As I observed in the previous chapter, the music and subculture of the punk revolution of the late 1970’s reflected a largely atheistic and non-religious, if not actively anti-religious, worldview. Throughout the bulk of this thesis I will generally approach the term ‘religion’ from a more or less ‘traditional’ sense that relies on a comparative ‘world religions’ taxonomy and hermeneutic, and which distinguishes religion clearly from ‘secular’. First, however, I will discuss one of many critiques of this usage—in this case a functional one—and later in this thesis I will return to some of the claims of this and other challenges to the ‘world religions’ taxonomy and consider some of the more salient points raised in opposition to this universalistic breakdown.

Underground Music as Religion

What, precisely, is meant by the terms ‘religion’ and ‘religious’ is open to interpretation. If one subscribes to, say, a sociological theory of religion as broad as that of David Chidester,

¹ By ‘performers’ I mean to include not only musicians and singers but also artists such as those who create much of the techno and other electronica and ‘spoken word’ performance artists. In the case of much of techno-electronica, the clarification is made as many of these artists do not sing or play instruments in the more conventional sense as the frequent monikers used to identify them, ‘deejay’/‘d.j.’ (from ‘disc jockey’) or ‘emcee’/‘m.c.’ (‘master or ceremonies’), indicate

one might extend ‘common sense’ notions of the domain of religion and religious expression and resituate the question of what is ‘authentic’ religion. As Chidester noted, “What counts as religion... is the focus of the problem of authenticity in religion and American popular culture” (Chidester, 2005: 9). Religious authenticity is a sticky and often ambiguous classification. Based upon this ambiguity, Chidester has constructed a case for the religious nature of, among other things, rock ‘n’ roll—or at least some forms of it—posing the idea that fetishization and other transcendent impulses within popular culture should be considered synonymous with religiosity.

Indeed, a social constructivist case may be proposed for the transcendent nature of rock ‘n’ roll, although perhaps Chidester, ‘channeling’ Marcel Mauss² and taking Dave Marsh’s thesis³ on the *potlatch* nature of the song “Louie Louie” in his history of that song too much to heart. Indeed, the entire title of the book hints at Marsh’s tongue-in-cheek intentions: *Louie Louie: The History and Mythology of the World's Most Famous Rock'n'Roll Song; Including the Full Details of Its Torture and Persecution at the Hands of the Kingsmen, J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I., and a Cast of Millions; and Introducing, for the First Time Anywhere, the Actual Dirty Lyrics*.

While it is important to acknowledge that Mauss discussed the concept of potlatch as a religious act—that is, an act which is an extension of a religious culture—it is important to make a distinction between the celebration of potlatch and the religion of those Northwestern tribes for whom it was a ritual. Furthermore, Marsh’s point about the potlatch, while accurate, still does not reflect religiosity per se. Indeed, Marsh’s point about the potlatch-like tendencies in rock

² See: discussions of potlatch ritual in Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2005 [1954]).

³ See: Marsh, Dave. *Louie Louie: The History and Mythology of the World's Most Famous Rock'n'Roll Song; Including the Full Details of Its Torture and Persecution at the Hands of the Kingsmen, J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I., and a Cast of Millions; and Introducing, for the First Time Anywhere, the Actual Dirty Lyrics* (New York: Hyperion, 1993).

genres is a recurring theme to which Greil Marcus and Simon Frith return in their books, respectively, *Lipstick Traces*⁴ and *Performing Rites*⁵. None of these writers, Marsh, Marcus, or Frith, makes an explicitly religious claim on the part of rock, however; instead they highlight a philosophical and performative aspect of rock genres—especially punk and its antecedents—which emphasizes a narcissistic and potentially transformative process. This does not necessarily a religion make, and forced to defend this assertion, I again point to the lack of certain elements typical of those practices and doctrines categorically deemed religion within the context of their multiple shared ‘family resemblances,’ including, but not limited to, supernatural and continuity aspects.

**‘Rock of Ages’:
The ‘Return’ of Religious Discourse to Punk/ Post-Punk Alternative Music**

Despite Chidester’s point that one should take some forms of rock that correspond—as does much of the punk genre whose performers and fans consciously cultivated potlatch-style spectacle—one should still note that 1970’s punks rejected forms of religions generally and popularly recognized as such—particularly institutionalized forms. Chidester may be correct that the distinction between religion and its ‘functional equivalent’ is a illusory one but I am most interested in forms of religions popularly recognized as such by their adherents, and I observe punks’ early ambivalence or hostility toward religion as they have generally recognized it—that is, religion in its more institutionalized forms which include beliefs in ‘the sacred’ (anathema to the many punks who have tended to declare that nothing is sacred), god(s), and the supernatural. While punks may have been *entirely* engaged in a type of religious ritual as defined by

⁴ See: Marcus, Greil. *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁵ See: Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996)

Chidester, again, in the past their embrace of more classically-defined constructions of ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’—the primary focus of my search for religiosity in general, and Hinduism in particular, in the punk and post-punk milieu—has been a rarity.

Yet religions are persistent and pernicious social phenomena. It is perhaps unsurprising that, as punk at its most nihilistic took its toll on a generation of performers and fans, the already disparate form spawned subgenres and sub-subgenres, and a new generation of music fans applied the aesthetics and ethos of the punk revolution to their own circumstances; religion would again become an acceptable source of inspiration and form of expression within the domain of punk and post-punk worldview.

**‘The Most Jewish of Rock Movements’:
Steven Beeber on Judaism and Jewish Cultural Identity in Punk**

Like the term ‘Hindu’, the term ‘Jew’ presents a problem to scholars of the sociology of religion in the sense that it is widely used to describe adherents to a specific religious worldview, and members of a specific ethnic community whose ancestors are traceable to a specific geographic location, but not necessarily both simultaneously. Like the ‘Hindu’ distinction, the problem of distinguishing where religious worldview and ethnic community diverge is rife with problems, even when approached from a ‘family relationship’ perspective. Particularly if one considers the wider functional definitions of religion which consider sets of rituals and beliefs that focus on ethnic identity as, at the very least, functional equivalents—if not *de facto*—religion, the distinction between a ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ Jew is indeed difficult to draw. If the latter is the case, then the origins of the punk movement in its New York context were decidedly Jewish and religious.

As Steven Beeber (2006) illustrates in *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB’s: A Secret History of Jewish Punk*, although the majority of the figures central to the pre- or proto-punk and punk

music and subcultures have overwhelmingly defined themselves as secular (and atheist), a significant share of them have been ethnically-defined Jews who brought to bear cultural assumptions of a sense of Jewish identity that has often been overlooked by not only gentiles involved in these movements but by punk's Jewish originators themselves.

Although Beeber views punk's 'Jewishness' as one of the decisive factors in its jump 'across the pond' to the United Kingdom—especially in the hands of one of British punk's central promoters, Malcolm McLaren (himself Jewish)—its roots became more obscured as it began to be adapted to the United Kingdom's social context. In a chapter entitled "Write Yiddish, Cast British: How England Stole Jewish Punk," Beeber notes that, despite the appropriation of American punk styles into a U.K. movement that was developing in tandem, Jewish punks faced greater hostility there (196). (However, Beeber and others have also noted that Jewish punks in Britain often forged alliances with the Rastafarians, who will be discussed in the next section, as their religious idioms are similarly drawn from Torah.) According to Beeber, by the time the punk revolution waned and the post-punk era emerged, the wider spread of punk music and (sub)culture and their adaptation to ideas, geographic locations, and cultural contexts had 'robbed' punk of its original 'Jewishness'. Historical revisionism and Jewish punks' lack of vocal promotion of their ethnic identities did the rest.

'Rock for Light': Rastafarianism and Punk/Post-punk

Again, despite the outward rejection of religion, there was, from the very beginning, a certain level of tolerance for the religions of 'outsider' communities—that of Rastafarians in particular. This was especially true in the United Kingdom, but to a large extent in North America as well, where punk 'white minority' consciousness was often emphasized; as it was in

the case of beats' and hippies' philosophies, identification with the racial 'other'⁶ was commonly promoted and idealized. Rastafarians' culture, and particularly their reggae music, inspired many other youth cults/subcultures, and sharing of a scene—the 'space' in which social actors engage in social interaction specific to subcultures.

Two major Rastafarians influences, revolving around men of African descent, emerged in the punk and hardcore (post-)punk context. Don Letts, a disc jockey at the legendary London punk venue, the Roxy, played (Rastafarian) reggae music between bands' sets there, and he and his music won the admiration of a great many punk fans who often covered reggae songs or incorporated reggae rhythms and some Rastafarian messages into their own original works. Letts eventually went on to manage England's first major all-woman band, the Slits, to direct and star in punk-related films, and to perform in Clash guitarist Mick Jones' post-punk band Big Audio Dynamite.

In Washington, D.C., the punk and hardcore (post-)punk band Bad Brains was formed in 1977 by Paul 'H.R.' Hudson, his brother Earl Hudson, Darryl Jenifer, and Gary 'Dr. Know' Miller—all African-Americans who adhered, to one degree or another, to Rastafarian religious beliefs and practices. In 1979, due to alleged blacklisting by D.C. area clubs, the band relocated to their current home in New York City. As it turns out, the band, whose members still perform together today, strongly inspired the growth of Hindu-punk hybridity, as I shall illustrate in Chapter 3.

Despite the Rastafarian religiosity of these figures, however, punks have rarely ever taken to heart the orthodox cosmological, theological, and soteriological claims of Rastafarians. In

⁶ As noted in my previous chapter, this identification with a racial or cultural 'other' did not necessarily equate to shared subcultural space, for a variety of reasons. Despite its Marxian critiques, much of punk and its ostensibly non-racist (post-)subcultural antecedents rarely broke free of its class- and race-based origins, although many adherents made noble attempts to expand its reach.

keeping with their general anti-religion trajectory, punks generally eschewed Rastafarianism even as they appropriated Jamaican/Rastafarian rhythms and *patois* and, occasionally, employing the Babylon metaphor in a more Marxian sense. Perhaps the greatest potential exception to this may be seen in post-punk fusion reggae and in the Two Tone ska revival of 1979-1982; but those engaged in the former still rarely accepted Rastafarian religious claims unless they were of African descent, and those engaged in the latter were still primarily white youths who tended to prefer their music danceable, without all of the religious trappings.

Although a few adherents did eventually join the ‘bredren’—the community of Rastafarians—it never became a major religious draw for any of the punk or post-punk movements, particularly if they were—as most were—predominantly white. While Rastafarianism has become a more acceptable religious alternative in the (post-)subcultures associated with some later techno/rave genres, it never fully caught on as the default religious perspective in any major genre or subgenre of punk or post-punk music.

From Bad Religion to Positive Spirituality: Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity in Punk and Post-Punk Music

Other religious perspectives and discourses emerged in the post-punk milieu, however, and I will briefly address them here and later, in Chapter 3, I will expand upon those which are of more immediate relevance to the presence of Hinduism, or elements thereof, in post-punk (sub)genres. More recent punk (paradoxically, *post-punk* punk) and hardcore (post-)punk bands and fans have embraced Buddhism and Islam. Even explicitly Christian perspectives have been promoted.

Punks’ embrace of Buddhism, or elements of Buddhism, has not been as rare as many other religious traditions, perhaps due to the combination of its ‘leftover’ influence via the Beats and its reputation, either actual or perceived, as more of a (non-theistic) philosophy than a

religion. Two adherents to hardcore (post-)punk subculture—Brad Warner, of the Ohio band Zero Defex and an adherent of the Japanese *Sōtō* Zen promulgated by Dōgen Kigen, and Noah Levine, son of the beat-Buddhist author Steven Levine and adherent of Indian *vipāśyanā* (insight) Buddhism—have established meditation centers, lectured, produced documentaries on Buddhism and their (post-)subcultures, and have written books detailing the development of their Buddhist identities. Levine’s *Dharma Punx: A Memoir*⁷ and *Against the Stream: A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries*⁸, and Warner’s *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, and the Truth About Reality*⁹ and *Sit Down and Shut Up: Punk Rock Commentaries on Buddha, God, Truth, Sex, Death, and Dogen’s Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye*¹⁰ have gained the authors additional followers for their respective schools from their (post-)subcultural peers, as well as promoted greater cultural literacy among Buddhists outside of their (post-)subcultural orientations. It is significant that, like many (post-)subculturists who identify with Hindu religious traditions, and whose cases will be discussed in the following chapters, Levine and Warner both cite, to one extent or another, both the chaos of the punk lifestyle and the oft-cited punk ethic of pursuit of truth as playing a pivotal role in their decision to pursue their religious practices.

Punk and post-punk (post-)subcultures eventually spread into traditionally Muslim countries. Even in the 1980’s I had a Lebanese Muslim punk friend in my native North Carolina scene who often kept the company of the Chapel Hill, North Carolina, skinhead ‘boot crew’.

⁷ See: Levine, Noah. *Dharma Punx: A Memoir* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

⁸ See: Levine, Noah. *Against the Stream: A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

⁹ See: Warner, Brad. *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, and the Truth About Reality* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003).

¹⁰ See: Warner, Brad. *Sit Down and Shut Up: Punk Rock Commentaries on Buddha, God, Truth, Sex, Death, and Dogen’s Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2007).

However, explicitly Islamic punk—often called ‘Taqwacore’—is a recent American development arising from within the hardcore subgenre. In a case of life mirroring fiction, Islam-oriented punk bands began to spring up following the publication of Michael Muhammad Knight’s 2002 novel *The Taqwacores*¹¹, which details the lives of Muslim adherents to a Muslim-punk underground scene which had yet to be established. Inspired by Knight’s vision, a San Antonio, Texas, punk named Kourosch Poursalchi established his one-man band, Vote Hezbollah by recording a poem from Knight’s novel, “Mohammad was a Punk Rocker,” and posting it to MySpace.com where it attracted the attention of like-minded fans of punk music, some of whom formed their own bands. Thus, the actual Taqwacore scene emerged and grew to include other bands such as Kominas, Face Full of Shotgun, and Secret Trial Five, to name a few.

Taqwacore performers and fans, similarly to many of those who negotiate a Hindu-punk identity, often draw upon what might be seen as disparate and even conflicting influences—especially if one assumes a default orthodox definition of either the religions or the (post-)subcultures from which they have taken those influences. Unlike many of the cases I will detail (prior to the emergence of South Asian techno and dub) who identify as Hindus or practitioners of *Sanatana Dharma*, or appropriate from Hindu religious traditions, the vast majority of Taqwacore musicians and fans come from Muslim families. They can be seen negotiating their religio-cultural identities through their (post)subcultural identities, rather than, as tends to be the case with the non-South Asian Hindu-oriented (post-)subculturists who tend to negotiate their (post-)subcultural identities through a western religio-cultural lens.

¹¹ Knight, Michael Muhammad. *The Taqwacores* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2002).

Christianity, too, has ‘returned’ to post-punk music and subcultures. Of course many punks came from Christian families and surely some of them accepted doctrines and engaged in Christian religious practices but, again, explicitly Christian messages and public embrace of Christianity were rare or even non-existent in the music of the early punk revolution and it was more often the case—as it still is, frequently—that Christianity is subject to hostility in punk and post-punk (post-)subcultures.

Perhaps one of the earliest examples of a hardcore (post-)punk band making their religious beliefs explicit is the New York band Warzone, whose lead singer, Raymond ‘Raybeez’ Barbieri often sang about his ‘faith’ keeping him alive ‘on the streets’ of New York’s Lower East Side. Much of the emergence of Christian-oriented bands is the result of the habitus promoted by Warzone and other ‘posi-core’ and ‘straightedge’ bands that overlap the ethical philosophies of many contemporary Christians. Today, Christian bands and fans have formed their own subgenres—within hardcore, ‘pop’ punk, and ‘third-wave’ (neo-)ska music scenes, in particular.

