Krishna, Christians, and Colors: The Socially Binding Influence of Kirtan Singing at a Utah Hare Krishna Festival

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Krishna, Christians, and Colors: The Socially Binding Influence of *Kirtan* Singing at a Utah Hare Krishna Festival

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Abstract. The Utah Festival of Colors, an incarnation of the Indian festival Holi, is among the largest Hindu celebrations in the United States, yet most who participate are not Hindu. Festivalgoers playfully throw colors at each other while singing *kirtan,* or sacred chants performed at this event in reggae, rock, and dubstep as well as traditional Indian musical styles. This article explores the musical and rhetorical techniques performers use to address the practices of their religion to adherents of different faiths, invite participation in their devotional chants, and in doing so use celebratory musicking as a tool for mediating social differences.

Every year during the last weekend of March, the local Hare Krishna community in small-town Spanish Fork, Utah, hosts what is arguably the largest Hindu festival in the United States. In recent years the Utah Festival of Colors has drawn crowds of as many as 65,000 people who spend a weekend throwing paint powder in the air and at each other while singing chants based on the names of Hindu deities. It is notable that the majority of festival attendees are not Hindu. Rather, the event—including its several onstage musical performances—is shaped by a distinctive dynamic that exists between festival organizers, who are devotees of Krishna, and residents of their local community who are not. Although the festival crowd may represent all demographics found in the state of Utah, the Festival of Colors has come to be so closely associated with the local Mormon community and its iconic educational institution, Brigham Young University, that the event has earned the nickname of "BYU's Unofficial Spring Break."

The Utah Festival of Colors, held at the Sri Sri Radha Krishna temple, is a celebration of the Indian festival of Holi. The tradition of observing Holi in Utah was established in the early 1980s by temple president Caru Das together with a group he remembers as comprising "maybe five Indians, three BYU students, and six [Krishna] devotees." Caru recalls:

> We used to just very demurely, with people's permission, smear a few colors on their face. And one day a yogi who's a dear friend walked in the room. He caught me tentatively standing before a BYU student with a plate full of colors asking if I could smear a little of it on his cheek. And the yogi just grabbed a huge handful and plastered the guy. There was this dead silence—I was like, "What's going to happen now?" And the BYU student started laughing and laughing, and I was laughing, the yogi was laughing, then the colors started flying and that was the first and last year we ever had it indoors (interview, Caru Das, July 3, 2012).

Since then the event has exploded in popularity. It is safe to assume that many—if not most—festivalgoers make the trek to the Spanish Fork temple simply for the novelty of being able to throw paint on complete strangers without getting arrested. But the other major element of the celebration is the performance, led by musicians on stage, of the sacred music of *kirtan*. Kirtan, as practiced among Hare Krishna devotees, is the congregational singing of sacred chants and mantras in call-and-response format. Special focus is placed on singing the many names of Krishna, as Hare Krishnas believe that the act of calling on the name of deity invokes the literal presence of the Divine. The practice of kirtan is considered so sacred that Caru has called it the real purpose of the Festival of Colors:

> Superficially it's [about] the colors and the poking of fun at oneself and the opportunity to take ourselves a little less seriously, [to] kind of erase the barriers that we put up between each other on the basis of gender and ethnicity, economic status . . . but for us it's the music. It's the kirtan. That's what drives us . . .to hear the names of God melodiously and repetitively chanted for hours at a time, and to participate in the chant (ibid.).

Although the vast majority of those who crowd the temple property are not Hare Krishna—the actual temple community numbers less than a hundred or so—those who come for Holi engage with the sacred music of the Krishna community with great energy. In 2008, even before the festival drew the tens of thousands now expected every year, Caru made this claim:

> Look at these videos [of Holi] on YouTube and I think you'll agree with me on certain points: that this is the biggest kirtan in North America . . .[but] these are not devotees. Most of them have never been to the temple before, nor have they ever chanted the Hare Krishna mantra before today. And yet this is the biggest in terms of number and if you look at them you'll see that they're chanting as enthusiastically as any comparable group of devotees (interview, 17 July, 2007).

This intriguing musical collaboration between Hare Krishna worshippers and those who do not belong to their faith suggests some rich lines of inquiry regarding the potential for participatory music in a celebratory context to mediate across boundaries of social difference that might otherwise be contentious—between religious groups, between those who identify with Eastern or Western cultures, between the familiar and that which seems foreign. The Utah Festival of Colors offers a particularly compelling opportunity to explore how celebratory musicking may contribute to shared experiences of communitas among individuals and groups of people who, on the surface at least, appear to have little in common. In 1969 Victor Turner wrote that "a mystical character is assigned to the sentiment of human kindness in most types of liminality" (Turner 1969:105). In doing so, he linked a triad of concepts—liminality, kindness, and mystical experience, or the quest for transcendence—of great significance to theoretical considerations of communitas. Turner further identified the festival experience as a period during which an entire community collectively passes through "the liminal, 'betwixt-and-between' state intervening between the 'safe' but dull domains of routinized and classified life" (Turner 1982:29; see also Turner 1982 and Picard and Robinson 2006), collectively embracing an attitude of humility, comradeship, and willingness to laugh (Turner 1969:95).

Turner's description of the festival experience maps effectively onto my own experiences as a participant in the Utah Festival of Colors, as well as the scholarly approach I will apply to a discussion of the event in this article. I first attended the Utah Festival of Colors in 2005 as a BYU music student and a Mormon with an interest in taking an expansive and inclusive approach to the practice of my faith. My experiences at Holi, among other events at Sri Sri Radha Krishna, affected me deeply enough to inspire several years of research and participation in Hare Krishna musical culture, throughout which I have continued to maintain my own religious identity as a Mormon.

These years of research and participation have served to contextualize the inextricability of liminality, kindness, and transcendence that Turner so eloquently identified. What I first experienced as the unique character and power of Utah's Holi—and what I now see as a singular manifestation of intercultural and inherently human communitas—is integrally tied to this "mystical character" of the festival experience. The Festival of Colors is an event that is utterly "other" in relation to the experiences of everyday life and is thoroughly oriented toward good humor, good will, and belief in the goodness of the Divine. Because of these qualities, it is exquisitely suited to the task of inspiring and facilitating the personal experience of transcendence and the social experience of communitas.

In this article I examine the performance of kirtan as a key component of Holi's inspirational and socially binding power, applying ethnographic and musicological analysis to the musical and rhetorical techniques employed by

musicians at the 2012 Utah Festival of Colors.[1] I analyze and interpret selected performances at this event in order to illuminate their evident capacity to move and connect people of vastly different backgrounds and religious faiths. In particular I explore how adherents to different belief systems perceive this sacred music as being spiritually meaningful. I examine both the words with which performers address their audience and aspects of musical style, particularly the use of hybrid musical styles that combine elements of popular music with traditional Indian sounds. I suggest that the cultivation of hybrid, synergistic musical forms is crucial to the performers' ability to effectively invite their audience into musical and kinesthetic participation in the process of kirtan.