**Archaic Revival:
New Age, Neo-pagan, Occult, ‘Tribal’ and Parody Religions in Post-Punk Genres**

New Age and neo-pagan religions are often associated with hippie subculture—and rightly so given that particular subculture’s role in propagating them—but their presence in post-punk (post-)subcultural contexts as well should not be especially surprising given these religions’ frequently (re)negotiated status. These religious practices and beliefs have had a cross-cultural appeal—although the regional focus that they take is often reflective of the ethnic heritage of the practitioners—and by no means are they limited to a specific subculture, let alone a post-subcultural context. Much of the popularity of neo-pagan and new age religion(s) has been achieved through their promotion via magazines, often run on a DIY basis; through books such as those by the Minneapolis-based publishers, Llewellyn publishing; and through the distribution

and use of tarot cards, runes, and other paraphernalia. Wicca and other neo-pagan religions which draw inspiration from ancient European or Egyptian sources, and which frequently incorporate ecological, feminist/womanist, and GLBTQ perspectives, have been popular among some in post-punk (post-)subcultures/(sub)genres—especially among fans of gothic, industrial, and some rave/techno and ‘worldbeat’ music.

So-called ‘tribal’ religions—that is, diverse religions that are generally of rural and/or third world regions—have also been of interest to some in the post-punk (sub)genres, although it is also frequently the case that appropriated tribal-related practices are used to augment styles with little or no reflection on their former religious significance. These religious practices/perspectives received a promotional boost with the publication, in 1989, of *Modern Primitives*¹², by V. Vale’s San Francisco-based counterculture publishing company, RE/Search Publications. Although chronicling an already growing modern primitive—or neo-tribal—movement, the anthology of interviews, articles, and photos details tribal practices, contemporary occult movements and figures popular in post-punk subculture, and body modification such as tattooing, piercing, and scarification.

Additionally, modern primitivism has been augmented by religio-cultural elements previously associated with the New Age and hippie subcultures. This has particularly been the case with fans of techno/rave and worldbeat whose consumption of psychoactive and/or hallucinogenic drugs such as MDMA (ecstasy), and LSD, and interest in ‘psychedelic spirituality’, has led to a resurgence of interest in, and experimentation with, the works of Timothy Leary, Terrence McKenna, Robert Anton Wilson, and Ken Wilber—just to name a few.

¹² Vale, V. *Modern Primitives*. RE/Search no. 12 (San Francisco: RE/Search Publications, 1989).

An ethic developed within Rave culture that emphasized ‘Peace, Love, Unity, Respect’—often expressed as an acronym, PLUR.

Occult religions and the religious convictions of esoteric orders, often engaged in ritual magic(k) along the lines of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (OGD) and Aleister Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientalis (OTO). Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan, which both lampoons Christian ethics, cosmology, and ritual while espousing Druidic-derived esoteric practices and beliefs, is also popular, as are ‘self-styled’ negotiated approaches to the doctrines and rituals of these groups. These approaches have been particularly popular in Gothic and Industrial (post-)subculture even to the extent that new orders such as the Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY)—established by Genesis P. Orridge¹³, whose band Throbbing Gristle is often considered to be the first Industrial band and whose interview was one of those featured in *Modern Primitives*—have emerged.

Satirical groups who often consciously cross the line between parody/satire and ‘authentic’ religion—groups such as the Texas-based Church of the Subgenius and the San Francisco-based Discordian movement, both of which began in the 1970’s, and more recently the anti-Creationism/Intelligent Design theory group known as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster—have avid followers among the punk and post-punk (post-)subcultures through which their ‘authentically fake’ Chidester-esque approach to religion is frequently disseminated.

Finally, African diasporic religions—particularly those hybridized versions extending from West African Yoruba traditions, have had some influence. Although David Byrne, of one CBGB’s early avant-garde punk/new wave house bands Talking Heads, has not considered

¹³ Although the ‘polygenderous’ P-Orridge was born Neil Andrew Megson, s/he had his/her name legally changed in 1971.

himself a member of their religious community—in fact, he is a Subgenii, a member of the Church of the Subgenius—his interest in world religions and world music led to his production of an album of regional worship music of, and direction/production of *Ilé Aiyé (The House of Life)*¹⁴, a film on the Brazilian Candomblé community. Interest in Vodou, Santería, Candomblé, and other Afro-Caribbean religions is a fairly uncommon, but not unheard-of, phenomenon. Indeed, my best friend—an African-American who, like me, spent most of his young adult life associated with the punk and skinhead scenes—is a practitioner of the Yoruba religion. Although it is a tradition that apparently was passed down through his family in Georgia, and not something with which he came into contact through any (post-)subcultural scene, in a tacit acknowledgement of the power of habitus, he also points out that acceptance of Afro-Caribbean religion(s) by many in the heterogeneous and experimental/negotiatory religious atmosphere of the musical underground made his ‘coming out’ much easier. It definitely also influenced his wife, a post-punk visual artist who incorporates *Orisha* (deities) and other Yoruban themes into her work and her religious worldview.

I will return to some of the elements discussed in this section in the following chapter due to their relevance to specific (sub)genres and trends which affect the dissemination of Hindu religiosity and Hindu-related elements within (post-)subcultural contexts.

¹⁴ *Ilé Aiyé (The House of Life)*, DVD, directed by David Byrne (1989; Brooklyn NY: Plexifilm 2004).

CHAPTER 3
HINDUISM AND PUNK/POST-PUNK:
NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES OF UNDERGROUND MUSIC

‘Hindu Punk’

In the first chapter I primarily addressed the theoretical underpinnings of the study of religions as social systems, in both general and specific (post-)subcultural contexts. I also briefly discussed the origins and characteristics of punk and post-punk music and their relationship, or lack thereof, with systems of beliefs and practices that are typically identified as religious. Although I have touched upon some of the history of punk and post-punk (sub)genres and movements, the present chapter represents an effort to further expand upon their histories as I attempt to track the development of ‘Hindu consciousness’ within the alternative music (post-)subcultural milieu.

In this chapter I will also provide a more detailed discussion of the development of genres and subgenres relevant to the emergence of these ‘Hindu-friendly’ elements/phenomena—highlighting developments in both mainstream and subcultural milieu which have influenced both the development of those (sub-)genres—and demonstrate through case examples how these developments provided a more fertile habitus in which social actors have become more amenable to incorporation of Hinduism and Hindu-oriented elements into their cultural identities and worldviews.

Before moving on with the punk and post-punk (post-)subcultures, I want to address the important influence that a pre-punk—although not necessarily proto-punk—subculture has exerted upon punk, post-punk, and Hindu-punk hybridity. While generally distinct from the punk cult, this cult has become an integral part of most punk and post-punk music scenes. Indeed, it is one of the CCCS’s classically-defined cults—skinheads. Although a fuller exploration of the skinhead movement falls somewhat outside the auspices of this thesis, it is helpful to briefly

discuss this subculture as it is embedded in the matrix of punk and post-punk (post-)subcultural scene(s) and because a number of the social actor-subjects of this thesis, the author included, have identified with the movement, either in the past or currently.

‘Oi! Get Your ‘air Cut!’: Skinheads

The well-publicized links between skinheads and racism and even the neo-Nazi movement are valid and I do not wish to dismiss them. However, media coverage and even some academic studies have often disproportionately focused on racist elements of the skinhead movement, sometimes even outright denying that non-racist skinheads exist or—in contradiction to the origins of the movement and the lived experiences of skinheads—that they can stake the authenticity of their existence on (ostensibly) non-racist precedents.

What is true of the skinhead subculture is that it developed in Britain in the mid- to late-1960’s, primarily as the English mod scene splintered between the more effete ‘smooth’ and ‘hard’ mod cliques, the latter being more explicitly working class/lumpen proletarian in orientation and who were more frequently involved in hooliganism. Over time these hard mods were variously by the terms ‘lemonheads’, ‘peanuts’, or the currently preferred term, ‘skinhead’, due to their habit of keeping their hair cut closely cropped—although not completely shaven as some skinheads do today (Marshall 1991, 17). Then, as is often the case today, skinheads embraced Jamaican culture—particularly that of the ‘rude boys’ with whom they shared subcultural space—much as did the punks of a decade later with the rude boys’ more religious Rastafarian antecedents (Marshall 1991, 18).

Simplistic anti-/non-racist or racist labels belie a complicated relationship between skinheads and Britain’s ethnic minorities. While it is not uncommon to see white youths appropriate elements of minority cultures on one hand and discriminate against and/or persecute members of those cultures on the other—and indeed there clearly are cases where this occurred

even early on between the white skinheads and black Jamaican rude boys—there has often been a good deal of racial harmony to the extent that members of groups of skinheads—known as ‘crews’—were, and are, of African descent (Ibid).

However, even prior the radical racist politics that later characterized a good portion of skinhead subculture, the same sort of cultural appreciation was not extended to British South Asians. ‘Paki’, a term applied indiscriminately to any South Asian, has been frequently employed as an ethnic slur, and ‘Paki Bashing’—random ethnically-motivated violence against South Asians—was, and still is, a common activity carried out by skinheads, black or white, who ironically sometimes often consider themselves non-racist.

**N[on]-R[ocking] I[ndian]s:
Indigenous Hindus and South Asian Immigrants in British and American Contexts**

Despite the shared legacies of the United Kingdom and the United States, to read the context of socio-economic dynamics and immigrant experiences as equivalent is a mistake, and regardless of their appeals to the authenticity of the movement, American skinheads are subject to a different habitus matrix. The same holds true for Hindus in the United Kingdom versus those in the United States—even in the case where diaspora/immigrant populations come from the same region(s) and socio-economic background(s), evidence tends to suggest that religio-cultural practices and beliefs are ultimately impacted differently dependent upon the variables in the new environment(s).

In contrast to the situation in the United States, South Asian immigrant communities and their (white) counterparts are fairly distinctly segregated. No British laws mandate this, but British social stratification and racial-ethnic habitus tends to reinforce the cloistering of communities. The tendency to settle in self-contained communities, as evidenced by the disproportionate, often ghettoized, numbers of South Asians in specific boroughs, is reinforced

by the desire on the part of South Asians to maintain support networks and preserve a sense of their original indigenous communities.

As the U.K. immigration organization Moving Here notes in its history of South Asian Migration,

Most people who came from India, Pakistan and later Bangladesh were aided by chain migration. The early pioneers who had found accommodation and employment in England then sponsored other men, usually from the same family group or village to join them.... This pattern of chain migration led to large numbers of South Asians settling in particular areas (movinghere.org).

Additionally, the ‘seeding’ of communities by the gradual immigration of expanding circles of family and/or caste/*jāti* members via chain migration—particularly among the relatively unskilled laborers who made up the bulk of the earliest immigrants—has tended to be focused in particular occupations and even at specific (industrial) worksites which have generally been a short commute from self-contained communities. What this amounts to is a stronger sense of not only Indian identity but more specifically, regional identity. This tends to pan out in terms of Hindu religious practices as well. And while this is often true of other major recently immigrated populations in United Kingdom, it has been especially so of South Asians whose insular lifestyles and more pronounced lack of habitus shared in common with their white, predominantly Christian neighbors marked them as ‘alien’ in the eyes of not only whites but even other immigrant populations such as East Asians who tended to more readily assimilate into British society.

Britain had already long been suffering from ethnic tensions by the time two weeks of bloody riots erupted in the primarily immigrant community-area of Notting Hill, London, in 1958. The riots were primarily due to black-white tensions and involved white Britons and those of the Afro-Caribbean immigrant community, but it would be a mistake to believe that they were

not a reflection of a general wave of anti-immigrant feelings among British and that Asians were not also targeted. In the British context it would be a mistake to interpret the British use of the term 'black' as an ethnic descriptor to mean only those of African descent, as it generally does in the United States. Indeed, the term is frequently intended to apply equally to all dark-skinned peoples, including South Asians. South Asians have certainly seen their share of racial-cultural discrimination.

On 20 April, 1968, British Conservative Member of Parliament for the Wolverhampton borough of southwest London, Enoch Powell, made an infamous, racially inflammatory speech before Parliament. In what came to be known as the "Rivers of Blood" Speech, Powell claimed that a constituent, "a decent, ordinary fellow-Englishman," had bitterly complained to him that "In this country in 15 or 20 years [sic] time the black many have the whip hand over the white man" (Powell 1968).

He went on, saying:

We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding a family with spouses and fiancées whom they have never seen (Powell 1968)

The latter point was clearly a reference not to West Indians, but to Asians for who arranged marriages are common.

Although Powell's comments made him a virtual pariah in Parliament, many shared his view. Immigration laws became stricter following his speech. The Commonwealth Immigrants act of 1962 was Amended in 1968, and further restricted under the Immigration Act of 1971. Also, as a result of tensions over immigration, South Asians have been targeted in the form of

Paki Bashing and intimidation. This has had a clear impact on Hindus and, thus, has impacted practices as well. As observed in the pages of the popular magazine *Hinduism Today* in 1993,

All Hindu activity in Britain is under the shadow of the volatile racial situation. The well-publicized ‘Dot-Buster’ attacks against Hindus in the eastern USA are isolated incidents by comparison. Britain's temples are regular targets of vandalism. Hindus are harassed on the street and often brutally for no reason. All Asians are lumped together in the white Britisher's mind, so that anger at the Muslims over the Salman Rushdie affair, for example, can just as well be taken out on a Hindu Indian as a real Muslim (*Hinduism Today* 1993).

What the article fails to note is that U.K. violence is seldom based upon the mistaken assumption that its victims are Muslims when, in fact, they might be Hindu; the distinction is frequently irrelevant to the minds of perpetrators. However, although discrimination and/or violence is still a concern of Indian immigrants in either context, even in post-9/11 America, South Asians are targeted for overt discrimination and violence far less often than they are in the United Kingdom.

All of this points toward a British skinhead habitus which is hostile toward South Asians and has not been particularly amenable to incorporation of Hindu religious elements. However, this is not the case with American skinheads, who, while often Anglophilic and eager to replicate much of British skinhead habitus, lost the ‘Hinduphobia’ and antagonism against South Asians of their European counterparts. As a result, American non-racist skinheads were open to embrace of Hinduism.

From ‘Hey Ram’ to ‘Gabba Gabba Hey’ and Back: Hinduism’s Inroad into (Post)-subcultures

I wish to address one more important subcultural development before moving on to the more specifically (post-)punk incorporation of Hinduism and Hindu-related religious elements. The growing phenomenon, while not necessarily qualifying as new religious movements in their own right, incorporates many of the elements which are characteristic of NRMs. Perhaps more

relevant to NRM theory, this phenomenon incorporates movements, in whole or in part, which are recognized as such. One of these is the Hare Krishna movement. In particular it was the first form of Hinduism to emerge in the post-punk milieu, eventually becoming the primary religious tradition of at least one major subgenre, Krishnacore, and one among a handful of Hindu religious traditions in many other (later) subgenres. Since this movement is critical to the first appearances of a Hindu-related tradition in punk and post-punk contexts, I briefly address its origins and spread as well as its relationship to counter-cultures and, hence, (post-)subcultures.

As Judah Stilson (1974), E. Burke Rochford, Jr. (1985), and others illustrated early on, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)—whose followers are popularly known as ‘Hare Krishnas’ after the famous *Kṛṣṇa Mahāmantra* chanted by devotees—became popular with hippies and members of other countercultures. The Hare Krishna movement grew in leaps and bounds to become one of the most dominant, and fastest-growing, Hindu-oriented movements to significantly appeal to non-South Asians in the west. Although it skipped the (first) punk generation, it eventually won relatively wide acceptance among second- and third-generation adherents to post-punk (sub)genres and (post-)subcultures.

Despite its designation as a *new* religious movement, however, ISKCON boasts old, deep roots in the *Gauḍīya*¹ *sampradāya* (school/initiatory system) of the *Kṛṣṇa Bhakti* (Krishna devotion) tradition which began under the *Vaiṣṇava*² ascetic Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1486-1533), and which had since been passed via successive guru-to-student relationship known as *paramparā*. The final link in Caitanya’s *sampradāya* before it emerged in the west is a man born

¹ Literally meaning ‘Land of Sugar,’ Gauḍīya is a dual reference to the school’s origins in the sugar-producing Bengal region of India and the ‘sweet’ heavenly abode of Kṛṣṇa—not entirely dissimilar from the reference to the ‘Land of Milk and Honey’ popular in the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

² *Vaiṣṇava* are Hindu devotees of *Viṣṇu* (Vishnu) and his various forms, or *avatāra* (avatars, or ‘descents’)—the most popular of which are which are Krishna and Rama (or *Rāma*, of *Rāmāyaṇa* fame).

Abhay Charan De, known to his followers as His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and *ācārya* (spiritual leader) of ISKCON. Prabhupāda brought his system of teachings to the United States in 1965, and initiated and taught devotees Caitanya's Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism until his death in 1977, at the age of 81.

A charismatic religious leader in the Weberian mold, Prabhupāda's death left the 'postcharismatic' ISKCON movement foundering because, like the Buddha, he was reticent to name a single successor; nevertheless the community of devotees have managed to recover and more or less democratically establish communal rule(s), drawing upon the voluminous books and recordings of Prabhupāda's teachings for inspiration ever since.

Chaitanya's Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is a system of intense focus on a personal relationship with Krishna as Supreme Godhead. Its primary inspirations are the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavad Purāṇa texts*, from whence it derives its theological and ethical framework and chanting of mantras of praise to Krishna and his primary divine consort, the *gopī* (milkmaid) Radhā. Hare Krishnas' passionate advocacy of *ahiṃsā*—or 'non-harm'—through pacifism and, especially, vegetarianism and animal rights, became a part of the habitus shared with post-punk (post-)subcultures in the Euro-American context. This shared praxis-oriented platform made ISKCON's approach—if not a logical lifestyle choice, then that of a natural ally—in the eyes of some in the various (post-)subcultural scenes, although resistance to the group as a 'dangerous cult' and/or its rejection simply due to its religious nature has always been strong as well.

'Don't Get Me Wrong': Chrissie Hynde, Authentic Pretender

Although I have already addressed the virtual absence of Hinduism and Hindu- or Hindu-derived influences on the music and lifestyles associated with the punk revolution of 1974-1979, there is one exception: Chrissie Hynde, lead singer and guitarist of the Pretenders. It should be noted that calling Hynde a punk rocker, and the Pretenders a punk band, is misleading even using

classic subculture theory, and it is perhaps doubly problematic if one subscribes to post-subculture theories which question the validity of the labels to begin with. Those familiar with the history of punk, early punk bands, and punk ethos and musical aesthetics, might particularly reject bringing Hynde into this discussion, and so further explanation of Hynde's relationship to the punk revolution, and why she is relevant to the discussion, is warranted.

Although the Pretenders share much in the way of family resemblances with bands more commonly identified with punk they are not, as noted, generally recognized as a punk band. Music historians and critics most often describe the band with which Hynde released her first album (on a major label), as either post-punk rock at most and, more likely, simply as a pop rock—albeit of a style for which rock critics have had a longstanding admiration. Hynde has called their music “straightahead rock” (Salewicz 1982: 54)—although the terms ‘new music’ and even ‘new wave’ were often applied to the band's music. Indeed, by the time Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders had achieved fame, the punk revolution had already begun to wane and give way to new music, new subcultures, and a music industry that was keen to meet punk's tactics with radio-friendly strategic alternatives.

Hynde herself, however, played a central role in the London punk revolution. During the late 1970's the Akron, Ohio, native traveled to London specifically with the intention of starting a band. During her time in London prior to forming The Pretenders, Hynde, who holds a BA in Fine Arts from Kent State, was hired as a music critic for the punk-friendly music magazine *New Music Express*. As an insider to London's nascent punk scene, she used the magazine's pages to support and influence punk bands. She also befriended and worked with a number of punk musicians such as John ‘Johnny Rotten’ Lydon of the Sex Pistols and Rat Scabies of the Damned, the latter with whom she had attempted to form a punk band prior to forming the

Pretenders. Hynde also worked for a brief time at designer Vivienne Westwood's punk boutique Sex, out of which Westwood designed many of the clothes and styles that would come to symbolize punk for years to come. (The boutique's co-owner, Malcolm McLaren would help to engineer the careers of the Sex Pistols—fronted by Hynde's good friend John 'Johnny Rotten' Lydon—perhaps the punk revolution's most definitive and notorious band.)

Hynde is neither an atheist nor has she made a secret of the central role 'spirituality' has played in her life. She has been candid in regard to her stated belief in (a universal/nondenominational conception of) God as a source of inspiration and sustenance. Despite her frequently profane language, penchant for heavy consumption of alcohol (early in her career), and antisocial behavior both on and off stage, Hynde is well-read in the world's religious texts, from which she claims have drawn inspiration since her teens. Hynde biographer Chris Salewicz described Hynde as a "Metaphysician, who believed there to be little difference between Christian teachings or those of Buddhism, or even the writings of a Rudolf Steiner or an Edgar Cayce" (Salewicz 1982: 60).

Among those texts most influential to Hynde is the Bhagavad Gītā. Although, again, she does not identify herself as a Hindu, she does look to the Bhagavad Gītā and other Hindu texts as source of wisdom, eventually adopting a vegetarian diet, eschewing her trademark leather pants and jacket, and becoming an animal rights activist. Hynde has also coordinated much of her animal rights activism with followers of the Hare Krishna movement, even lending a preface to ISKCON author Steven J. Rosen's book *Holy Cow: The Hare Krishna Contribution to Vegetarianism and Animal Rights*³. More recently, Hynde has begun making annual pilgrimages

³ See: Rosen, Steven J. *Holy Cow: The Hare Krishna Contribution to Vegetarianism and Animal Rights* (Herndon, VA: Lantern Books, 2004).

to India to study Vaiṣṇava Hinduism, although she has remained stalwart in her nondenominational and universalist position on religion.

So, while Hynde's influence is perhaps a step toward the promotion of Hinduism in punk and post-punk music, one musician, no matter how influential, does not a movement make. And given Hynde's nondenominational approach and the lack of explicit reference to Hinduism in her lyrics or, even for that matter, Indic influences on her music, Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders could hardly be thought of as enthusiastic proponents of Hindus through their art. Perhaps Hynde has wielded some influence over the trajectory of Hinduism as a force in underground music, but it is more likely her embrace of vegetarianism as a spiritual ethic, rather than a qualified embrace of Hinduism, has affected fans looking to her for cues as a role model. This embrace of vegetarianism, and how she approaches it is significant, however—a single drop in the bucket that is the punk and post-punk habitus, to be sure, but when considered alongside the increased number of drops falling into that bucket, a substantial one.

I will return to the issue of vegetarianism's role in furthering the shared habitus of Hinduism and punk/post-punk music later in this chapter.

'Identity': The Appearance of Formal Hindu-Punk Consciousness with X-Ray Spex's Polly Styrene and Lora Logic

One of the punk revolution's most popular bands was the mixed-gendered London quintet X-Ray Spex, which formed in 1976 and featured Poly Styrene (Marian Joan Elliott) on vocals and Lora Logic (Susan Whitby) on saxophone. Early on during her time with X-Ray Spex, one can recognize in the philosophy of Poly Styrene some elements in common with the Hare Krishna movement with which she would later identify. Her songs were often satirical send-ups critical of capitalism, materialism, conspicuous consumption, and commoditization.

Commenting on Styrene's lyrical messages for the British television documentary *The Punk Years*, biographer of women in rock music Lucy O'Brian remarked

Interesting thing about Poly's lyrics is, I think, she was ahead of her time in that she was dealing with eco-issues a good, sort of, fifteen, twenty years before it became really, sort of, mainstream... how we're sort of driven by advertising and driven by consumerism (O'Brian 2002).

On the same program Styrene added, "The commerciality of the city, the brightness and the garishness of it, really—and the *plastic-ness* of it—really hit me in a strong way" (Styrene 2002).

Eventually, the two frontwomen became ISKCON members. Lora Logic had already joined when Styrene followed suit. In *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground*, music journalist Maria Raha writes of Poly Styrene and her X-Ray Spex cohort,

After a mystical breakdown/vision in 1978, twenty-one year old Poly Styrene decided to quit punk in favor of a spiritual path, and eventually joined a Hare Krishna sect, as Lora Logic had also done when she was eighteen. As Logic recounts, 'I had a close school friend who had given up her rock and roll life, and moved into a temple on Soho Street. I saw an amazing change in her for the better, and so I also started visiting the temple. I was very attracted by their motto, "simple living, high thinking." Getting up early and chanting the Hare Krishna mantra helped me give up drinking, smoking, and drugs—things I had wanted to give up before, but could never find the inner strength to leave behind (Raha 2005: 90-91).

Logic was replaced in X-Ray Spex, and the band broke up a few months later, at about the same time that Styrene began her 'spiritual quest,' although she denies assertions that she left the band specifically over a breakdown or to join ISKCON (Styrene 2005). Both Logic and Styrene began other music projects with Styrene performing as a solo singer and Logic forming her ill-fated but critically acclaimed new wave post-punk band, Essential Logic. Although the latter never substantially incorporated Krishna Consciousness-oriented lyrics—nor did Poly Styrene's first solo album, "Translucence"—Styrene stepped up her previous lyrical critiques of

popular culture and on 1 January, 1986, she released the benchmark *God's and Goddesses* [sic], the first major appearance in the post-punk milieu of an album and an artist specifically advocating the teachings and lifestyle of a Hindu religious tradition. Recorded at a London ISKCON temple studio, the album's tracks featured quasi-Indian musical elements such as *m□danga*, sitar, and log drum⁴, and lyrically expressed some of the fears and frustrations that had driven her lyrics during her days with X-Ray Spex but which were shared by adherents to her adopted religious tradition as well. Subjects such as consumerism/commoditization, ecological irresponsibility, and warfare are addressed in songs with titles such as "Sacred Temple" and, below, "Paramatma":

Talk about religion—
I say don't do no thing no harm—no, no.
Talk about religion—
I say I'm vegetarian.
Talk about divisions—
Nations, creed, and class.
Talk about divisions—
I'm just planetarian.
I'm earthly darling—
Earthly, Earthly girl. (Styrene 1986)

Neither of Styrene's post-X-Ray Spex albums sold well, however. I remember reading a letter to the editor describing one of Styrene's performances in the punk 'zine *Maximum RocknRoll*, shortly after *God's and Goddesses* was released. The writer, a former fan of X-Ray Spex, expressed disappointment that Styrene had 'sold out' and was playing a style of ambient electro-synth pop music which had lost favor with punks who had generally transitioned over to the more aggressive styles of punk and post-punk—and which had come too late to reap the benefit of new wave crowds who, at any rate, tended to be more interested in dance music. That

⁴ The latter two instruments were electronically simulated—perhaps an ironic twist given Styrene's quest for authenticity and ecological holism—but that quest never extended to an eschewal of electronic music, which she enthusiastically promoted.

Styrene had fallen prey to a ‘cult’—presumably used in the pejorative sense—was underscored by the unimpressed author.

Styrene and Logic continue to perform and are still widely cited both as important figures central to early punk, as well as feminist icons and early proponents of environmentalism in a genre that, while frequently ‘political,’ rarely addressed environmental issues on square terms. Yet their promotion of ISKCON and, by extension, Hinduism in general—particularly on the part of Styrene—rarely earned them accolades. While their influence cannot be completely discounted, their music did not spawn anything approaching a revolution. By the end of the year that *God’s and Goddesses* was released, this would begin to change in a punk subgenre—or alternately a post-punk genre—known as hardcore.

The Coming Night: Gothic (Punk) Rock

Before moving on into a discussion of hardcore punk and the Hindu-oriented music that grew out of it, I would like to briefly digress into another punk sub-genre/post-punk genre that began to develop within punk during its heyday. As this thesis’ exploration of Hinduism and underground music movements is laid out in roughly chronological terms respective to development of the musical genre/subcultural movement—and not necessarily in order of the emergence of strong signs of Hindu identity and/or appropriation of Hindu religious practices and beliefs—I will now address gothic music and subculture. Later I will address how these elements have led to hybrid identities as the idea of a Hindu-friendly gothic subculture, but that discussion is somewhat premature along a roughly chronological scale. For now I will merely discuss its development and some important and interesting trends it brought to underground music—developments which provided a fertile environment for aspects of Hinduism, albeit in forms that tend to be more highly appropriated/reformulated than in most subcultures where Hindu identity is less hybridized.

Gothic rock—early on called gothic punk and, later, more frequently simply called ‘goth’—is one of the earliest and most direct subgenres to evolve out of the punk movement. Early performers looked to everything from Gothic horror books and films, to flourishes of the Romanticists, Dadaist, Absurdists, and avant-garde theater and music for influence. If one individual can be credited with creating the genre, it would probably be Siouxsie Sioux (Susan Ballion), a member of the so-called ‘Bromley Contingent’ of influential London punks. Her band, Siouxsie and the Banshees, would shortly become one among many, spawning a subculture that would outlive and overshadow its original punk roots to be joined by its twin genre, the more aggressive electronic music known as industrial⁵ to achieve near-mainstream popularity.

Even early on in the development of gothic subculture, certain elements signaled an approval of religion and religious discourse, although the earliest rumblings of the gothic movement seem to have taken on religion in only the most ironic or twisted of senses. This genre is one which in some ways (re-)opened religious discourse among its fans—particularly Catholicism viewed through a dark lens, as the term ‘gothic’ implies—neo-paganism, spiritualism, and New Age or esoteric magic(k) along the lines of the O.G.D. and O.T.O. mentioned in the previous chapter. Interest in magic and the occult was, and continues to be, widespread in Gothic and Industrial subculture(s). As the genre was oriented toward dance music and more commodifiable styles, it quickly won favor with a wider audience than that which embraced punk—although, like heavy metal, it has hardly been the musically-oriented culture parents would want their kids to embrace.

⁵ Fans of industrial are known as ‘rivetheads’, after the frequent appearance of rivet gun and other industrial sound effects in their music.

While few punk bands won radio airplay or—perhaps more importantly in the early- and mid-eighties, considerable airtime on MTV—gothic bands were able to find a niche. Gothic bands such as Bauhaus appeared in such films as “The Hunger” (1983) and by the late 1980s, goth artist and film director Tim Burton began to have hits with such movies as “Pee-Wee’s Big Adventure,” (1985) “Beetlejuice” (1988) and “Edward Scissorhands,” (1990) in which—particularly in the latter two—he inscribed his gothic sensibilities, thereby extending the reach of gothic habitus far into the mainstream. The highly successful mainstream film “The Craft” (1996), a gothic-oriented movie about Wicca and other forms of witchcraft further clinched the connection between gothic subculture and minority neo-pagan religion. The popularity of gothic/industrial post-punk performers such as Nine Inch Nails, and hybrid gothic/industrial-heavy metal bands such as Marilyn Manson and Type O Negative helped to further propel to gothic/industrial subculture and its elements into the mainstream.

I will later revisit why this subculture—particularly in a post-subcultural setting—is an important addition to Hindu-oriented habitus and negotiation.

‘Meat is Murder’: Vegetarianism, Veganism, and Animal Rights

Vegetarianism, veganism, and the animals rights movement had already gained a foothold in the other counterculture movements in the west, and even in some forms of post-punk alternative music, by the time they became a widespread and significant part of many post-punk (post-)subcultures and (sub-)genres.

Based partly upon their vigorous promotion by ISKCON, as well their presence in other (mainstream) Hindu sects and within orthodox Brahmanism, it is often the presumption in the west that the two—vegetarianism/animal rights and Hinduism(s)—go hand in hand. The South Asian case is actually more complicated than a simple Hindus-must-be-vegetarian formula, but based upon western stereotypical presumptions about Hindus and Hinduism(s) and the

considerable presence of the vegetarianism/animal rights praxis-ethic, it has become a *de facto* habitus-oriented recruitment tool when it is embraced. It is perhaps helpful, then, to explore the presence of the vegetarianism/animal rights praxis-ethic in the west in general, and in the post-punk (post-)subcultural milieu specifically.