Audience immersion in such a celebratory musical experience serves to heighten a perception of kindness and transcendence within a liminal state of being that in turn facilitates awareness of social unity among those who participate. It is the link between kirtan's musical character and the festival's "mystical character" that I will foreground in this discussion. Before delving into these performances, however, it is useful to look briefly at the background and practice of kirtan. I also examine the rather unique relationship that exists between Utah's Hare Krishna and Mormon communities, a relationship that predisposes members of both groups to find commonalities of spiritual experience, and by extension, opportunities for meaningful interaction grounded in spiritual pursuits.

The Practice of Kirtan

Kirtan is a process of musical worship that takes a variety of forms among different religious groups in India. In the United States, common styles of kirtan practice are heavily influenced by the Hare Krishna movement (formally known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON), a branch of Gaudiya Vaishnavism promoted in the West by Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (1896–1977). ISKCON traces its Gaudiya Vaishnava spiritual roots, including its practice of kirtan, to the sixteenth-century saint Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who promoted kirtan singing as a simple call-and-response exchange of sacred texts with special focus given to accessible group participation and ecstatic personal devotion. While the practice of kirtan encompasses many scriptural and poetic texts as well as mantras based on various names for God, the most popular text for kirtan singing among Gaudiya Vaishnavas is the Maha Mantra, which is composed of three particularly important names:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama
Rama Rama, Hare Hare

The theology behind singing the mantra asserts that Krishna is present in his name—that the names themselves act as "perpetually accessible sonic avatara," or "Krishna in vibratory form" (Bryant 2007:15–16). Because the sound vibrations of the holy names are believed to invoke the literal, cleansing presence of the God himself, devotees believe that the spiritual benefit of singing kirtan is not limited to the singer, but includes the listener and even the environment where the names are sung. Steven Slawek, in his work on kirtan singing in Benares, quotes one singer's assertion that "by uttering good words, the pollution in the air is counteracted . . .we believe that our kirtan benefits the welfare of the whole world" (Slawek 1998:84).

There are many diverse styles of musical performance associated with the term kirtan, but the music commonly heard at ISKCON temples in the United States tends to share similar traits with that performed and broadcast from Gaudiya Vaishnava temples in India. Singing is led by a kirtan leader, or *kirtaniya*, who spontaneously strings together melodies that are usually drawn from a stockpile of common tunes that musicians simply pick up over years of chanting. Thomas Turino, speaking broadly of participatory music, describes such musical forms as "a collection of resources refashioned anew in each performance like the form, rules, and practiced moves of a game" (Turino 2008:59). The most notable trait of kirtan singing is playful exchange, and a kirtaniya may lead a congregation in anywhere from two to thirty repetitions of any given melody before choosing another. By exploiting varying tempos and contrasting melodies, a singer can shape the energy of a musical experience that generally progresses from a slow, meditative introduction to a frenzy of ecstatic energy. Throughout the process, instrumentalists spontaneously and collectively improvise an accompaniment characterized by a compelling rhythmic groove. Members of the congregation frequently stand up to dance ecstatically. Edward O. Henry notes that devotional music in India is often geared toward the "use of music as a trigger to special states of consciousness," and as Krishna devotees in the United States build upon Indian practices, their kirtans similarly tend to be "highly emotional and intensely personal" as they are attached to "intense devotion to God." (Henry 2002:49–50).

Traditional kirtan, as Hare Krishnas describe it, is commonly accompanied by the harmonium and an array of Indian folk percussion instruments, particularly hand cymbals and the *mridanga* or *khol* drum (as distinct from the South Indian *mridangam*). Traditional kirtan mimics the music heard in Indian Gaudiya Vaishnava temples, but in recent years, hybrid styles of kirtan based in rock, reggae, reggaeton, hip hop, dubstep, and other styles of popular music have gained traction among American Hare Krishnas. The performances at Utah's Holi largely play upon these popular styles.

Kirtan has historically been considered a democratizing influence among groups of people who perform it. It is associated with Bhakti Yoga, a devotional

pursuit of enlightenment characterized by "an intensely personal attitude toward devotion . . . which should be playful, random, and expressive," according to Meena Khandelwal (Khandelwal 2004:75–76). Bhakti Yoga tends to be populist and egalitarian in nature, and Milton Singer identifies "reducing the consciousness of caste, sect, and regional differences and the tensions generated by this consciousness" as a major function of Vaishnava devotional singing (Singer 1966:121). The purposes of kirtan thus encompass both transcendence and kindness. Turino describes such modes of participatory musical experience as those in which "we are fully focused on an activity that emphasizes our *sameness,*" when "deep identification [of individuals with one another] is felt as total," even "so intense that we feel, for those best moments, as if our selves had merged" (Turino 2008:18–19). Slawek's interviews with Indian kirtaniyas yield the statement by one informant that "as long as we are doing kirtan . . .we will not think in favor or against anybody, not about anyone's qualities or defects, we will just concentrate and think that we are singing kirtan" (Slawek 1998:84). Singer has noted that historically rigid social divisions were temporarily suspended during kirtan. Such divisions might re-emerge when the music fell silent, but the kirtan was nevertheless a performance of an ideal—one valued highly enough that, according to Singer, the "disconnect [between ideal and reality] may even be viewed as sin" (Singer 1966:123, 26–7).

The egalitarian nature of kirtan is in keeping with the traditions associated with Holi. Although Holi predates Bhakti practices such as kirtan, it has long offered a culturally sanctioned opportunity for chaotic misbehavior to act as a temporary release valve for social tensions. The traditional throwing of the colors is notable in that the layers of paint worn by festival participants act to erase visible markers of social distinction, and wearing the colors requires a sense of humor regarding oneself and one's status.

Although contemporary American culture is not subject to the caste divisions from which Holi and the Bhakti movement, in their original contexts, provided some release, there are other social tensions presently at work in the United States that can be usefully addressed through events like the Utah Festival of Colors that promote a state of relaxed communitas. The Colors festival seems to be a weekend dedicated to humor and playfulness, and laughter can be a key element in fostering a convergence of liminality, kindness, and transcendence. Turner identifies certain liminal personalities as "holy fools" (Turner 1969:109–10) and Thomas Csordas writes that laughter can be "objectified as sacred if [its] spontaneous occurrence is thematized as out of the ordinary, the 'otherness,' which, according to Eliade is the formal criterion of the sacred" (Csordas 2002:70). Turner identifies among the Ndembu the phenomenon of "white laughter" that "represents fellowship and good company" (Turner 1969:104). Barbara Ehrenreich uses the phrase "collective joy" to describe festival experiences, and points out that such celebratory events, unlike many other common social encounters, promote a

"love that serves to knit people together in groups larger than two" (Ehrenreich 2007:14–16).