Vegetarianism became popular in the U.S. late in the 1800's and early 1900's, via American transcendentalist and utilitarian philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and religious groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists, who promoted a vegetarian diet based upon ethical reasoning. Breakfast cereal magnate Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, himself once a Seventh Day Adventist, promoted it as a sure route to longevity as well.

These influences remained a part of the postwar subcultural/countercultural movements, but additionally, elements of 'Eastern spirituality' in the form of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain teachings—initially filtered through American transcendentalists and, later, through Hindu 'missionaries' to the west such as Swami Vivekānanda and esoteric orders such as the International Theosophical Society—were picked up and re-contextualized, first by beats and then by hippies. Eastern vegetarianism and ahimsa ethics were appropriated, either as part of a hybridized New Age 'package,' part of a fuller adoption of teachings of a specific school such as Chinese Chán Buddhism or a group such as ISKCON, or simply because they made sense as part of a pragmatic program of beliefs and practices—'spiritual' or not.

Additionally, in 1975—right around the time that the punk revolution began to grow—the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation*⁶, consequently providing the foundational philosophy for the Animal liberation movement and the radical, direct action group Animal Liberation Front, or ALF. As I noted previously, many in the punk movement

⁶ See: Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Ecco, 2002.

were critical of hippies not because of their activism but because, among other reasons, they were perceived as naïve and overly idealistic or because their movement had allegedly become a parody of itself. (Some of these criticisms could just as easily be applied to punk and post-punk movements as they gained in popularity, however.) Embrace of social activism—often of the very same liberal individualist stripe as that which was endorsed by hippies—was not, and is not, uncommon among punks and (other) adherents to post-punk (post-)subcultural ideals. In a chapter of *The Philosophy of Punk* tellingly entitled “Environmentalism and Ecological Concerns: The Ideas and Techniques of Earth First, ALF and Others Have Found a Comfortable Home in the Punk Scene,” Craig O’Hara observes that

Vegetarianism and animal rights are two subjects which were first popularized by the European Punk community. English bands, particularly those with anarchist messages, often included in their records information and images on the horrors of animal use and abuse. Politically minded [sic] punks have viewed our treatment of animals as another of the many existing forms of oppression (O’Hara 1999: 134).

A number of adherents to punk and post-punk (post-)subcultures had already adopted a pro-animal rights and vegetarian/vegan agenda when, in 1985, the Manchester, England, band the Smiths released their album *Meat is Murder*, which reached number 1 on the U.K. charts and a respectable 110 in the United States. Lead singer [Steven Patrick] Morrissey, who penned the album’s title track has been a passionate vegetarian and an advocate the animal rights movement (as well as an openly gay man who has remained celibate for most of his adult life). In the song “Meat is Murder”, Morrissey sings in his trademark melancholy style:

Heifer whines could be human cries
Closer comes the screaming knife
This beautiful creature must die
This beautiful creature must die
A death for no reason
And death for no reason is murder (The Smiths 1985).

Often, when I am asked what influenced me to become a vegetarian (long before I became interested in Hinduism or Buddhism) I will cite personal-ethics reasons and, to be sure, I had read the occasional ISKCON treatise and had spoken to animal rights-oriented punks and had read some of their literature on the virtues of vegetarianism. However, those were rational reasons. The *inspiration* for adoption of a vegetarian diet and ethic, however—the emotional tipping point, so to speak—was the Smiths’ “Meat is Murder”.⁷ This prior addition to the subcultural milieu of a vegetarian praxis-ethic via Morrissey’s appeal was likely an inducement to others as well and with the addition of the greater proliferation of reinforcing influences of subcultural peers, bands who advocated vegetarian or vegan diet, or a reading of Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, these praxis-ethic elements would eventually coalesce into a strongly present habitus that provides a ‘social fact’ reinforcement against a dominant mainstream omnivorous praxis-ethic American culture.

My case is not particularly unique in the (post-)subcultural context. Indeed, the first vegans I ever met—before I even understood what the term meant—were punks. When I first began to cook as a vegetarian I picked up *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking*⁸ and cookbooks written by mainstream or hippie movement-oriented authors. Today, many of those vegetarian and vegan cookbooks are written by my subcultural peers—for example, New York’s public access television show and cooperative, the Post-Punk Kitchen, has spawned a popular

⁷ In fact, I had been ‘sneaking’ alternative and mainstream pop music in violation of the social codes of my adopted skinhead subculture in a fairly post-subcultural way. As I sometimes observed then, and have increasingly observed in subsequent years, so were many other subcultural adherents. It is due to this and other challenges the orthodox received CCCS wisdom regarding the atomistic and the stronger Hypodermic Needle/Magic Bullet Theory-oriented propositions of the Frankfurt School about the impact of ‘social facts’ and the nature of subcultural social groups. This occurred commonly enough that—especially in view of the social actor-social group dynamic after the advent of globalization and the internet era—I began to embrace neo-Weberian objections to their model and accept elements of ‘post-subcultural’ theory.

⁸ See: Dasa, Adiraja. *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking* (Alachua, Florida: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1989).

website and vegan cookbooks such as *Vegan With A Vengeance*⁹, *Vegan Cupcakes Take Over the World*¹⁰, and the *Veganomicon*¹¹.

However, in order to see how punk and post-punk embrace of the vegetarianism/animal rights praxis-ethic was achieved and further became a reinforcing habitus element, it is necessary to address the role they played in the incremental steps toward the first definitively Hindu-oriented movement within the post-punk milieu. Before moving on to that first definitively Hindu movement within the pantheon of punk and post-punk genres, it is necessary to discuss hardcore punk—or hardcore—and the straightedge movement.

‘Punks Not Dead!’: Hardcore Punk¹²

Hardcore is generally regarded by both its fans and music historians as the most direct descendent of the original punk revolution and, indeed, many of its bands were part of the original punk revolution. Members of its associated subculture tend to identify themselves simply as ‘punks’, and they generally listen to both earlier ’77-era punk bands and later hardcore punk bands without bias. The term ‘hardcore’ implies both the intensity of the following the subculture has generated in its music and lifestyle, and the intensity of the music—usually much harder and faster than older punk music—and shows, which typically include slam dancing, ‘mosh pits’, and stage diving. Hardcore began to develop in several cities simultaneously, but it

⁹ See: Moskowitz, Isa Chandra. *Vegan with a Vengeance: Over 150 Delicious, Cheap, Animal-Free Recipes That Rock* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2005).

¹⁰ See: Moskowitz, Isa Chandra. *Vegan Cupcakes Take Over the World: 75 Dairy-Free Recipes for Cupcakes that Rule* ((New York: Da Capo Press, 2006).

¹¹ See: Moskowitz, Isa Chandra and Terry Hope Romero. *Veganomicon: The Ultimate Vegan Cookbook* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2007).

¹² Sic: Grammarians note: the standard rendering by punks preserves the punctuation error of a British graffito immortalized by the U.K. band the Exploited. Indeed, correction of the error is seen as a dead giveaway that one is not an insider.

is generally argued that the American West coast—and particularly Los Angeles—is the area in which it took root most deeply, quickly spreading to eventually become a global phenomenon.

Two closely connected subgenres of hardcore—or perhaps, more accurately, perhaps, hardcore-oriented movements—that developed more or less simultaneously and in tandem, are important elements of the Hindu-oriented Krishnacore post-punk phenomenon I will later address. The first of these influences is Straightedge, quasi-ascetic movement which developed in reaction to the general nihilism and common (ab)use of drugs among punk fans. The second is the ‘positive hardcore’ or ‘posi-core’ movement led by bands such as Reno, Nevada’s 7 Seconds and the Washington, D.C./Los Angeles combo the Youth Brigade. I will address the importance of Straightedge first.

‘Out of Step with the World’: The Straightedge Movement

One especially fertile ground for post-punk developments was the Washington, D.C., hardcore scene. Of particular note—especially as it relates to the spread of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Hinduism of the Krishna Consciousness, or ‘Hare Krishna’ movement—are the efforts of a pair of Georgetown friends named Ian McKaye and Jeff Nelson. The pair co-founded the Dischord record label, as well as establishing the band Minor Threat, through which they promoted a philosophy they called ‘straightedge’ as an alternative to the nihilism and conspicuous alcohol and drug abuse they blamed for destroying the lives of many of their friends and idols in the punk scene.

Although, as noted, punk and most post-punk movements de-emphasize the ‘rock star’ status accorded to musicians of other popular genres, certain musicians and high-profile ‘scenesters’ such as McKaye are accorded a modicum of celebrity, and their influence is often disproportionately high given the relatively small—although globally-distributed—punk and post-punk scenes. In addition to inaugurating the first straightedge band and scene, McKaye also

supported a stable of D.C.-area bands, many of whom did not share his straightedge philosophy. Among this group of artists was a singer (and erstwhile white Rastafarian) named Tomas Squip who was instrumental in launching Dischord's second hardcore subgenre emo, which, like straightedge, would become a worldwide musical phenomenon.

A social activist and early adopter of the vegetarian and animal rights praxis-ethic, Squip—who was only straightedge in the Rastafarian sense of the word that excludes, as a drug abuse violation of straightedge praxis-ethic, the religiously-prescribed smoking of *ganja* (marijuana)—encouraged McKay to emphasize vegetarianism as an element of straightedge philosophy and as a direction of the social activism in which Dischord bands and their fans—some of whom lived together in the 'Dischord House' on Bleacher Street in Georgetown—were often involved. Music historians Mark Anderson and Mark Jenkins write,

At Dischord House, Squip began to badger MacKaye about one of his pet issues: vegetarianism. It was not the first time MacKaye had discussed this subject. He parried the playful yet persistent digs, but he also took Squip's ideas seriously and appreciated the challenge (Andersen 2003: 163).

Straightedge took hold, particularly in the Northeast, and soon its quasi-ascetic elements became more emphasized. It should be noted that neither McKay nor Nelson professed or openly advocated Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava or any other school of Hinduism. Yet even if McKay hadn't planned on promoting straightedge as a more or less purely ascetic movement—much less a delivery system for the Krishna Consciousness movement—others had different ideas. The eventual addition of the vegetarian/animal rights praxis-ethic to the extant quasi-ascetic elements of straightedge philosophy would further link the shared habitus of the two movements. Successive 'waves' in the straightedge scene became increasingly focused less on simply avoiding or moderating habits deemed harmful, and more on a type of total renunciation of

practices deemed hedonistic/nihilistic, to the extent that they became functionally equivalent to many of the practices of religious ascetics. Thus, the (quasi-)ascetic ethic embraced by straightedgers has proven to be fertile ground for the Krishna Consciousness movement.

Many straightedgers—including its own originators—eventually abandoned the movement. Proponents had not only become ‘preachy’ but even violent against those who did not share their philosophy—as O’Hara (1999: 142) and Robert T. Wood (2006: 35-39) attest—although this has been rejected as uncharacteristic by others such as Ross Haenfler (2006: 100-01). Because of this behavior and a few other mitigating factors, McKaye eventually renounced the straightedge scene that he created—although he has still maintained a quasi-ascetic lifestyle that he has since expanded to include the vegetarianism that his friend Tomas Squip and subsequent waves of straightedgers have advocated.

In his band Minor Threat’s swan song “Salad Days”, McKaye explains his sense of frustration with the direction that his ‘baby’, the straightedge movement, took:

Wishing for the days
When I first wore this suit—
Baby has grown older;
It’s no longer cute.
Too many voices—
They’ve made me mute.
Baby has grown ugly;
It’s no longer cute (Minor Threat 2005).

Regardless of McKaye’s perspective, the straightedge movement has remains a potent force in underground music scenes—not just in hardcore but in other post-punk scenes as well—and it is still strongly represented by both religious and non-religious performers and fans who adhere to its codes, many of whom have attempted to root out the negative aspects that McKaye and others blame for its ‘degeneration’.

‘I Still Believe’: ‘Youth Crew’ Posi-Core

Like straightedge, posi-core was, and is, more of a philosophy than an aesthetic approach to music. And like straightedge, posi-core adherents stress scene unity, and eschew drugs. Indeed, there is considerable overlap between straightedge and posi-core philosophy, with the primary distinction being one of emphasis. While straightedgers emphasize drug- and alcohol-free living, adherents have often been cliquish and violent. The major focus of posi-core is on inter-scene respect and co-operation. So, while also usually eschewing drugs and alcohol, posi-core adherents also promote and sing about unity amongst the various subcultural cliques, such as punks and skins, who make up many scenes. Knowing about these two subcultural philosophies is important to knowing engaged is important to understanding the development of the Krishnacore phenomenon, to which I will next turn.

Hardcore Devotion: The Birth of ‘Krishnacore’

Perhaps the most visibly unified, cohesive, parampara-based approach to integrating Hinduism into punk/post-punk alternative music is the phenomenon known best by the portmanteau Krishnacore. The term is applied retroflexively to the first hardcore bands to begin singing about Krishna Consciousness in the mid-1980s, the Cro-Mags, and to a lesser extent, Cause for Alarm, but the term wasn’t actually coined until the early 1990s, when it was used by to describe the now-growing phenomenon of hardcore straightedge bands whose members were Kṛṣṇa devotees.

Although it began as a subgenre within the hardcore punk rock movement, the term Krishnacore has been applied more widely to a ‘family’ of bands—in the Wittgensteinian sense—whose music does not always necessarily fit into the same general hardcore genre. All of these bands are clearly Krishna Consciousness oriented, but many perform in musical styles and genres that bear little resemblance to hardcore. Thus, for the purposes of clarity, I will

acknowledge that the term has been applied to bands that do not play variants of hardcore such as Baby Gopal and Sri Kesava—bands whose highly melodic musical style is best described as emo or alternative rock. In the context of this thesis I will address Krishnacore as a specifically hardcore or ‘crossover’ heavy metal-hardcore hybrid musical form and will then later address those bands associated with the term but whose music draws more specifically from genres that developed later than hardcore.

The first of the Krishna Consciousness-oriented were two bands from New York City, the Cro-Mags, and Cause for Alarm. The Cro-Mags was formed by two friends who were interested in practicing and propagating the teachings of ISKCON, John Joseph (McGowan) and Harley Flanagan, along with guitarist Parris Mitchell Mayhew. In his autobiography, *The Evolution of a Cro-Magnon*, lead singer John Joseph notes that his conversion to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Hinduism endorsed by ISCKON was gradual and incremental. He writes that he first adopted a vegetarian diet as a matter of necessity while he was poor and living with the hardcore band Bad Brains whose band members, as noted in the previous chapter, are Rastafarian (and thus vegetarian). Bad Brains’ lead singer, H.R., had long discussions about religion and spirituality with Joseph, and Joseph notes that these discussions made a strong impact and inspired a spiritual quest, yet he was reluctant to adopt Rastafarianism. While John Joseph is white, and it is true that Rastafarian talk of defeating ‘Babylon’ is code for toppling white privilege, plenty of whites identify with Rastafarianism. But Joseph writes that there was a deeper reason he passed over the Rastafarian religion in his spiritual quest:

I was moved by H.R.’s revolutionary spirit and devotion to God, but something was missing. That something was a philosophical understanding as to why he did the things he did on his path. Religions without philosophy is [sic] fanaticism and when I would ask questions about certain matters like reincarnation, or how the soul fell into the material world in the first place I would get an answer like, ‘Don’t worry about all that. It’s just Jah [God] you know’ (Joseph 2007: 240).