The Utah Festival of Colors brings together not only members of differing religious groups, but a host of diverse Indian and American, traditional and contemporary, culture-specific and global signifiers. In the process, festival organizers, performers, and participants simultaneously emphasize an ideal of common humanity while framing social difference as a positive cultural resource. In doing so, they model an ideal that promotes positive encounters across potentially tricky social boundaries.

The Utah Krishna Community

The popularity of Utah's Holi is evidence of a generally positive relationship that has emerged over the last thirty years between religious groups in Spanish Fork and the surrounding area. Utah's Hare Krishna community has been built largely from the ground up by its founding couple, Caru Das and Vaibhavi Devi. In 1982, after serving at temples in Australia and San Francisco, Caru and Vaibhavi purchased land in Spanish Fork where they built a small ashram. They also purchased a radio station for the sake of broadcasting continuous Krishna conscious music because, as Caru explains, "Prabhupada always talked about broadcasting the glories of Krishna, so we just took him literally." The ISKCON community broke ground for the current temple in 1996 (Schmerker 2001). The Sri Sri Radha Krishna temple as it stands now is a beautiful example of Rajasthani architecture, framed against the Rocky Mountains in stunning contrast to the surrounding farmlands (see Figure 1).

In their efforts to get the temple built, the Krishna community found an ally in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (nicknamed the Mormon, Latter-day Saint, or LDS church). While the state of Utah in general has a large Mormon population, the LDS influence is particularly strong in the Utah Valley area south of Salt Lake City. The presence of Brigham Young University roughly twelve miles up the freeway from Sri Sri Radha Krishna only strengthens the Mormon influence in this region and helps to bolster the stereotype that Mormonism is the default religion in the area. It would be easy to expect rivalry between the two groups, and it is certainly possible to point to incidents of contention on an individual level. But a local Mormon congregation donated a crucial sum of money to the temple building fund, Mormon volunteers and youth groups took part in building the temple itself, and in the years since such groups have continued to work on maintenance projects and new installations. Caru has said of the local Mormon community, "They've been very generous, they've shown a lot of magnanimity. I'm kind of in awe of the way they've extended their hospitality and their friendship and their support to us" (interview, 17 July, 2007).

Figure 1. Sri Sri Radha Krishna Temple

The Utah Krishna community's placement in such a heavily Latter-day Saint area has impacted their outreach efforts. Rather than focusing on book distribution or chanting in public spaces, as is common at other ISKCON temples, Caru and Vaibhavi created Sri Sri Radha Krishna itself to be a significant attraction. According to Caru, "We want people to come to us . . .that was the whole idea of building a temple, is to make the mountain go to Mohammed" (ibid.). The physical beauty of the building and its surroundings are a powerful draw. Sri Sri Radha Krishna hosts several annual festivals as well as an animal park and llama farm. The temple maintains its radio station as well as an encyclopedic website and a YouTube channel. Offerings also include yoga classes and temple tours that are frequented by groups ranging from retirement home excursions to world religions classes from BYU and even groups of Mormon missionaries who visit on their day off. Caru reflects, "We help a lot of people take baby steps toward Krishna consciousness . . .our strategy has always been to get a thousand, ten thousand people to take their baby steps" (ibid.). Given the Vaishnava doctrine that spiritual activities have a benefit in future lives, Caru believes that "there are other temples making more devotees in this life. We're making more devotees in the next life" (ibid.).

Commonalities of Religious Experience

Many Mormon visitors to Sri Sri Radha Krishna are able to find common ground between their own religious ideals and those of their Hare Krishna neighbors. While Mormons' famous investment in missionary work is driven by a belief that their religion contains certain exclusive truths, LDS leaders also tend to encourage their flock to seek and honor the truths within all religions. Caru has occasionally commented with amused surprise that Mormons often tour the temple, listen to him outline certain important Vaishnava ideas, and respond, "Well, that's what we believe." Obviously, Caru reasons, that cannot be completely true. There are clear theological differences between the two faiths, aside from the biographies of Christ and Krishna, perhaps most fundamentally in doctrines regarding sin, redemption, and the means by which corruption to the soul is cleansed. Even so, there are significant resonances within the two belief systems in ideas regarding the nature of God and the various means by which a soul approaches the divine. Adherents to Krishna consciousness often use the term "God consciousness" when speaking to those of other faiths, a turn of phrase that facilitates the interpretation of key principles as relevant within other traditions. Many discussions I have heard at Krishna temples would, with a few alterations in terminology, be applicable in a Mormon Sunday School.

BYU religion professor Alonzo Gaskill, who regularly sends students to tour Sri Sri Radha Krishna, uses Krister Stendahl's term "holy envy"[2] to describe the experience that many of his students have there:

> Holy envy is the idea that you see something in another religion that your religion doesn't have, and you're struck by it, and the principle makes you feel closer to God, so that you envy it and wish it was part of your religion . . . . And so I think the things that you really find [students] writing more meaningfully about are the things they have holy envy for. Like a lot of students say, 'I wish we danced. Or got up spontaneously and sang (interview, 6 July, 2007).'

On a number of occasions I have heard Utah Mormons express a sense of spiritual kinship with their Hare Krishna neighbors, and there are several factors to consider in elucidating the sources of this kinship. One is a sense of shared marginalization in American society. The decades following the initial founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provide some of history's readiest examples of American religious intolerance, as mob violence drove the fledgling church out of the borders of the United States on the heels of an extermination order in Missouri. Even today Latter-day Saints continue to be marginalized within the context of modern Christianity, as many contemporary Christians, in the words of Stephen H. Webb, "treat Mormons as members of an exotic religious species" (Webb 2013:13).[3] Meanwhile, Hare Krishnas, in the relatively recent process of establishing a foothold in American religious culture,

have faced the opposition of "anti-cult" activists who went so far as to kidnap converts and submit them to deprogramming treatments in the 1970s (see Bromley and Shinn 1989:16–17). Mormons tend to have a sharp cultural memory of the persecution in their own communal past and often express the importance of not turning that intolerance on others. While there are unquestionably non-Mormon residents of Utah who can point to Latter-day Saints whose behavior has caused them to feel socially excluded, the ideal of promoting kinship between often misunderstood groups is gaining traction in the local community.

Another factor in the spiritual kinship between Latter-day Saints and Hare Krishnas involves certain resonances in belief and resulting commonalities in the types of experience that are perceived as being spiritual. These include an emphasis on creating a personal relationship with a personal God, a belief in spiritual gift or personal revelation, a focus on ecstatic or emotional experience, and a drive to promote community revitalization.[4] The crowd at the Festival of Colors is by no means exclusively Latter-day Saint, but for those who are or who may be influenced by Mormonism, these commonalities of spiritual experience offer a rich subtext to much that is said and sung from the stage over the course of the weekend. Caru acts as emcee throughout the event, and many of the comments he addresses to the audience show a particular sensitivity to elements of belief common to Mormons and Hare Krishnas.

Consider the emphasis on building a personal relationship with a personal God. Harvey Cox beautifully captures what many Latter-day Saints find resonant about Hare Krishna with his description of Vaishnava devotionalism as "the idea of a personal God who becomes incarnate in a particular figure revealing what God is about and eliciting a form of participation in the life of God" (Gelberg 1983:27). This devotion to a personal God may extend to a belief that worshippers can experience a divine bestowal of some truth or heavenly intervention in response to their efforts as individual seekers. Latter-day Saints teach about "personal revelation," the idea that every individual has the right—even the responsibility—to seek a personal manifestation of spiritual truths and direction regarding life decisions. I have noticed similarities in the language that Mormons often use to describe personal revelation and that used by Krishna devotees to characterize the divine communion they experience through calling on the holy names in kirtan.

During a transition between performances on Saturday afternoon in March 24, 2012, Caru tells the audience, "[God] has a great plan for your life . . . Nothing that has happened in the past can keep you from the great future that God has in plan for you." His statement is likely to stir recognition among Mormon festivalgoers. One of the most prevalent doctrinal terms used in Mormon theology is "plan of salvation," a phrase associated with the Latter-day Saint explanation of God's purposes for mankind. It is spoken of on both macro and micro levels,

as believers are encouraged to discover God's personal plan for each of them. Caru ties this idea to Hindu-based spiritual practices:

> [No past issue] keeps us from the amazing future that God has planned for us as long as we recognize and develop and work according to the talents and abilities that he gave us. That's yoga—yoga means simply "yoking" and it starts when you engage your senses in the service of he who is the lord of all senses (24 March, 2012) .

An extension of this emphasis on personal gift or revelation may involve placing special value on the contributions of individuals to the spiritual life of the community. This is in keeping with the egalitarian nature of Bhakti Yoga as well as the fact that Mormons, who have no paid clergy, attend Sunday services composed of speeches, lessons, and testimonies shared by lay members of their congregations. Caru affirms the spiritual value of the individual with the claim, "Did you know that God loves variety?" He refers to the conflicts often caused by those who object to social difference, and asserts that by contrast, "When you celebrate variety you serve God, because he also loves variety." He continues:

> Each and every one of you is created one of a kind, unique, never to be copied because God—not only does he like variety, but he doesn't cut corners. He doesn't make carbon copies. He crafted each and every one of you uniquely like a beautiful gem, a beautiful jewel. We waste too many minutes and hours and days of our lives wishing we were like somebody else . . . let's not waste time trying to be someone that God didn't create us to be (ibid.).

Hare Krishnas take a distinctly ecstatic approach to worship and great value is placed on the emotion and energy derived from experiencing that personal connection to the Divine. Spiritual enthusiasm among Latter-day Saints is generally expressed less in overtly ecstatic behavior than in a very deep emotionalism, as the culture of Mormonism tends to encourage the expression of personal spiritual experiences in distinctly emotional terms: Mormons often joke about their predilection for crying while speaking in public. Although a Mormon church meeting lacks overt expressions of ecstasy, members of a religion that teaches that "happiness is the object and design of our existence" (Smith 1976:255) and that "the song of the righteous is a prayer unto [God]" (Doctrine & Covenants 25:12), might find that the emotional tenor of an enthusiastic Hare Krishna kirtan is not difficult to understand or appreciate.

An ecstatic, dance-filled kirtan might even address some perceived tensions between Mormon worship practices and beliefs about the body. One idea that Latter-day Saints and Hare Krishnas share is a belief in an embodied God whose emanations or Spirit nevertheless fill the reaches of space. Mormons and Hare Krishnas differ, however, in their beliefs about the human body and the use of the body in worshipful activities. To Hare Krishnas the human body is inherently transitory—the phrase "I am not my body" comes up frequently in discussion.

But worship practices seek to engage the physical body as a tool of enlightenment, hence Caru's earlier-quoted statement describing yoga as "[starting] when you engage your senses in the service of he who is the lord of all senses" (ibid.).

Mormons believe that the human body, while flawed in its mortal state, is divine in origin. James E. Faulconer asserts that much as theologians discuss the anthropomorphism of God, it might be as effective "to speak of the theomorphism of human beings" (Faulconer 2005). There is an implied link between embodied human experience and the ability to perceive spiritual realities in a manner that can be interpreted through the senses. Webb writes that "knowing God is not a matter of turning our backs on the sensory information we receive in the act of perception. Knowing God is the ultimate perceptual experience, but it is not an experience of something so ultimate that our sensory system breaks down (Webb 2013:37)."

Terryl Givens specifies a connection between embodiment, emotion, and understanding the Divine with the statement that "Latter-day Saints have historically . . . turn[ed] away from a Being who is without body, parts, or passions, to a God who is both embodied and [subject to emotion]." He continues, "That God has a heart that beats in sympathy with ours is [significant]. That he feels real sorrow, rejoices with real gladness, and weeps real tears" (Givens 2009).

The doctrine of divine embodiment and its implications for human experience are thus connected to the capacity for the physical self to express deep emotional as well as spiritual realities. During Sunday worship, however, the body is kept relatively still. LDS meetings are by no means severe or austere. The talks, given by lay members of the congregation, are frequently laced with self-referential humor, personal storytelling, and tears borne of "the emotion of conviction" as Webb describes it (Webb 2013:21). The congregation, however, is expected to sit quietly in an attitude of reverence. The hymn-singing and musical performances that are intended to "invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord" nevertheless exclude certain instruments and popular genres in order to preserve a "sacred, dignified" atmosphere in which music "should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration." (Handbook 2: Administering the Church) For this reason, participation in an exuberant kirtan might, for a Latter-day Saint, express a spiritual instinct that otherwise goes unfulfilled in the specific context of organized worship—an instinct to demonstrate deep spiritual emotion in physical gestures of ecstasy. Gaskill described his students as prone to holy envy when they recognized in Krishna worship something that "[made them] feel closer to God," and specified dancing and singing as elements of worship that they admired.

The emotional, enthusiastic nature of kirtan, paired with Caru's commentary, may encourage participants to perceive transcendence in the festival experience.

Caru's words also foreground the "sentiment of human kindness" that Turner ascribed to the state of communitas as well as a belief that spiritual activities can and should be transformative of social relations and, by extension, society at large. During Holi, Caru often appeals to the crowd to identify as a group and encourages a sense of collectivity bonded by goodwill. Periodically he calls for "hug time," and in doing so he draws on the themes of variety and individuality, encouraging festivalgoers to embrace each other's differences: "We're going to take a little break now where you're going to go hug ten people that you've never met before and tell them, 'I love you. I love you. You are unique. You are one of a kind. You are a God-created jewel.' Don't stop until you've hugged at least twenty strangers—white, black, yellow, tall, thin, short, fat—I love you" (ibid.).