Following a great deal of reading, which included such works as those by George Gurdjieff, Ram Dass, Krishnamurti, and Yogananda, Joseph came across the works of Prabhupāda. In typical punk anti-authoritarian fashion he writes,

If you ever read any of Srila Prabhupada's books you'll find out that what's contained in their pages is revolutionary, because the real revolution is all about throwing up the middle finger to this fucked up way of life and getting back to our original, blissful spiritual nature (Joseph 2007: 243).

Other factors also conspired to 'funnel' Joseph toward Krishna Consciousness. He took a job working in a local vegetarian/health food store and restaurant where other hardcore musicians worked. His manager was an ISKCON member, and the two often had discussions about Krishna Consciousness. Another influence was Larry Puglisi, "a punk turned devotee" who

...established a house in nearby northern New Jersey for fellow devotees to live in, and sponsored food and clothing drives as well as concerts for the punks and skinheads hanging out in the New York's rough Lower East Side. Early devotees that he had influenced included John Joseph and Harley Flanagan of the band Cro-Mags (krishnacore.com).

Also, unbeknownst to most of his friends, Joseph was AWOL from the Navy for several years (which is why, to avoid being identified, he used only his first and middle names). When he fell on hard times, he sought out an ISKCON temple for a place to stay and food to eat. During that time he began taking formal instruction. His Cro-Mags co-founder, Harley Flanagan, eventually followed suit and also took instruction. It is unlikely that either was completely celibate or completely eschewed drugs for an extended period however.

Lyrics to the Cro-Mags' songs, particularly on the band's first album, are often brooding and—while addressing key concepts like reincarnation, devotional yoga, and vegetarianism—

they also speak of a social Darwinian struggle to survive on ‘the streets’. Clearly, these messages were not the kind of sermon one might expect to hear at an ISKCON temple.

Furthermore, Joseph and the Cro-Mags never explicitly rejected drugs, alcohol, or sex in their music, an omission that was telling terms of their adherence to ISKCON ascetic values. Much of Joseph’s memoir focuses on his battle with drug addiction even while he was involved with ISKCON and despite the Krishna Consciousness movement’s rejection of use of drugs even, in some cases, for more purely medicinal purposes.

But while the Cro-Mags certainly, in many ways, stood in contraposition to ISKCON orthodoxy, later bands of the Krishnacore movement were less antinomian. Beginning with bands such as Shelter and 108, both of which were formed in the U.S. Northeast in 1991, ISKCON orthodoxy began being paired with elements of the straightedge and posi-core identity. Where the Cro-Mags were aggressive and intimidating despite their ostensibly ‘hippie-esque’ religious identities, the new batch of Krishna Consciousness-oriented bands were positively peace-loving tree huggers by those standards. As is observed in the ‘history’ page of Krishnacore.com:

Whereas the Cro-Mags were known to be Hare Krishna devotees, the spiritual aspect was more covert than [that of] their successors[sic] Shelter and 108, who put the Vedic teachings in a nutshell and effectively conveyed it to a specific audience. This was done by singing songs with direct reference to it's [sic] philosophy, speaking onstage about the culture, including interviews and quotes on album lyric-sheets, and speaking to the press openly both within the alternative music scene and also the greater music press worldwide (krishnacore.com).

The more explicit emphasis on straightedge philosophy of these bands drew more straightedge adherents into the ISKCON fold and exposed even non-straightedge fans that might have bypassed the Cro-Mags’ more macho, take-no-prisoners approach to Hinduism. As Eric Davis reported in his 1995 feature article on Krishnacore in *Spin* magazine,

Unlike the nice suburban jocks in Shelter, the Cro-Mags were ferocious skinheads. ‘It wasn't like we were up on stage in dhotis and chanting,’ Joseph says. ‘It was all-out assault. Even in the Vedic philosophy, there are different kinds of people. Not everyone is meant to be a monk and live in the temple. There's the kshatriyas who were meant to be warriors. I would chant and meditate before I went onstage, and get into this mystical-type warrior mentality. We didn't promote violence, but sometimes things happened’ (Davis 1995)

It should be noted that by employing the term ‘skinhead’ Davis is not referring merely to band members’ shave-headed appearance, but is actually tying them to the skinhead subculture that I previously addressed. Beyond the case of the two members of the Cro-Mags associated—one somewhat erroneously—with the skinhead subculture, it does figure into the cases of numerous subjects who spread ‘Hindu consciousness’ in punk and post-punk subcultural movements.

Ray Cappo came to the Hare Krishna movement from a different angle. A veteran of the straightedge hardcore scene, his practices and beliefs made for a slightly more smooth transition from the role of punk to monk. Although it is not always an explicitly religious approach to hardcore punk music and lifestyles, the renunciate qualities have often led its followers to embrace monastic forms of Hinduism, while from its side—unlike many other renunciate forms imported to the west—Krishna Consciousness shares punk’s embrace of music, dancing, and singing as a *primary* religious practice. As is noted on Krishnacore.com:

...many followers of the straight-edge lifestyle were attracted to the principles and philosophy of the Hare Krishna movement, and spirituality became almost the next step to take in self-improvement after having renounced alcohol and other drugs, meat and other animal products, and sometimes illicit-sex or at least casual sexual relations outside of established relationships. Already being accustomed to saying no to many 'pleasures of the flesh' made it easier to appreciate and practice the 4 regulative principles of the Vedas; no meat-eating, no intoxication, no illicit-sex and no gambling (krishnacore.com)

Eschewing drugs was Cappo’s *raison d’etre* as a straightedge musician, and his lyrics tend to speak more of commonly held ethics than those practices and beliefs specific to Gauḍīya

Vaiṣṇavism while, at the same time, being more explicit in terms of their affiliation. The bands with which he has been involved have become more pop-music oriented over the years and, given the addition of the ecumenical messages of the lyrics, they are potentially more accessible to the tastes of a wider audience than that of Cro-Mags.

Whatever the internal problems of the Krishna movement, the folks I talked to were not dogmatic robots but thoughtful people negotiating the conflicting demands of traditional religious practice and the chaos of a modern world they do not entirely want to reject. When I asked Cappelletto to describe his devotional day, it was clear that he spent less time memorizing Sanskrit sastras than he did working on music business or developing Civilization, his cruelty-free line of skateboard sneakers (Davis 1995).

Krishnacore bands reversed some of the male domination so characteristic of straightedge bands. Despite the macho demeanor of the Cro-Mags and many bands of the bands in their wake, Krishnacore's cross-(sub)genre reach and Cappelletto's early incorporation of ostensibly feminist 'not just boys' fun' posi-core youth crew messages, women's voices were better represented. Thus, woman Krishnacore singers like Sri Kesava (Kim Shopov) of Baby Gopal and Natalia 'Tatalia' Wegrzyn of the Polish Krishnacore band Omkara have been important contributors and role models for male and female fans alike.

Today, most of the members of these bands continue to perform music that propagates elements of Prabhupada's teachings, other Hindu schools, or in some cases, Buddhism. Krishnacore spread as a global phenomenon and is especially popular in South America and in former Soviet republics of Eastern Europe.

Late Hindu 'Conversion' of First-Generation Punks

While this thesis has heretofore painted a picture of a sort of Gauḍiṣya Vaiṣṇava revolution within punk and post-punk genres, this is only part of the picture. ISKCON-influenced perspectives were clearly the earliest dominant form of ostensibly Hindu-oriented religious traditions to be imported, in whole or in part, into punk and post-punk music

subculture(s), where they remain vibrant, visible component. More recently, however, there has been an embrace of non-Vaiṣṇava devotional Hinduism—Śakti and Śaiva Hinduism in particular—by first-generation punks and (other) post-punk (post-)subcultural adherents.

As noted in the first chapter, my own mentor, Donny the Punk (Steven Donaldson) was involved in the original punk revolution in New York City and then later became an initiated Liṅgayat (VīraŚaiva) Pūjāri while maintaining his punk subcultural identity. Indeed, any aspect of his lifestyle and his life's work that he thought was amenable with Hindu and/or Buddhist teachings was often viewed through those lenses, a negotiated relationship from which he drew much comfort. Despite his acceptance into the fold of the traditional Indian VīraŚaiva community, his is a highly unorthodox approach to Hinduism and a telling one with regard to the ways in which Hindu identities are negotiated in some unusual ways.

Donaldson, who died in 1995, was a 1970 graduate of Columbia University's School of Journalism and a gay and (later) bisexual rights activist who co-founded Columbia University's Student Homophile League (Donaldson 1991, 31-45). However, he is probably best known for his advocacy on the part of victims of prison rape through the organizations People Organized to Stop the Rape of Imprisoned Persons (POSRIP) and Stop Prison Rape (SPR), the latter for which he served as president. As his experiences as a gay/bisexual male and as a survivor of rape are relevant to how he approached Hinduism, I will briefly explain them.

Donaldson had been arrested and imprisoned several times over the years either for the civil disobedience that often characterized his activism, or for possession of small amounts of marijuana (that, even before his 'conversion' to Hinduism, he considered a part of his religious

practices).¹³ His first arrest was on August 14, 1973, while engaging in a Quaker-sponsored ‘pray-in’ protest, at the White House, against the United States’ illegal secret bombing of Cambodia (Brownmiller 1975: 286). While incarcerated, Donaldson was repeatedly gang-raped, in a(n) (in)famous and well-documented incident, by an estimated 45 of his fellow inmates (Ibid.).

On a subsequent arrest for possession of marijuana in 1976, Donaldson accepted the role that initially earned him his nickname, ‘Donny the Punk’, not due to his (later) love of punk music, but as a ‘jailhouse punk’—one who traded consensual or semi-consensual sex for protection against rape.

Not wishing to repeat the battering I got in the D.C. Jail, I capitulated.... I considered myself lucky that the blocks were so small.... The next day the four white marines came up to me and said, ‘You’re moving in with us!’ and so I became the fifth occupant of the four-bunk cell.... I had become the *Punk* of these four lads, who in jail lingo became my *Men*.... They provided me with protection and such things as stamps and snacks, in return wanting blowjobs (from three) and ass (in jail called ‘pussy’) from one. (Donaldson 1982: 62-63).

Donaldson had previously taken training in a Theravada Buddhist order, and his approaches continued to fuse perspectives generally attributed the Buddhism with those of the Hindu sect with which he later associated. (Indeed, he—as have I, and a great many South Asian Hindus, for that matter—preferred to identify more with a sectarian label such as ‘Śaiva’ than a general ‘Hindu’ label.) However, he was ultimately won over by the more Hindu-oriented VīraŚaiva sect due to its veneration of the aniconic representation of Śiva as the cosmic force of

¹³ I will again touch on this subject later in the present chapter; for now I wish merely to acknowledge that for some Hindus—particularly, but not limited to those of Śaiva sects—marijuana (*ganjika* or *ganja*) consumption either by smoking it in *chillum* pipes or in yogurt-based drinks known as *bhang*, is not entirely uncommon. However, it is also the case that it is usually reserved for *sadhu* ascetics and in contemporary India, while *sadhus* are seldom harassed for possessing or consuming marijuana, lay Hindus are likely to face *stiffer* penalties for marijuana possession than their American counterparts.

creation, maintenance, and destruction, the Śiva liṅga—a focus that for him was lacking in his Buddhist studies and practices.

Often the liṅga is identified as a phallus¹⁴, a correlation with which Donaldson readily agreed and a concept to which he related. Unlike many other Śaiva orders, VīraŚaiva adherents carry the liṅga with them as a form known as Iṣṭaliṅga—often worn on a chain—and so he need not worry about access to temples liṅga. Donaldson related his experiences as a homosexual and as a victim of rape to the qualities of the Śiva liṅga as the phallus had, for him, became a highly personal symbol of the tripartite creative, nourishing, and destructive qualities of the Cosmos, which for him was equivalently identified as Śiva. In an interview, tying his religion to his prison experiences, he acknowledged that he realized that his approach was unorthodox. Yet he defended it as driving to the heart of the matter of what, from his perspective, it means to be religious and to experience the sacred firsthand:

I know how atypical, in a sense, my jail experience has been. I'm more sophisticated and more adaptable, you know, more mentally flexible. And by spiritualizing the whole thing. For example, I've gotten into Shiva Hinduism from Buddhism, in part because there's a very strong phallic-worship tradition there. And I can relate to that. I can relate to the phallus as the symbol of total power, of creativity, and see how it emanates a sense of awe, which is the basic feeling of religion. You know, the uncanny. The awesome. The hallowed. All the feelings that have nothing to do with good and evil....Just this sense of incredible power, this overwhelming energy that is so other, so totally other, and yet it touches you so closely inside. That's religion. (Goad 1994: 29).

**‘The Return of the Mother’:
Nina Hagen and the *Kriya Yoga* of Haidakan Babaji**

Nina Hagen had long been a fixture of the avant-garde punk scene when she made what would become the first of many trips to the village of Haidakhan in the Himalayan Kumoia

¹⁴ This interpretation has been challenged by many Hindus as ‘putting the cart before the horse’ in that the phallus is a reflection of the universal creative force of the liṅga, and not the other way around. Nevertheless, even such respected contemporary scholars of Hinduism as Gavin Flood argue that “The liṅga represents a phallus.”[Flood, Gavin. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), 151]

foothills. The village is the site of the ashram of the late guru known as Haidakhan Babaji, often called ‘Bole Baba’ or simply ‘Babaji’ by his followers. A reputed avatar of the combined form of Śiva and Śakti (Parvati), Haidakhan Babaji is thought to return periodically to bring messages of peace. Particularly in the wake of the promotion of the guru by New Age author Leonard Orr¹⁵, the claim is often made that Babaji was/is the reputedly immortal yogi Mahavatar Babaji—to whom Paramahansa Yogananda refers in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*. However, although the existence of Mahavatar Babaji—who was allegedly active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—is debatable as a single, corporeal historical figure, Haidakhan Babaji’s material existence is undeniable and well documented.

Haidakhan Babaji is known to have promoted the claim that he was Mahavatar, but more problematic is the claim of his material immortality, to which he never apparently laid literal claim and which was further complicated by his death in 1984. Following Haidakhan Babaji’s death, his close disciple Sri Muniraji overtook the responsibilities of managing the Haidakhan ashram and it is he who is Hagen’s most immediate spiritual mentor, and who bequeathed upon Hagen her devotional name, Rashmi Jaya Radhe.

Hagen adopted Babaji’s motto “truth, simplicity, and love” and the *nama japa* practice of recitation of the Śiva Mahāmantra (*Aum namah Śivāya*) which Babaji prescribed not merely as part of yogic discipline but also as a method to deflect the effects of an unspecified coming world disaster of apocalyptic proportions.

An eccentric but charismatic singer known for her deep, Teutonic voice and quirky operatic style vocals, Hagen came from a family who had the rare distinction of being deported from their native East Germany during the height of the Cold War. In a 2003 interview she

¹⁵ See: Orr, Leonard. *Babaji: The Angel of the Lord* (Staunton VA: Inspiration University, 1995).

described her religious viewpoint, which had already begun to develop prior to her family's deportation:

Well, everybody said there was no God when I was little. I was going, like escaping, Sunday mornings when my parents were sleeping and I just went to the church on the corner and they were singing some good songs. My father was upset that I went there and that made me start questioning and they all said there is no God. All the people who said there is no God had bitter faces, they looked so ugly and they looked so stressed out. And I thought I want to search for God myself. Which I apparently did, and I found. This I try to show in my documentary film about my teacher in India (Robinson 2003).

Over the years Hagen has consistently claimed that this search for God and religious truth was radically vindicated during a near-death experience she had after ingesting LSD when she was nineteen, a story which she reiterated in an interview with Michael Roche of *Chatter* magazine:

After I took it, I felt like I have to die, but I couldn't. And this was going on forever and like being in hell. And then I was calling God because I remembered all these stories about LSD. I remembered that I took LSD and that brought me into those circumstances. So now I know what people, like 'nature people,' they don't take LSD, but they take awaska¹⁶ in the rain forest. So it's like a way of being initiated to all the other worlds and dimensions out there. And eventually, finally, to the dimension where God resides (Roche 1995).