Caru tells me that his goal in addressing the crowd at Holi is that his message be "relevant and transformational." There is in all that is said a hope that this celebratory goodwill will have some transformational impact outside the temple grounds after the event is over. At one point Caru addresses the absolute otherness of an experience like Holi in comparison to the grinding, "nine-to-five world" and proclaims, "They see us acting like this and they get a hope for the future. This gives them a hope for a bright amazing future" (ibid.).

Festival Weekend

In the week leading up to the Utah Festival of Colors various local news outlets rush out their how-to guides for enjoying Holi (see Lake 2012 and Bailey and Clark 2012). Common recommendations include wearing sunglasses and bandanas over the nose and mouth, using shrink-wrap and plastic bags to protect cameras, and swathing car interiors with old sheets to shield upholstery from festival paint. Starting Saturday morning, school buses act as shuttles from parking areas in other parts of the city while landowners near the temple charge five dollars per vehicle to pack hundreds of cars onto their properties.

Upon entering the temple grounds, one unofficial custom becomes apparent: the tradition of wearing white clothes, or at least a white t-shirt, to better display the colors—a custom that is also popular in India. By wearing white, festival attendees embrace the liminal identity represented by the layers of paint; they also embrace the kindness associated with that liminality. One festival-goer tells me that as a behavioral science student, she is "fascinated" because "I watch people come in, and when they're first coming in they're all white [in their dress] and they're all kind of clique-ish. But as they start to get colors and everybody looks the same, you see those cliques deplete, and everyone gets unified" (personal communication, Monica Reed, 25 March, 2012). (See Figure 2, below.) Latter-day Saint attendees might feel an underlying spiritual significance in wearing white to a religious center, as Mormons wear white for ceremonial purposes such as

Figure 2. Arriving in White, Departing in Color

baptism or worship in an LDS temple. White clothing is commonly interpreted as a symbol of spiritual purity, but I have also heard many Latter-day Saints remark that the white clothing worn in the temple acts as a social equalizer. So the experience of entering a temple ground in white clothing—albeit a different temple and for a different type of activity—might also predispose Mormon festival attendees to sense transcendence as well as kindness in the embrace of a liminal state at Holi.

It is worth noting the somewhat transgressive nature of throwing paint at other attendees during the Festival of Colors and the associated release of social tension. I have referred to Holi's reputation as "BYU's Unofficial Spring Break." While most major universities in the United States offer a spring break for students' recreation, BYU—a school with a "stone-cold sober" reputation—does not. The codes of moral behavior expected of practicing Latter-day Saints are not unlike the regulative behaviors prescribed within ISKCON—no drugs, tobacco or alcohol, no extra-marital sex, etc. ISKCON even goes further in restricting such things as the consumption of meat. For members of both groups, ecstatic activities like kirtan and celebratory events like Holi can potentially resolve the tension between their transgressive impulses and their codes of moral behavior by offering alternative and controlled forms of transgression. It may even be a point of pride to make a public demonstration of the bliss that believers promise to those who forego other forms of pleasure for the sake of their spiritual convictions. A Krishna devotee at another temple told me, "we follow many regulative principles that for outside people are pretty strict, but the process [of worship] itself is so joyful [that] it becomes very easy for us to give these [things] up" (interview, Banabhatta, 24 July, 2011). Mormons and Hare Krishnas may share an interest in demonstrating that one can be not merely transgressive, but ecstatically transgressive without breaking with one's closely held values of moral behavior.

Caru offers two explanations for the skyrocketing popularity of the Utah festival, one of which is an organized countdown and color throwing every two

hours. Festivalgoers splatter each other with copious amounts of paint powder at spontaneous moments throughout the weekend (see Figure 3), but a special anticipation builds around an organized throwing, when a sudden eruption of paint engulfs the temple grounds (Figure 4). The spectacle of this explosion of color in front of the already visually striking temple has significantly raised the media profile of the event outside of Utah, particularly as videos and images posted to social media websites have enticed greater numbers of people to Holi. Throughout the weekend professional photographers and videographers—their expensive equipment swathed in protective plastic wrap—figure prominently in the festivities. Members of one production company body surf through the crowd with cameras attached to poles, taking footage from unique angles. Another company sets up a zip line from the top of the hill to the stage. The videos produced by these crews will eventually accumulate more than 5,250,000 views and 370,000 views respectively on YouTube.

Twice during the weekend, the color throwing will be combined with one of the other major traditions of Holi as celebrated in India: the burning in effigy of the demoness Holika. The name of the festival is derived from the fireproof demoness who, according to legend, attempted to kill the virtuous child Prahlad by carrying him into a fire. However, because of Prahlad's devotion to Vishnu, Holika was incinerated while the child escaped unscathed. Burning an effigy of

Figure 3. Splattering a Friend with Color

Figure 4. Color Throwing before the Burning of Holika

the demoness in the spring, a transitional period of the year, is a means of affirming the order of the universe with good ascendant over evil. For this reason two Holika effigies stand beside the stage, wrapped in plastic wrap and bearing signs that request, for the time being, "Do NOT Burn the Demon." Come midday temple volunteers douse the straw at Holika's feet with gasoline, and when the colors go up in front of the temple, Holika also goes up in flames.

Turner's earlier-quoted statement about the mystical character of liminality and kindness continues with the assertion that "in most cultures this stage of transition is brought closely in touch with beliefs in the protective and punitive powers of divine . . .beings" (Turner 1969:105). With all of the emphasis given to color throwing and singing, the Holika effigies are a continual reminder of the festival's origin story in which divine powers protect the gentle and devotionally inclined, as represented by the child Prahlad, and punish cruelty and aggression as represented by the demoness Holika. The story features Hindu characters, but at its heart it celebrates a shared ideal of goodness relevant to many in the audience.

The unified color throwing is one element of Utah's Holi that Caru credits with its popularity. The other is the use of rock as well as hip hop, reggae, and other musical styles to accompany the kirtan sung throughout the event. Early in the festival's history, temple priest and frequent kirtan leader Jai Krishna Das would organize a small rock band with a handful of Mormon friends and sing rock-style kirtan. Jai Krishna still leads a band, Ananda Groove, in a few kirtan sets, but with the festival now filling two days, several guest artists complete an impressive line-up of musicians. These groups include TK and Nam Rock, a classic rock outfit, and Larisa Stow and Shakti Tribe who also perform a hard rocking style of kirtan. The Mayapuris provide the most traditional kirtans of the festival, while the Kirtaniyas bring dubstep and electro house to this event. The headlining act is Jai Uttal, who brings a reggae band.

The audience is packed with the local college students who have long made up the bulk of the Holi crowd as well as a large contingent of young families with children. A number of middle-aged Indian couples and families look over the scope of the event from the upper deck of the temple. One Indian-born man watches the crowds of young Americans singing kirtan while covered in paint and periodically bursts out, "This is my culture" and "I am so happy!"

Musical Hybridity, or Kirtan for Newcomers

There is a moment in the Mayapuris' Saturday set that encapsulates a few key points about the musical performances at the Festival of Colors and the strategies with which performers address their message to their largely non-Hare

Krishna audience. The Mayapuris' website makes a point of their members' backgrounds with other forms of popular music—Visvambhar Sheth having played in hardcore punk bands, Kishore Rico playing reggae, and Bali Rico performing hip hop. Even so, the Mayapuris take the stage with Indian instruments and provide the major representation of traditional kirtan at this particular event. At one moment in their set, however, Bali takes the microphone for a brief hip hop interlude. "When I say hip, you say hop!" he raps, leading the audience in call-and-response on "hip," "hop," "hip," "hop." He continues a series of verbal call-and-responses: "when I say Krishna, you say rock . . .when I say Hari, you say bol . . .when I say spirit, you say soul: spirit" "soul" "spirit" "soul." Meanwhile, Kishore and Visvambhar, traditional Indian drum and flute in hands, jump up and down with their arms raised in the manner of a hip hop DJ.

There are a few elements of this short musical moment that are instructive in considering all of the performances at the festival. First of all, there is a hybridity of musical styles at work—a translation of Hare Krishna musical culture, from instruments to texts to specific melodies, into the musical languages of contemporary popular culture—the languages that many people in the audience speak.

Secondly, there is the use of music to communicate what Krishna consciousness is and what the words mean, and to do so in a manner that people of different cultural backgrounds can find meaningful. Take the progression of word combinations that Bali deploys in his call-and-response, for example. "When I say hip, you say hop," he begins, invoking the popular culture that many of the festivalgoers inhabit and appreciate. "When I say Krishna, you say rock" brings the theology and the popular culture together, proposing the two concepts as compatible—then shifts the meaning subtly to praise and affirmation when a second time through the call and response becomes "Krishna *rocks*." With "Hari/Bol" (a traditional greeting) he teaches the crowd appropriate Vaishnava Hindu terminology. And finally, with "When I say spirit, you say soul," Bali introduces a phrase—"spirit soul"—commonly used by Vaishnavas to express an idea about the spiritual nature of humanity that people of other faiths can readily appreciate.

Finally, there is the use of call-and-response. These verbal exchanges are just one of many techniques employed to draw out audience participation. Throughout the festival performers teach the crowd terminology and musical phrases as well as utilizing physical gestures to create a kinetic sense of unified action.

Through much of the weekend performers capitalize on the popularity of musical styles such as rock, reggae, and dubstep, allowing the audience members' familiarity with these genres to promote a sense of comfort with a process of mantra singing that will be new to many of them. But the musicians do at times take the opportunity to introduce elements of Indian culture that the crowd appears to find new and exciting. As the Mayapuris take the stage Saturday

afternoon carrying harmonium, mridanga, and hand cymbals, Visvambhar narrates over Bali's thunderous drum rolls: "[This is] our tribal drum from Mayapur, India, made of clay from the sacred Ganges river. Feel it in your heart!" He then launches into a series of the rapid *konnakol* vocalizations that imitate tabla drumming, to which the audience immediately responds by leaping up and down, pumping their fists in the air. Visvambhar then asks the audience to chant "Om" with him, and the crowd collectively raises their arms while chanting. The kirtan that follows utilizes a classically-inflected melody and vocal style. Audience members respond by waving their arms from side to side in a unified gesture that extends all the way up the hillside to the temple. When Bali re-enters the mix with drumming reminiscent of classical tabla, the audience leaps into the air, jumping up and down with as much energy as they expend dancing to any other musical style performed all weekend.

The Kirtaniyas, who are contemporaries and friends of the Mayapuris, take a different approach to their audience. The Kirtaniyas, as their online presence attests, have built a career on traditional kirtan. However, for this particular festival, one of their members, Nitai Prem, acts as DJ and provides electronic backing for their kirtan. As he introduces the band, frontman Vijay Krishna announces, "We thought we'd bring you some kirtan, some chanting of the names of the Lord. And some dubstep. That's it, you heard right. Dub. Step." Given my own familiarity with traditional kirtan, I can hear clearly in their performance many traditional influences that are recognizable in melodic character and particularly in Vijay's vocal styling. But Nitai provides a dense layer of electronic noise that transforms the kirtan into a musical experience the audience can identify with a very current trend.

The Kirtaniyas' offering highlights an important phenomenon in the weekend's musical performances: a tension between acoustic and electronic, traditional and modern sounds. The interplay between tradition and modernity is a fascinating aspect of ISKCON culture in general, as the movement reveres and draws legitimacy from Vedic culture while proposing that this ancient wisdom can transform and revitalize the modern world. Singer describes such processes as an attempt to "explain how traditional mythological and legendary stories, rites, and ceremonies can serve contemporary moral and social purposes" (Singer 1966:202). In performances that merge the traditional and the modern, the acoustic and the electronic, the tools of modern technology are put to the service of ancient worship practices in some compelling ways.

On Sunday morning, for example, the Mayapuris and the Kirtaniyas share a set, and their manner of introducing and concluding the hour's music demonstrates an intriguing play of the acoustic/electronic musical tension. As the bands take the stage, Nitai provides a dense background of electronic sounds—wobble-basses, crescendos of distortion, etc. As the electronic noise increases

in volume and density, Kishore points dramatically into the audience and calls out, "Utah, are you ready to move? Are you ready to move? Are you ready to move?" Then, following a hand gesture from Kishore, Nitai draws the electronic noise down to a cutoff. There is a dramatic pause. Kishore launches into a rapid mridanga groove, and the audience promptly starts to jump up and down, waving their hands in the air or clapping overhead in time. Visvambhar enters with a small pair of hand cymbals, and the audience dances enthusiastically to the rapid-fire acoustic, Indian folk percussion. An accelerando draws the audience to a near frenzy of tension. When Visvambhar launches into a series of konnakol vocalizations, the crowd roars approval and dances even harder.

After this introduction, the Mayapuris lead a reggae-inflected but fairly traditional kirtan. When the Kirtaniyas step to center stage, the acoustic instruments continue to play, but Nitai's electronics come to the forefront with loud, buzzing waves of sound that the crowd rides with enthusiasm. For a time, the electronics dominate the musical texture, while the voices singing the holy names simply add another layer to the dense conglomeration of sounds. Finally Vijay introduces the full Maha Mantra as the electronic sounds buzz toward a climax.