Like many other non-Vaiṣṇava-oriented post-punk (post-)subculture sources with whom I have spoken, Hagen rejects the idea that drugs cannot be an acceptable (potential) pathway to 'divinity' and/or religious/spiritual enlightenment, although she also mirrors the 'use common sense' ethic of many of those who do approve of the use of certain drugs—particularly hallucination-inducing ones—to achieve these ends. And, ultimately, she also mirrors the similarly repeated claim that drugs are not the only, or even the best, method for achieving these states.

¹⁶ Although Hagen and/or someone transcribing her interview has used the term for the traditional homespun cloth of the Incas, *awaska*, it is apparent that she was referring to mind-altering drugs such as peyote, psilocybin, or dimethyltryptamine (DMT)—the latter often consumed via beverages such as *Ayahuasca*.

...many years later in 1987, I found like those books and stories and things about Babaji and *Kriya-Yoga*. I know that you do not have to even take a drug or an herb or peyote or kreyote or whatever, to go out of whatever-you-might-call-it. You can do it through so-called breathing techniques. You can really go out of your body and experience Nirvana. Everyday (Roche 1995).

Since becoming a devotee of Babaji, she began appropriating Indian/Hindu dress modes and iconography into her style—even appearing on album covers and in promotional photos as Śiva, or Parvati, Kali, or another form of *Mahādevī*—the Great Goddess—and incorporating Hindu-oriented messages into her music.

Hers is a not merely a pan-Hindu, but a universalistic conception of the divine. “I follow the Sanatana Dharma: The Teachings of Christ & Babaji,” she writes to me (Hagen 2008). Indeed, she betrays no discomfort with, or ambivalence toward, this view, which is consistent with the views of Babaji and his followers in South Asia as well as those in the west. She is at ease speaking of Mary, mother of Jesus, as the divine goddess, and Hagen equates Mary’s name with that of *Mahādevī* as easily as those of the (other) more individuated aspects of *devī* (the more specifically individuated [and regional form] of the goddess), as is illustrated in the title track of her 1999 album “Return of the Mother”:

Come to me!
Hail Mary!
Come to me!
Hail Mary!
Hail Mary!

Those who have awakened to the Mother
Have given birth to the Divine Child within themselves.
They have all a certain look like no other—
Like the dog that died next to my hotel.

The return of the Mother!
The return of the Goddess of Love!
Every soul turns towards the Mother!
Every soul turns to the Goddess of Love! (Hagen 2000).

Hagen has also expanded her punk and post-punk repertoire to include Hindu *kīrtana* and *bhajana* music. In the aforementioned documentary “Om Gottes Willen—Om Namah Shivay” she promotes Babaji’s pan-Hindu teachings, and she uses her personal websites¹⁷ to promote the Babaji’ mission as well as vegetarianism/animal rights, human rights issues, and civil liberties. Hagen’s following in more recent years seems to be increasing based upon her appearance in films and television, her work in fashion (she is co-designer and part owner of Mother of Punk, a “fashions-lifestyle company”), and her internet presence.

Reflecting on Hagen’s September, 2002, visit to New York City, in which she performed with her band and premiered her film, Robert Lund of the ‘zine *New York Waste* observed,

Whether or not you subscribe to the teachings of the master [Babaji], or to any religion at all, it is uplifting to see the joy it has brought Ms. Hagen to have found such enlightenment and purpose through her experience. It is not as though she has found ‘the one way’ as some religious people seem to think they have. Hindu and Christian gods are revered alike, and it was fascinating to see Nina in the film doing a Christmas play with little Hindu children. In the scenes showing Nina with no make-up and a freshly shaven scalp, she looks a lot more like a monk than a punk, the peace and joy radiating from her beautiful face (Lund 2002).

From ‘Dick’ to *Yoni*: Gary Floyd and Devotion to Kali Mā

Another ‘old school’ punk who has embraced devotional Hinduism is Gary Floyd, lead singer of the Austin, Texas, “Commie Faggot Band,”¹⁸ the Dicks. The openly gay Floyd, a committed Marxist since his late teens, altered his political views and opted for the teachings of Ramakrishna, but remains a left-of-center adherent for whom skepticism of even his professed beliefs is a healthy option. In a 1998 interview with the punk ‘zine *Suburban Voice*, he said

...you have other people like Rama Krishna who are very good teachers that have never done anything for their sexual or economic lifestyles to improve. They have no reason to do anything. They're just good. They stay busy helping people.

¹⁷ See: <http://www.beepworld.de/members77/ninahagendas/> and <http://www.myspace.com/whymeohlord>.

¹⁸ See: http://homepages.nyu.edu/~cch223/usa/dicks_main.html.

There's a lot of people like that. Why not follow them? I'm not talking about follow them like sheep, because they don't teach that. They teach strength in your own self. That's why I like these people. I'm not going to follow anybody blindly. I didn't do that with communism, I'm not going to do that with religion. I don't do that with anything, but I also do whatever I think is right, without thinking of the repercussions in the punk rock community. Fuck that shit (*Suburban Voice* 2005).

A quick glance at Floyd's homepage reveals a deep and abiding devotion to Kali Mā, however, and friends and visitors to the site leave messages in praise of the dark Bengali goddess. A band which he started after dissolution of the Dicks, Dark Kali Ma, similarly honors his benefactor.

'Kali's Thugs': The Case of Edward and Karene Stapleton

Yet another first-generation punk musician who, like Nina Hagen, is better known for his experimental and avant-garde approach to his music is Edward Stapleton of the San Francisco 'queercore' band Nervous Gender. Stapleton, too, is a Kali devotee. His most recent band project (he still performs and records with Nervous Gender) is Kali's Thugs—the band's name an apparent attempt to re-appropriate Kali devotion while acknowledging the darker aspects associated, historically, with her worship and an ironic play on the term 'thug' as synonymous with 'punk'. The band describe their work as

a collection of Industrial, Hindi, electronic sound and wordscapes woven together to create an eclectic view of contemporary society. Subject matter ranges from Hindi/Tibetan chants to America's cultural obsession with John Lennon, violence and murder (Kali's Thugs web page).

Describing their initial interest in Hinduism, bandmate Karene Stapleton points toward translations of Hindu texts by Eknath Easwaran:

Four years ago I picked out a book for Edward as a birthday present, it was called the End of Sorrow. It was by an author I knew very little about, although I had read his book 'Dialogue with Death' a discussion of the Katha Upanishad. When I inscribed the book I wrote that it was for the both of us. Those words proved to be prophetic.

I began to read a couple of pages a day and my life changed. Edward began reading and we both found that what he had to say resonated through our being. It started small, how we treat ourselves and our immediate family. But then it began to extend out to our immediate neighborhood and then the world. It was one passage of Easwaran that led us to decide not to eat animals. He said ‘I don't eat my friends’ (Ibid.).

The pair became drawn toward Kali. Their religious convictions eventually overflowed into their music and the band was born. As Karene explains their particular *advaita* soteriology:

Life is suffering and non-suffering. We move from one to the other like a metronome. That is life, impermanence. Nothing good or bad lasts forever. Kali is a visual representation of that constant motion, that non-linear view of our place in the universe. From birth to death to birth, from suffering to non-suffering to suffering, it is all circles. Kali represents our ability to break the bonds of ignorance that keep us in those circles. We are not lambs to the slaughter and we are not the center of the universe. We are universal. That is why Kali's Thugs exists. We want to break through the boundaries of our preconceived notions about our place in the world. We do it through music and art, but most of all through our belief that *ignorance kills and knowledge saves* [emphasis original] (Ibid.).

‘Indopaganism’: Negotiation of Hindu and (Neo-)Pagan Identities

A growing minority within the otherwise European- and/or African-oriented neo-pagan community, ‘Indopagans’ are those devotees of (ostensibly) Hindu deities who resist acceptance of a Hindu identity and who merge Wicca and other neo-pagan practices and beliefs with their Hindu devotional practices. PaganWiki—a sort of pagan-friendly Wikipedia—defines ‘Indopaganism’ as

...an umbrella-term which describes the path followed by an ever-increasing number of NeoPagans, who derive the majority of their spiritual inspiration from the Hinduism and other Indo-origin spiritual paths, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The term can also be extended to those of a Hindu or Indo-tradition background who choose to incorporate elements of NeoPaganism into their practice (paganwiki.org).

While neo-pagans generally worship gods central to ‘dead’ religions such as those of Greco-Roman, Nordic, Celtic, or Egyptian antiquity, Indopagans appropriate deities from Hinduism, a ‘living,’ non-European tradition, and as such are far more vulnerable to charges of

cultural imperialism and of pillaging cultures—in a word *misappropriation*. Danielle Meierhenry, a Canadian Indopagan who is better known in pagan circles by her devotional names, Devi Spring or Prana Devi, explains the conundrum and the reason she ultimately decided to stake out her negotiated status:

When it became apparent that the Hindu gods were calling, I was told that my only option was to convert to Hinduism. So I did alot [sic] of study and contemplation towards that aim, but it never, ever felt right. I was sick and tired of feeling that I was pissing everyone off—the Wiccans were upset I wasn't worshipping Western gods, the Hindus were upset that I didn't want to completely embrace the Eastern lifestyle and culture in order to convert (or were of the opinion that one can only be born a Hindu, so there was no coming into the tradition for me at all). No one thought blending the two had any merit.

Well, for me it did. When I started blending everything clicked, and my life started to turn around and everything began to fall into place. I'm eternally grateful [sic] that Durga-Kali gave me the courage to just do what felt right! I had the greatest respect for both traditions, but each in its 'regular' forms did not work for me (Meierhenry *Yahoo!* 2008).

Meierhenry—who hosts a Yahoo internet-based support group for Indopagans scattered across the United States, Canada, and Europe—grew up listening to the grunge, industrial, gothic, and other post-punk alternative music forms. As noted previously, the gothic subculture, in particular, became a part of the habitus web of neo-paganism. Of those involved in Meierhenry's Yahoo group, a disproportionate number appear to have been involved in post-punk music subcultures/scenes, and of those a large number indicate their preference—or a past involvement with—gothic music. The vast majority, in fact, consider themselves Kali devotees.

Being Feminist by Being Hindu

Depending upon the scene, it is clear from the public discourse of performers and fans that various understandings of (post-)feminism or 'womanism'¹⁹ play a large role in their lives.

¹⁹ The term 'womanism' was coined by Alice Walker in her essay, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens". A variant of philosophical pragmatism, womanism is meant to more specifically address the empowerment needs of women—particularly those of color—ill-addressed by the 'traditional' approaches to feminism which developed in a

The role that these philosophies play is reinforced by the private dialogue of fans with whom I have engaged over the years and through the comments of respondents directly to the interviews conducted to facilitate the research for this thesis.

Previously I cited lyrics from the title song from Nina Hagen’s 2000 album “The Return of the Mother”. In addition to its immediate allusion to the ‘return’ of Hagen—the ‘Mother of Punk’—to recording and touring after a hiatus—its title also alludes to the 1999 book of the same name by Steven Harvey, former spokesman for the German-based woman guru Mother Meera. Harvey’s book, in turn, took inspiration from an observation Harvey claims Swami Aurobindo is thought to have made regarding the soteriological necessity of Śakti as a universal, feminine quality:

Toward the end of his life, the great Indian mystic Aurobindo is said to have said, ‘If there is to be a future, it will wear a crown of feminine design.’ Unless we awaken to the mystery of the sacred feminine, of the feminine as sacred, and allow it to grow into, irradiate, illuminate, and penetrate every area of our activity and to create in them all harmony, justice, peace, love, ecstasy, and balance, we will die out and take nature, or a large part of it, with us (Harvey 1995, I).

The universalistic and feminist impulse promoted by this perspective, as well as the responsibility for ecological stewardship it enfolds into those impulses, is in keeping with Hagen’s philosophy—and indeed the philosophies of a number of the subjects of my research. That is to say: embrace of a universal ‘mother’/feminine—sometimes addressed via *thealogy*—is the only grace by which humanity and the planet can be saved.

Yet for some, questions about feminist perspectives/influences and their Hindu-oriented religiosity are loaded. When asked “Is Hinduism an expression of feminism or feminist beliefs for you?” or “Do you see the Goddess as empowering to/for women?” respondents, while often

dominantly Euro-American middle class context. According to womanists, when feminist models of empowerment are extended to address cross-cultural, multi-class, and global contexts, they often dis-empower women outside of the original contexts that they address. This critique has also been proposed by post-feminists.

replying with a qualified “yes,” also tacitly or explicitly expressed concerns similar to those raised by womanists and/or post-feminists that (western) feminist constructions are constrained.

Furthermore, some point out that correspondence between Goddess aspects and women’s roles on Earth are only casually related. Despite prominently featuring messages promoting womens’ activist groups, and feminist- and women’s issues-oriented material and links, on her website even Nina Hagen objected to the framing of questions about feminism’s role in Śakti (or other forms of) Hinduism/Sanatana Dharma. In her typically eclectic approach, Hagen responds in poetic form, utilizing Rastafarian phrases such “thanks and praises,” expressing her objections to characterizing her religious worldview as ‘feminist’ (or specifically ‘Hindu’):

what is femminism hinn-du-ism
i don’t buy no ism’s !!

I follow the Great Sanatan Dharma, where all Religions have it’s origin and place therein ...
The Female and Male Aspects of God—
what is being worshipped as ‘GODDESS’—
is GOD in HER FEMALE FORM ...
so to be grateful and in awe and giving thanks and praises
for all that amazes,
for that ecstatic energy of life’s existance is the great power that sustains all beings—
that great great ENERGY OF LiFE & CONSTANT RENEWAL!!

THE MOTHER THE FATHER THE CHiLD

WHOOOOOOOOOOHOOOOOOOOO
HERE COMES THE
SOUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUL_TRRRRRRRRAiNNNNNNN (Hagen 2008).

‘Invented Identities’:

Negotiating Gender and Sexual Identity Through Hindu-Punk Hybridity

It should be abundantly clear by now that many of the individuals I have described—especially those of Śaiva, Śakti, Indopagan and/or Tantra orientations—are LBGQT and/or view these gender- and sexual identities as acceptable alternatives to the predominant sexual

paradigms. This is somewhat consistent with the doctrines of many major Hindu sects and sampradāya/paramparā, but simplistic descriptions of Hinduism(s)/Sanatana Dharma as monolithically LBGQT-friendly are highly problematic. Hinduism(s), Santatana Dharma, and/or Indopaganism is/are frequently cast as being (an) LBGQT-friendly religious perspective(s), or at least as having no position against such alternative paradigms, and there have been appeals to everything from the implication of saṁsāra —the doctrine of transmigration of souls through reincarnation—that gender/sexual identity, whether heterosexual or LBGQT, is transitory, especially when viewed through an advaita non-dualist lens.

Appeals are also often made to the presence of androgynous deities, gender-blurring bhakti practices, and such ‘third-sex’ Hindu sects/jāti as the *Hijra*, *Aravani*, *Jogappa*, and *Sakhi-Bekhi*. For example, as a bisexual, Stephen Donaldson identified with Ardhanārī (or Ardhanārīśvara), the androgynous combined form of Śiva and Śakti, and his attitude is mirrored by others to whom I have spoken. It is sometimes countered that ‘gods are gods’ and that humans who engage in such radical challenges to orthodox (patriarchal) gender roles violate authentic Hindu/Vedic teachings. Yet these counter-challenges to negotiation of gender roles and sexual orientation have done little to discourage the growth of a Hindu-punk habitus which maintains that there is plenty of room for LBGQT persons in Hinduism/Sanatana Dharma, if not outright claiming that Hinduism/Sanatana Dharma is, *de facto*, an LBGQT-friendly religious worldview. Indeed, the many westerners and South Asians who have maintained that Hinduism/Sanatana Dharma is LBGQT friendly, or at least non-judgmental, have had some support from relatively conservative ‘traditional’ Hindu groups such as the Śaiva Siddhānta Yoga Order of the Himalayan Academy:

Intensely personal matters of sex as they affect the family or individual are not legislated, but left to the judgment of those involved, subject to community laws

and customs. Hinduism neither condones nor condemns birth control, sterilization, masturbation, homosexuality, petting, polygamy or pornography. It does not exclude or draw harsh conclusions against any part of human nature, though scripture prohibits adultery and forbids abortion except to save a mother's life (Subramuniaswami, Satguru Sivaya 2003: 217).

Although my method of analysis was more qualitative than quantitative, and my samples are not sufficiently large and random enough for reliable statistical inferences to be drawn from them, initial anecdotal indications are that LBGQT orientations/identities are disproportionately present in the Hindu-punk context. Subjects who identified themselves as Indopagan, or who had passed through a phase of neopagan identity/experimentation, frequently listed bisexual/'bisexuality' or another LBGQT orientation as their sexual preference in numbers that appear to be roughly consistent with their (other) neopagan peers (Berger 2003, 75-79, 93-98, 120). Once again, however, those who are members of, or who identify with, a more orthodox sampradāya/paramparā or sectarian approach—such as Steven Donaldson—still frequently define their sexual orientation under the auspices of LBGQT description at rates far higher than those of the general public.

Loving a Difficult Woman: Punk, Transgression, and the Dark Mother

The observation by Vasudha Narayanan that the dark, fierce Bengali goddess Kali “never gets a visa” to join the multitude of deities present on the “buffet of gods and goddesses” that altars of Hindu temples in the West have tended to become is true enough.²⁰ At worst, Kali is deemed demonic (or demoniac) by both westerners and South Asians. More often, perhaps, she is viewed with suspicion and contempt by westerners, and with embarrassment by South Asian immigrants who wish to distance themselves from a goddess with a dubious reputation. Her association with ‘degraded’ (tribal) Hinduism, ‘Left-Hand’ Tantra, the infamous murderous

²⁰ Narayanan, Vasudha in lecture comments for the course “Hinduism in America,” University of Florida, January-April 2008.

‘Thuggee’ Phansigar cult—alleged to have been Kali devotees²¹—and even (inexplicably) Satanism and black magic—is certainly enough to chase off most South Asians and westerners who might be drawn to forms of Hinduism. As noted, however, a number of those involved in post-punk alternative subcultures/genres are drawn to Śakti Hindu traditions, and the majority of those tend to embrace Kali.

A few factors seem to coalesce to make Kali seem a natural choice for these people. Free of familial deities and *paramparā* or *sampradāya* that traditional (Indian) Hindus have guiding—if not outright dictating—their choices, non-Hindu westerners often feel free to pick and choose among the Hindu pantheon those deities they believe are most appropriate to them or, alternately, claim that those deities most appropriate to their spiritual needs choose them, as was the case made by Meierhenry (2008).

While often challenged on their characterization by ‘traditional’ Hindus and scholars alike, many western Hindu Śaktas and Indopagan Kali devotees view the goddess as embodying feminist or ‘womanist’ principles. She is seen as empowering as she has dominance—iconographically, at least—even over the Lord of the Cosmos, Śiva. As 41-year-old Robin Renée, a (rare) lifelong African-American fan of hardcore punk, industrial, and gothic music states,

I think that the presence of the Goddess(es) of Hinduism bring [sic] balance to the religious world that is often patriarchal. I don’t know that it is an expression of feminism, but it is wonderful for those seeking to connect with the powerfully

²¹ Scholars have recently challenged the accuracy, either in whole or in part, of this claim. See, for example, Martine Van Woerkens, *The Strangled Traveller: Colonial Imaginings and the Thugs of India*, translated by Catherine Tihanyi, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002; Parama Roy, “Discovering India, *Imagining Thuggee*” in *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Kim Wagner, “The Deconstructed Stranglers: A Reassessment of Thuggee” in *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (October 2004); Cynthia Ann Humes, “Wrestling with Kali” from *Encountering Kali in the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, edited by Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal, 145-68, (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 160-61;

feminine and/or are viewing the world through a feminist perspective. Worship of the Goddess helps further the overall vision of feminism and it is empowering for women to see their own faces in the face of the Divine (Renée 2008).

Renée's comments reflect the perspective of a lot of devotees to the Goddess—her in many forms—both Hindu and Indopagan.

Finally, Kali is a logical choice for those whose 'stock and trade,' so to speak, is transgression. This would, of course, be a good description of much of the very impulse that lay at the heart of the punk revolution: breaching boundaries and rejecting sacrosanct social mores. This explanation might at first seem to conform to a stereotypical depiction of those subcultural actors who engage in Kali devotion, or deploy her as a symbol, as merely relying upon the dark goddess for shock value. But this would belie the tantric use of the transgression and the goddess. Transgression of borders, particularly in advaita Hindu tradition, is a serious and necessary business, and many of those who have appropriated her in the West seem keenly aware of this fact. And perhaps a little punk rock-style shock value apparently doesn't hurt the mix when it comes to scaring the neighbors, Hindu and non-Hindu alike.

'Strange Folk': Hinduism and the 'Mainstream' Brit-Pop Alternative of Kula Shaker

I have more or less skipped the grunge rock movement of the late 1980's and early 1990's and the development and proliferation of more mainstream and forms of post-punk rock and post-rock music generally categorized under the auspices of the term 'alternative'. Despite the Sanskrit religio-philosophic origins of the name of the grunge movement/(post-)subculture's preeminent originating band, Nirvana, and the alternative 'nu metal' band Tantra, plus the presence of song titles such as the Smashing Pumpkins' "Shiva"—all of which do potentially lend a certain level of literacy, however potentially misinformed—and/or habitus legitimacy to experimentation with Hindu religious practices and themes, few of these bands were interested in

anything more than a cosmetic treatment or allusion to their subjects. Although highly controversial, one alternative band did, however, diverge from this pattern.

The English band Kula Shaker has blended the styles and some of the ethos of contemporary post-punk (sub)genres and (post-)subcultures with retro 1960's and 1970's sounds as do many of the alternative rock bands of the 'Britpop' movement. Popular in the U.K. and Europe, they are relatively obscure in the U.S., where their albums and singles have never charted. In the case of Kula Shaker, its choice of retro influences, rather than being drawn from, say, the mod rock that has influenced bands such as Pulp, Oasis, Blur, and Ocean Colour Scene, drew more specifically on the Beatles' India pilgrimage-influenced psychedelia. This choice was logical for the band's front man, Crispian Mills, who is a second generation Kṛṣṇa devotee. As the son of actress and ISKCON devotee Haley Mills, he grew up in the presence of European Kṛṣṇa devotees who fairly worshiped the Beatles side by side with Kṛṣṇa himself. Although he distanced himself from this music at the time, songs such as "Tattva" clearly have been influenced by the Beatles' music of that era. While the band's lyrics rarely, if ever, contain specifically Vedic/Vedantic religio-ethical pronouncements, their music has also drawn from Indian *Hindustani* and *Karāṇaka sangīta* music elements to an extent—albeit via possibly second- or third-generation simulacra—and their album cover imagery has often drawn upon Indian mythological motifs for inspiration.

In a 1997 interview with the British popular music magazine *Q*, Mills claims he had an epiphany—a realization of his own mortality at the age of eleven—and following this experience he began readings his mother's Mahābhārata and adopted her vegetarian diet—although he conceded the latter was done more to impress a young woman in whom he had a romantic interest in at the time (Sutcliffe 1997).

While most of the bands I have previously discussed, albeit being non-South Asians who self-identify as either Hindus or as adherents to a Hindu-oriented religious tradition, have seldom appropriated Hindu-related religio-cultural elements in quite the same way as Kula Shaker has. Most of the Krisnacore bands, for example, play specifically hardcore music. Even Nina Hagen, since adopting a Sanatana Dharma religious identity, has maintained that identity resolutely, distinguishing and separating her performance of kirtana from her ‘secular’ rock with very explicit acknowledgement of its ‘(sacred) Indian-ness,’ while Kula Shaker seldom makes the distinction clear. Furthermore, individuals and bands heretofore discussed in the thesis have not been as well-known and/or as controversial as Crispian Mills and Kula Shaker—save, Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders who, as previously noted, is/are not explicitly Hindu-oriented. Both Kula Shaker’s appropriation of Hindu religious and Indian cultural trappings and Mills’ ill-advised public statements have received sharp criticism, however.

The charge in *The Independent* that Mills “had dabbled with Nazism and its most potent symbol, the swastika” (Kalman 1997), is a gross misrepresentation of Mills’ use of the symbol in its traditional Hindu context—although Mill did himself no favors when, while explaining the Indic origins of the symbol, he digressed into a discussion of the “brilliance” of the magic(k) in which some Nazis reputedly dabbled.²²

On another occasion Mills restated the old colonialist (and sometimes Orientalist) saw about Indians’ happy acceptance of poverty as being ‘good for the soul’, a misstep for which he was rightly condemned. One anonymous South Asian British woman told me via a LiveJournal group for Hindus:

²² Mills later clarified his position after seeing his words in print. Recognizing the effect the digression had in blurring his overall point about his attitude toward the reprehensible ideology and actions of the Nazis, he issued an apology.

I hated kula shaker because of something Crispian Mills said in an interview once – ‘that Indians don’t mind being poor because they are spiritual’. What a load of rubbish! To me he just sounded like some posh public school-educated clueless prat, possibly trying to make himself feel better for being so wealthy or something. I could never believe that his interest in Hinduism, if he had one, was genuine (“Bengrl Tiger” 2008).

To this, another group member responded that she had heard the same pronouncement come from the mouth of a Hindu guru. “Does it make a difference whether Crispian Mills says it or the Guru?” she asked. (While it *may* make a difference who says it, it seems nonetheless universally condemnable to me.)

Additionally, as a popular white British band whose music is predominantly embraced by white fans whose ancestors have had an uncomfortable and exploitative colonialist-subaltern relationship with the South Asian population from whom these elements are being appropriated, the ethnic and religious tensions Mills and Kula Shaker have inspired is palpable. Noting the trend, Keith Cameron, a *New Music Express* columnist quipped, “He is singing a song which he says came from India and he can only be Crispian Mills from Kula Shaker. It is surely significant that no-one from India has asked for their song back” (Cameron 1997)

Postcolonial theorists specializing in ethnomusicology and post-subcultural studies such as Virinder S. Kalra, John Hutnyk, and Rupa Huq, prefer to characterize Kula Shaker as specifically mainstream—in opposition to my own, broader breakdown—and not, therefore alternative or (post-)subculturally post-punk.²³ There are some good reasons for taking seriously the sources of this tension as it relates to allegations of appropriation and the charges that their mainstream success—indeed the very reason that success was achieved—undermines some of

²³ I concede that Kula Shaker is far toward the periphery of the post-punk alternative ‘family’—especially where the D.I.Y. elements are concerned, although I still include them as they follow, roughly, in the mold of a number of bands widely considered genuine post-punk alternative.

the most important tactical reasoning of punk/post-punk music. I will address these charges in turn.

Significantly, at the time the Beatles were engaged in their ‘spiritual quest’ at the *ashram* of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh, India, some voices were raised in protest that they were ‘raiding’ other cultures and appropriating elements from them, but it was especially with the emergence of postcolonial studies that these critiques reached a fevered pitch. Kalra and Hutnyk argue, for example, that the Beatles followed in an already-long line of westerners who ‘mythologized’/Orientalized South Asia—that “Like so many other imperial travelers, most of the Beatles and their fans soon found this adventure becoming tiresome and uncomfortable” (Kalra 2001). They continue:

Kula Shaker’s inspirations are less to do with the music of South Asia, then or now, than reversions of the Beatles and the essence of a timeless, mythologized ancient India. Indeed, ever since the Beatles made their magical tour, recurrent phases of interest in the mystical East have been prevalent in Britain’s popular music (Ibid.).

Kalra and Hutnyk observe that “A hint of ‘Asian-ness’ has become the ‘authentic’ reference point for a whole series of music-culture adventures into eastern terrain,” which is commoditized and ‘resold’ to mainstream audiences. Pointing toward the Marxian ‘alienation’ problem this might pose, they ask,

...if this media and artistic exposure has affected the social and political status of a racialised minority group, or whether the birth of Asian Kool, or even Asian being Kool, signifies the end of racial violence, discrimination or Orientalist visions of the Asian ‘other’, must our answers always be negative? (Ibid.).

While they ultimately answer this question in the negative, it is not entirely clear how far this commoditization-alienation paradigm extends into the more orthodox (post-)subcultural contexts which are definitively outside of the mainstream. In fact, Kalra and Hutnyk pit a specific (post)subculture—Asian dub—against the case of Kula Shaker and other white

performers to suggest why those white performers are inauthentic and play a role—intentional or not—in alienating Asians from their authentic culture and in denying authentic artists a voice.

I will now turn to the musical source of that voice.

Rave, Techno, and the ‘Asian Underground’

The term ‘rave’ is associated with certain types of music, and it is certainly true that when one uses the terms ‘rave music’ or ‘house music’ one implies a fairly specific stable of artists who share in common certain aesthetic and ethical values that shape the production and consumption of their music. More formally, however, raves are *cultural events*—large parties organized around dance—not necessarily the music associated with them. Although there isn’t a single (sub)genre of music associated with the various rave-oriented (post-)subcultures, their music has overwhelmingly fallen under the auspices of techno (electronic dance music), to which I referred earlier in this chapter. Those who attend these dance events are typically called ‘ravers’. (Although the term rave—from ‘rave up’—first began being applied in the United Kingdom, the ‘acid house’ dance party culture from which they developed actually began in tandem with certain industrial music strains in U.S. Midwest cities such as Chicago and Detroit.)

Unlike those of the previous scenes, these alternative post-punk dance music forms became popular among British Asians (generally of South Asian ancestry) who began to take a more active role in the (post-)subcultures associated with them, and who created their own (post-)subcultures and musical (sub)genres. Simultaneously dismissing the CCCS’ claim that Asians were/are problematic ‘others’ who have never engaged in the punk and early post-punk subcultures that they catalogued on the one hand, and noting the upswing in British Asian (post-)subcultural activities on the other, Rupa Huq observes that while it is true that few British Asians were engaged in the formal punk subculture and most of the major post-punk (post-)subcultures, she still contends that the British Asians who were ‘invisible’ to the lens of CCCS

theorists—except when they were hapless, passive victims of Paki-bashing (Huq 2005:16, 34-35)—were still present and that, furthermore, they were creating their own (post-)subcultures.

Further, she writes,

By the mid-1980s, however, this state of invisibility appeared to be altering, in no small part due to the emergence and media reporting of bhangra, defined as ‘a dance style which originates from the region of Punjab, performed when celebrating the harvest... Its raw traditional sound is often supplemented with contemporary musical styles... from the UK’ (Huq 2005: 68).

Clearly- and self-defined South Asian-oriented alternative music scenes developed by the mid- to late-1990s. Although there was, and is, a pan-South Asian or, especially, a pan-British South Asian identity emphasized even by the artists and fans themselves, it is important to note that—while I am focusing more specifically on Asian dance music—artists of the so-called Asian Underground differ radically in their genres and subgenres. As Kalra and Hutnyk observe, these

cultural products are re-branded as Asian Kool, and people (sometimes) re-branded from ‘Pakis’ and other slurs to applauded participants in national creativity and British ingenuity. In this process Asian folk are collectivised even though their music, interests and styles cross multiple genres (Kalra 2001).

I am, in fact, interested in collectivizing one specific facet—Hinduism—to an extent, and so this is one reason that I will discuss certain of the Asian Underground artists to the exclusion of others. To this extent, alternative Britpop bands such as Cornershop—whose music and means of production have a much closer family resemblance to punk than does, generally, techno dance music but whose members, as British South Asians of Sikh ancestry who sing about ‘Indian-ness’ but not Hindu religious culture—generally fall outside the auspices of Hindu-punk.