After this climax, Nitai's electronics gurgle downward and the acoustic, traditional elements of the kirtan—the violin, hand cymbals, and mridanga—rise from the texture. Visvambhar and Vijay exchange melismatic treatments of the phrase "Hare Krishna," all of their classical Indian vocal training on full display. It is a stunning interweaving of acoustic and electronic sounds, demonstrating the importance of the deep tradition of kirtan, regardless of what modern innovations are added to it.

Situated as they are in an event that by its nature draws people together across lines of social difference, these hybrid musical performances themselves occupy a somewhat liminal space. Homi Bhabha writes of conceptualizing an international culture that exists in "interstitial spaces and is [based not] on the exoticism of multiculturalism . . .but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the in between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity" (Bhabha 1994:56).

Cultural performances that emerge from interstitial spaces "open up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (ibid.:4). Haj Yazdiha writes that "hybridity can be seen not as a means of division or sorting out the various histories and diverse narratives to individualize identities, but rather a means of reimagining an interconnected collective" (Yazdiha 2010:36). In performances at the Festival of Colors popular styles such as rock, reggae, and dubstep emphasize common ground between audience and performer. At the same time, the traditional Indian sounds offer something that is distinctly different for those grounded in mainstream Ameri-

can musical culture. The enthusiasm with which the audience receives that offering indicates that this difference is perceived as being positive and beautiful. Performances such as this may be understood as metaphorically demonstrating the positive, productive things that can emerge from the spaces where cultures meet.

Presenting Krishna Consciousness

One of the tasks facing performers at the Festival of Colors is to explain Hare Krishna doctrine and terminology in a manner that encourages audience members with non-Hindu beliefs to nevertheless self-identify with the core concepts and intentions of Krishna consciousness. During a Mayapuris set, for example, Kishore explains the meaning behind the expression of greeting and praise "*Haribol*":

> Bol means to praise, to sing from your heart . . . to sing the praise of Hari. So what does Hari mean? Hari is a name of the Divine which means, "one who steals, one who takes away." Steals what? Your wallet? Your cell phone? Your car? Maybe if those things are stopping you from loving him and the people around you. But more importantly, what he steals is your heart. He takes away your worries . . .

During this explanation, Visvambhar starts playing a slow reggae-style lick on his harmonium. Kishore explains about Hari: "He takes away your worries, and like Bob Marley said, he said it best—how did he say it, Vish?" Visvambhar begins singing the chorus to Marley's "Three Little Birds": "Don't worry about a thing/'Cause every little thing/Is gonna be alright." Kishore holds his microphone invitingly to the audience, but almost as soon as the Marley song is recognizable, the audience is already waving their arms and singing loudly. Marley's personality and music have become for many fans a sort of pop cultural shorthand for inclusive spirituality, in part because, with songs like "Natural Mystic" and "One Love" (among others), his music does address the qualities of mystical experience and kindness that, according to Turner's formulation of communitas, promote an awareness of social unity. It is a powerful moment as performers from one religious group address an audience largely from another by singing together the songs of a musician from a third, speaking in what might be termed the universal language of Bob Marley.

The audience loves it. After several times through the chorus to "Three Little Birds," Visvambhar introduces a new melody on "Oh Haribol," reggae rhythm intact, while Kishore uses his microphone to "throw" the call-and-response back and forth with the audience. Visvambhar then connects the kirtan thematically to Marley's lyrics: "When we chant Hare Krishna, we feel all our worries going away. But let's fill that space with something positive. Let's fill it with bliss, with happiness."

Inviting Participation

Once the performers have conveyed some critical ideas about Krishna consciousness, their goal is to get the names of deity in the mouths of festival goers through verbal and musical call-and-response. Throughout the weekend performers draw a great deal of audience participation with simple verbal call-and-response as they teach the crowd various Hindu names and Sanskrit terminology. Many in the audience are then open to singing the kirtan along with the performers.

Even among those who do not sing out loud, there are few who are unwilling to participate via dance. One assumption that I've taken as a given while studying kirtan is that this rhythmically compelling style of music demands movement. Over the course of my research the term "gestures of ecstasy" has emerged as a useful way to describe body language common among kirtan participants who, for example, raise their arms above the head to indicate joy or open the hands to frame the heart at moments of contemplation. However, these very common gestures are culturally learned, and it is fascinating at an event like the Utah Holi to watch the spontaneous eruption of gestures of ecstasy among the uninitiated. Certainly excitable crowd behavior like jumping up and down while pumping the hands in the air would not be out of place among devotees during kirtan inside a Hare Krishna temple. But in the absence of some other learned gestures, one that seems to come naturally to this crowd is the conga line. At moments of great enthusiasm audience members start spontaneously forming chains and following each other around the hillside—a particularly exciting song may stimulate three or four long conga lines before its end. There are other spontaneous gestures of ecstasy. A unified side-to-side wave at a particularly melodic moment is one. Another occurs when audience members raise their hands and wave their fingers while Jai Uttal sings a melismatic and meditative treatment of "Haribol."

Throughout the festival, performers find different ways of inviting specific modes of kinesthetic participation as a means of unifying and focusing audience energy. At one point Visvambhar and Kishore draw some markedly enthusiastic singing on a fairly complex, melismatic treatment of "Haribol" by first leading the crowd in a snake-like motion of the arms that provides a kinesthetic approximation of the melodic contour they want the audience to sing. During a Kirtaniyas dubstep number Vijay instructs the crowd to "get down . . . everybody down on the ground . . . wait for it." Nearly everyone in the crowd responds to his request and crouches down through a minute of crescendo and the thickening texture of Nitai's wall of electronic sounds. The anticipation is amplified by Vijay's repeated instruction to "wait for it," until at his cue the crowd leaps in the air as one.

Exploring a kinesthetic dimension of the kirtan experience is an effective means of deepening the potential impact of participatory singing in a crowd of the uninitiated. Some non-Hare Krishnas might feel uncomfortable actually singing the kirtan, but the physical gestures provide a way to still be involved and to express the emotions of excitement and social unity that come with participating in a large-scale celebration. For those who are singing the kirtan, involving the body can deepen the sensation of having achieved a spiritually meaningful experience. Csordas, in his work on spirituality and embodiment, writes that "the most immediate and concrete means of convincing people of the reality of divine power is to involve their bodies," and that spiritual experience with a physical dimension "invokes a powerful sense of totality, encompassing the whole person" (Csordas 2002:30). The kinesthetic experience of participation is also important in helping festival goers experience the breakdown of social barriers. Shared physical experiences can cause people to sense their relationships to each other, as A.R. Radcliffe-Brown asserts in *The Andaman Islanders* with the statement that music and dance are "a means of uniting individuals into a harmonious whole and at the same time making them actually and intensely experience their relation to that unity of which they are members" (quoted in Henry 1998:117–118).