However, Asian techno dance did develop acts with Hindu-specific themes. Some artists, such as DJ Cheb I Sabbah, an Algerian Jew of Berber descent, began remixing mantras, kirtanas,

and other Hindu sacred utterances with the help of fellow scenesters of South Asian descent such as Karsh Kale.

The Emergence of the ‘Asian Underground’

This raises an interesting point: there are tendencies which differentiate South Asian-descended Hindus’ approaches to religiosity in alternative music forms and (post-)subcultures from those of those of westerners who adopt Hindu/Sanatana Dharma religious identities. Westerners still tend to approach these religio-cultural systems from a *doxa*-oriented frame of mind—what one might call an echo, or the fossil, of Protestant Christianity’ and its dominant role in defining the parameters of religion and religious discourse. Religion is not merely performed, it is talked about or—more specifically in the bands’ cases—*sung* about. Ethical ideas are discussed and problems-solving is attempted. This is, in fact, the main role that music plays for the majority of these artists.

On the other hand, South Asian (diaspora) artists whom I have discussed are far less likely to discuss soteriological and ethical details. Occasionally songs will briefly touch upon such elements, but they are rarely the primary subject. More often the songs, themselves, are performed religiosity, if subtly so. Hinduism isn’t something one believes and teaches—it is something one experiences. One doesn’t profess Hinduism—one simply *is* a Hindu.

While it would be a mistake to take this bifurcation as a hard, fast rule, I think it bears up under enough scrutiny that tends to highlight a relatively common difference in worldview between the predominantly Christian doxa-focused west and a more praxis-oriented South Asian Hindu context.

In terms of Asian techno dance, performers such as Asian Dub Foundation, Apache Indian, Bally Sagoo, and others rose to such prominence in their scenes that even mainstream record companies in Britain began to take notice. As Kalra and Hutnyk note,

At the beginning of the 1990s a certain sophistication entered into the record industry with the appearance of Apache Indian, followed by the million pound signing of Bally Sagoo with Sony Records, heralding what could have been the emergence of a new dance music genre. But in the high profile bracket, what can't be controlled is often not kept on, and with both Apache and Sagoo falling out from the 'flavour of the month club', the major companies withdrew support (Kalra 2001).

Whether it is specifically colonialist/orientalist or not, I think a good case can be built that the use of cultural elements used by record companies is *misappropriation* based upon the 'throwaway' role that these performers played in their attempt to exploit a potential market, and I think Kalra, Hutnyk, and Huq have correctly identified disempowering and dehumanizing power that these capitalist ventures bring to bear when they commoditize music in such a culturally-insensitive manner.

Once again, when thinking about these issues, the idea of what is authentic religious culture—especially in terms of 'ownership' of the term 'Hindu' and the question of who has an authentic claim to systems of symbols, beliefs, and practices becomes salient. Does a South Asian Hindu by birth, such as Karsh Kale, have the right to remix mantras, let alone a white middle class kid like Ray Cappo have the right to claim a Hindu identity and sing them in punk rock songs?

Who *owns* Hinduism?

Whose Hinduism? When is Appropriation *Misappropriation*?

While one can easily see the tendency of the capitalist music industry to alienate South Asians from South Asian culture products—and one needn't look further than the nearest white racist hip-hop fan to see the fruition of some of Kalra's and Hutnyk's fears—they seem to buy into some of the individual liberty-denying communitarian ideas that (neo-)Weberians find so troubling among the old-line CCCS Marxian theorists.

I accept their claims about the disempowerment of subaltern populations through—in at least some cases, genuinely misappropriated cultural elements and alienation of members of those cultures from their own legacy—via strategies of the music industry, among others forces. However, I also think that they too readily dismiss the idea that negotiated hybridity can play an important role in bridging cultural gaps, even in cases where the performers have been non-Indian whites. Kalra and Hutnyk so strongly rely upon communitarian principles that they appear to reject hybridity unless it is internal to subaltern communities—a troubling position, as it is as explicitly unjust in terms of potentially ghettoizing and alienating the race, culture, and rights of individuals that it seeks to liberate.

Rupa Huq writes, “There should be more roles available to Asian cultural practitioners than simply appearing as ethnic court jester for white audiences or adding exotic trimmings to white cultural products” (Huq 2005: 71), but she also acknowledges that many of the British Asian musicians/performers to whom she has spoken do not want their music to be politicized or to stop their—or anyone else’s—experimentation with hybridity. In cases where hybridity appears to be central to a person’s or group’s identity—whether that ‘mixing’ comes in the form of musical elements, adopting a religious identity, singing about certain ideological themes, and/or incorporating art and other themes—they may do so not because they believe there is cultural capital to be gained by doing so, as one angry anonymous South Asian-American complained because they are “White hipsters using ‘Hindu elements’ in their music” (“Fire Fly” 2008)—but because they believe it is their religious/ethical prerogative or duty.

Ultimately, it may be impossible to find an answer to the ‘authenticity’ issue, and I am frustrated by discussions of ‘appropriation’ that tend to focus on post-colonialist discourses alone which— while particularly helpful where they have challenged the constructed notions of ‘East’

and ‘West’—are, I find, increasingly shrill in some quarters. Despite the authors’ and others’ intentions to distance themselves from such positions, these postcolonial critiques have served to emboldened manifestly unjust apologist positions of movements such as Hindutva.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION: REFLECTIONS ON PUNK ROCK PUJA

**A Breakout Movement?
On Hindu-Punk Culture's Long-Term Survival and Dissemination**

This thesis has presented the approaches to Hindu religious traditions as they are negotiated and lived by social actors who find meaning in both those traditions and in the popular punk and post-punk cultures with which they are engaged, and it has explored the ways in which these actors—both as individuals and as groups—have negotiated hybrid Hindu-punk identities. The cases in this thesis are not intended to provide a template for the broad future of Hindu religious traditions as they are approached in the west—although this could conceivably turn out to be the case—but to highlight just one way that Hinduism(s) is/are adapted, for better or for worse, to the (postmodern) context of contemporary western popular culture.

Although being far from the dominant approach in the (post-)subcultural milieu(s) that led to its emergence, the negotiated Hindu-punk identity nonetheless represents a present and growing phenomenon which—like that of the gothic punk subculture—could far transcend its roots as a humble minority sub-subculture to grow into a powerfully influential post-subcultural force that influences the practices and beliefs (and styles) of many of those who do not immediately associate themselves with the subcultures from which their inspiration came. Indeed, it may be the case that, although Krishnacore appears at first glance to be a more formally organized movement which is potentially better adapted to long-term survival—especially as an extension of the more optimally-positioned Hare Krishna new religious movement—it might be the more actively feminist/womanist and neopagan-friendly ‘Indopagan’ movement that gains wider acceptance and proliferation/dissemination as a post-subcultural force. The tendency has been to accept more narrowly- and orthodoxically-, and essentially-defined religious traditions as those which stand the test of time (in terms of their survival and

growth), but as Diana Eck (2002) and others have illustrated, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, as an expression of the ‘strength in diversity’ approach, neopaganism in general is a much more dominantly self-defined religious approach among westerners than the more doctrinally-orthodox ISKCON, and it is quite possible that, with the growth of ‘Indopaganism’ as a valid neopagan option, Indopagans—along with Śaiva and Śakti sectarians who tend to mirror many of their attitudes and practices—could represent the more substantial ‘breakout’ source for Hindu-punk hybridity.

Whose Religion(s), Whose Music, Whose (Sub-)Culture(s)?

In ending chapter 3 with a discussion of views of orthodox Hindus and/or South Asians who are ‘stakeholders’ in the (mis)use and (re)presentations of Hindu religious traditions in a largely western popular culture context, I have introduced one of the more controversial issues to be addressed when one considers how, why, to what extent, and to what end negotiated Hindu-punk hybrid practices and identities are engaged. The idea of ‘authenticity’ and its implied privilege of rights to ‘ownership’ to those to whom it belongs are critical to how these questions are answered. The acceptance and/or negotiation of Hindu religious traditions, or elements of them, has/have been a source of both tension and fellowship between South Asians and westerners who embrace these practices and beliefs. This will continue to be a contentious issue, and I do not seek to resolve it here. Yet the question of who is a valid stakeholder in Hindu communities, and what is authentically Hindu, is relevant to all involved, and how these questions are approached and answered will dictate how, and to what extent, Hindu religious traditions are incorporated as part of a negotiated tactical approach to religious/spiritual identity. I have attempted to highlight some of these tensions, both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of Hindu-oriented religiosity and the ethno-cultural identity of South Asians and South Asian immigrant communities.

Escaping to, or from, Freedom? The Tension Between Hindu and Punk Worldviews

Another concept that I have highlighted in this thesis is the ‘return’ of religious worldview and backlash against the ‘extreme’ (existentialist) freedom embraced by the early punks. While this could be seen as a strategic (re-)incorporation of tactics, the reverse might just as well be said of an overarching punk strategy being challenged by, for example straightedge asceticism or other (ostensibly) religiously-oriented tactics. Punk nihilism did come at a cost. However, the hardcore ascetic approach of straightedge brought with it trouble, too—trouble that in the eyes of many within and without the fold of straightedge was as problematic as the social ills they sought to alleviate.

Despite straightedgers’ professed opposition to “sexism, racism, and homophobia, women were marginalized within [the straightedge scene]” (Thompson, 2004: 50). Mirroring asceticism in the formally religious context, women were relegated to supporting roles—in the straightedge context as “girlfriend, fan, club worker, label worker, or photographer. Women also performed the majority of the work of recording the scene’s history” (Ibid). Ironically, despite the reputation of ISKCON as a regression from feminist ideals¹, Krishnacore has arguably provided more leadership roles to women than the non-ISKCON-oriented straightedge scene(s).

Perhaps it is worth reflecting on Craig O’Hara’s critique of the direction that the straightedge movement has taken in general, and the role of Krishnacore specifically, in the chapter of *The Philosophy of Punk* entitled “Straight Edge: A Movement that Went from Being a Minor Threat to a Conservative, Conformist No Threat”:

¹ See: “The Guru, Mayavadins, and Women: Tracing the Origins of Selected Polemical Statements in the Work of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami” by Ekkehard Lorentz (112-27), “Healing the Heart of ISKCON: The Place of Women,” by Kim Knott (291-311), “Life as a Woman on Watseka Avenue” by Nori J. Musterin (312-320), and “Race, Monarchy, and Gender: Bhaktivedanta Swami’s Social Experiment” Ekkehard Lorentz (357-90) in *The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant*, Edwin Bryant and Maria Eckstrand. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

Young kids had blindly emulated Youth of Today and when [singer] Ray [Cappo] turned [to the Hare] Krishna [movement], many followed. It is not rare to see [Hare] Krishna Straight Edge bands and records. The [Hare] Krishnas could not have asked for a better spokesperson to recruit new followers. This trend has contrasted sharply with Punks' rejection of organized religion (especially cults) as being oppressive, escapist, anti-individualistic, and just plain dumb (O'Hara, 1999: 149).

Setting aside O'Hara's understanding, not to mention his ironic use, of the term cult—which he appears to utilize only in its popular media sense—his observations mirror the critiques by many of his punk and post-punk peers regarding the ascetic tendencies present in most of the Krishnacore movement and in other straightedge-oriented movements. While the Hindu-oriented (and other) ascetic movements embraced by many within punk and post-punk scenes do appear to give adherents a sense of purpose and empowerment, the extreme freedoms that the punk revolution promoted, constructed though they may be, are still often radically constrained.

In his landmark 1941 treatise on the psychology behind the growth and popularity of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, *Escape from Freedom*, the philosopher Erich Fromm noted that individuals in contemporary societies are often paralyzed in the face of freedom and so attempt to flee from it.

They cannot go on bearing the burden of 'freedom from'; they must try to escape from freedom altogether unless they can progress from negative to positive freedom. The principal social avenues of escape in our time are the submission to a leader, as has happened in Fascist countries, and the compulsive conforming as is prevalent in our own democracy. (Fromm, 1965 [1941]: 133).

Rather than deal with the “aleness, fear, and bewilderment” (Ibid.) of a life lived in the type of existentialist freedom that punks and others strive for—theoretically, at least—many opt to surrender that freedom for the comfort that comes from a ordered and controlled existence. Humans tend “to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking” (Ibid, 140).

While this critique is, again, very much in keeping with those anarchistic and existentialist claims promoted by many punks, it strikes at the very heart of the soteriology of the *bhakti yoga* (devotional discipline) approach advocated in many Hindu religio-philosophical systems, such as that of ISKCON. Indeed, the term *dāsa*, often incorporated into the ritual names of devotees of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and other forms of devotional Hinduism, is variously translated as ‘slave’ or ‘servant’, making explicit the surrender, no matter how voluntary, of personal freedom. Devotional Hindus often counter this by observing that personal freedom is an illusion, that despite one’s perceived freedom in any situation one is always hindered and controlled—that servitude to the divine is still the greatest freedom—but this doesn’t wash with many non-Hindus who are more likely to take their cues from thinkers such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Fromm, or Chomsky than Śaṅkara or Prabhupāda.

However, O’Hara is correct in his observation that the more ascetic shift of the straightedge movement has carried with it some rather unpleasant conservative, sexist, and anti-intellectual baggage, although whether these tendencies are a necessary result of the ascetic tendency is another matter. Indeed, as I noted in chapter 3, the ascetic tradition promoted by Krishnacore movement adherents tends to have reversed, somewhat, the gender bias so strongly present in the mainstream straightedge movement.

‘Breakout’ of Hindu-Punk Negotiated Identities

I have already highlighted the fact that Hindu-punk/post-punk negotiation departs radically from Hinduism(s) as understood and practiced by the bulk of South Asian Hindus. I have also already suggested that the negotiated Hindu-Punk identities of the actors whose cases I have discussed are not necessarily intended to be a template for the future of Hinduism. But Hindu-punk hybridity is clearly present in the western popular culture context, and it appears to be a growing phenomenon. Even the growing South Asian voices in techno, rave, and world beat

rhythms and subcultures have re-contextualized their approaches to Hinduism(s). However, the post-punk mix is the growing South Asian voice in techno, rave, and world beat rhythms and subculture which often not only counters some of the messages and forms of primarily white, middle class genres of prior punk and post-punk music, but which also provides inspiration for those audiences.

Added to the problem of assuming that appropriation is, *de facto*, *misappropriation* is the long use of appropriation to the general benefit of the world's population. While separating practices and beliefs from the specific cultures in which they have had a long developmental history often does a certain level of violence and injustice to the host cultures and the beliefs and practices themselves—especially if the separations are carried out in a way that entirely alienates those cultures and the beliefs/practices—the idea of the power issues revealed by investigating the (ab)use of elements (mis)appropriated from cultures does not necessarily imply a normative ethic that forbids such approaches. Rather, it implies acknowledgment of the cultural origins of said beliefs/practices and recognition of how those beliefs/practices were applied in their original cultural context versus how they are (re-)applied in their new context. To this extent, both 'deep' socio-anthropology and post-colonial critiques provide a valuable service when it comes to this reconciliation.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I was born in Russellville, Arkansas, in 1967, the last of four children to be born to Carroll Ray Wilson, a U.S. Army Infantry officer, and Patricia Allen Wilson, a homemaker who would later become a journalist and newspaper editor. I grew up primarily in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where I graduated from Westover Senior High School in June 1986, joining the U.S. Army Engineer Corps Reserves. After spending a largely unproductive year as a History major at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, I returned to Fayetteville where I completed an Associate degree in general education studies at Fayetteville Technical Community College in June 1990. I worked a variety of jobs for nearly a decade before re-enlisting in the Army, this time as an active-duty Signal Corps communications specialist in October 1998. Shortly after completion of that four-year enlistment, I returned to academics, simultaneously completing a Bachelor of Science degree in mass communications with a concentration in journalism and a Bachelor of Arts degree in religion and philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Other autobiographical details are included in this thesis.