On Sunday morning Jai Uttal offers a reggae-styled kirtan on two of Krishna's other names, "Govinda Govinda Gopala," which is memorable for the audience's spontaneous but unified manner of taking part. The first several minutes of the song are dominated by a melodic treatment of the names exchanged onstage between Jai Uttal and Rasika Dasi of the Kirtaniyas. This vocal exchange produces an effect not unlike the sound of the I-Threes singing with Bob Marley while retaining the ever-important participatory signature of kirtan. Several minutes in, however, Jai introduces faster melodic material that gives the music a sense of forward motion, and with that motion the audience enters the call-and-response pattern.

About ten minutes into the performance Jai begins adding a long and heavily distorted guitar chord to each iteration of the holy names. As he does so, some members of the audience, matching tone colors with literal colors, throw handfuls of paint to mark each chord. Then an unusual moment of audience-performer interaction occurs. Whether Jai is responding to what he sees in the audience or the crowd is responding instinctually to a significant text, Jai breaks into the Maha Mantra at the same moment that a spontaneous yet unified color throwing envelops the crowd. Unlike all of the previous unified throwings, there is no countdown and no cue, but the action is virtually simultaneous anyway. The color throwing also appears to take on an aesthetic dimension for many in the audience as they turn the action of flinging paint into a dance gesture. Even as the color throwing dies down, the dancing in the audience continues to be

Figure 5. Dancing as a Group

markedly expressive and individualistic—a possible indication that dancers have found their personal connection to the transcendent spirit of the music. There are also gestures of group unity and kindness; several people in front of the stage, for example, spontaneously wrap their arms around each other and dance as a tightly bound circle (see Figure 5).

As the kirtan draws to a close, audience members mirror Jai in raising their arms high in the air, singing the mantra loudly, and punctuating the words with rhythmic hand gestures, before the instruments come in for a long final chord. The crowd roars approval. When Caru takes the stage, he announces that he has never seen anything like this spontaneous, unified color throwing—it is an indication of crowd sensitivity to the music onstage, and also an expression of the unity that the entire festival is intended to cultivate.

Conclusions

The Utah Festival of Colors offers a compelling study of musical participation in a celebratory context as a tool for the mediation of social difference. Such musical experiences offer a means of performing treasured ideals including universal good will, mutual respect among faith groups, and the valuing of diversity as a cultural resource. Turino writes that "Art is not really an 'imitation of life'"; rather "artistic processes crystallize the very essence of a good life by dramatically emphasizing the interplay of future possibilities" (Turino 2008:18). Hakim Bey describes festivals as a type of "peak experience [that]

> cannot happen every day—otherwise they would not be 'nonordinary.' But such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the entirety of a life. The shaman returns—you can't stay up on the roof forever—but things have changed, shifts and integrations have occurred—a difference is made" (Bey 2003).

To some degree the efficacy of an event like the Festival of Colors does lie in the fact that it is far outside the sphere of everyday experience; even for those familiar with the temple grounds and the music of kirtan, the opportunity to

throw paint at others is so wildly outside the realm of normative behavior as to be almost irresistible to festivalgoers. The humorous, playful state of communitas thus engendered is conducive to a poignant combination of liminal experience willingly embraced, interpersonal kindness, and the quest for transcendence.

Krister Stendahl proposed the term "holy envy" to describe an ability to experience the doctrines and practices of different faiths and to recognize their relevance to one's own spiritual path—essentially, to find transcendence in the beliefs and practices of others. The enthusiasm with which many in Utah's Mormon community embrace the cultural as well as spiritual offerings of their Hare Krishna neighbors indicates both effective communication of transcendent ideals on one hand and an ability to effectively recognize those ideals on the other.

Participation in celebratory music has a special power to facilitate this recognition as well as the internalization of these ideals. Hybrid musical styles that encompass familiar sounds while introducing new ones, especially when enhanced by participation techniques that include both kinesthetic and musical dimensions, have the capacity to model the positive integration of differences into a unified whole, engage the body as well as the emotions, and encompass a totality of experience for those who take part. Such musicking promotes the "mystical quality" of experience and "sentiment of human kindness" that are among kirtan's most fundamental purposes.

Conversations with audience members over the course of the weekend reflect on the efficacy of the Festival of Colors and the performances offered there. One observer who particularly enjoys the music is nevertheless reserved enough to specify that she didn't come to Holi seeking a spiritual experience for herself, but that "I think it's more of a draw to see what *other* people's religions are like." Others, however, take the messages presented on stage more to heart. "I think a lot of people are coming because this is a place they can freely express [themselves]," says one woman. A teenage girl tells me, "They keep on talking about happiness and love and peace and that speaks to me." A couple finishes each other's thoughts: "He was talking about love and yoga and the collective, and—" "We're all God's [children]." One woman recalls attending Hare Krishna festivals as a BYU student 25 years ago, and introduces the children and extended family she has brought today. "We love it here," she says, "We love the purity." She points out her husband who is onstage playing drums with the band that is presently leading kirtan, and describes Holi as something "we want our kids to experience" because "everyone has good [in them], peace and goodness are everywhere."

Epilogue

Earlier in the week, while volunteering to set up for the Festival of Colors, I met Mike, a relatively recent convert to Mormonism who comes to the Krishna temple for yoga classes that have become an important influence in integrating

his newfound spirituality into his life. I run into Mike again Sunday afternoon in front of the temple doors, and although we have only met once and he seems somewhat shy in his personal life, he greets me with a warm hug and an expression of happy friendship. He tells me that he has been struck by the ideas shared on stage and he thinks of people he has met with whom he could be more compassionate. As Mike reflects on leaving the festival and re-entering the world outside, he hopes that some of the communal love that is cultivated here will spread in his interactions with others. I walk away from our conversation and reflect that the intentions of the organizers and musicians at Holi are geared toward just such moments as this.

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Notes

1. This article is based on fieldwork performed at the 2012 Utah Festival of Colors as part of my dissertation research, but it also builds on three months of fieldwork at Sri Sri Radha Krishna in 2007 for my master's thesis as well as dissertation research that also included Hare Krishna festivals in New York, Los Angeles, and Alachua, Florida during 2011.

2. Theologian Krister Stendahl (1921–2008) introduced the term "holy envy" during a 1985 press conference in which he proposed "Three Rules of Religious Understanding" that are frequently quoted in inter-religious dialogue and closely associated with his name. These three rules do not appear as such in any of his published writings, but Stendahl discusses holy envy in an interview with Yehezkel Landau that appeared in the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* in 2007.

3. Renowned Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley gives a useful explanation of the theological basis of this marginalization, largely based on Mormon rejection of the Nicene Creed, in the chapter "Prophets and Creeds" in *The World and the Prophets.*

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