

Girl sues Hare cult for \$2.5M

By HAROLD BANKS
Staff Writer

Former Hare Krishna devotee Susan Murphy, 18, of Weymouth, and her mother, Mary, yesterday sued the religious movement for \$2.5 million for alleged:

False imprisonment, violations of the Massachusetts child labor laws, breach of contract, fraud, deceit, intentional infliction of mental distress, intentional destruction of the Murphy family unit, invasion of its privacy, interference with its internal relationships, seduction of a female child, and assault and battery.

The assault charge is based on the allegation that Hare Krishna "aided and abetted the acts of sexual intercourse of Damaghosa Das, (its) agent ... when Susan was a minor, not capable of consenting thereto."

The suit, filed in Dedham Superior Court, names as defendants the International Society for Krishna Consciousness of Los Angeles, its leader, and the New England chapter at 70-72 Commonwealth Ave., Boston. The leader is identified as His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada of Los Angeles.

Counsel for the Murphys — Attys. Francis J. O'Rourke, Richard Howard and Mary John Boylan — obtained a temporary order restraining the defendants from interfering with the personal liberties of the Murphys or contacting them directly or indirectly.

Wrentham District Court Judge Ellis

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STAFF PHOTO BY TED GARTLAND

Former Hare Krishna devotee Susan Murphy, left, listens as her mother, Mary, announces \$2.5 million suit against religious group.

Weymouth family sues Hare cult for \$2.5M

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F. Brown, sitting in the Superior Court, will hold a hearing Friday on a preliminary injunction sought by the Murphys.

Aja Das, president of the Boston Hare Krishna temple, denied all the allegations in the suit as "false . . . hogwash."

"As a matter of fact," he said, "the whole idea of this civil suit is so ludicrous that we're not even worried about it. It's just giving us another opportunity to educate people about the realities of our movement."

THE SUIT ALLEGES that Aja Das, identified also as Alan Attias, is cohabiting with Susan's sister, Eileen, 21, still a Hare Krishna devotee, "as his wife 'in the eyes of Krishna.'"

Susan was "inveigled" into joining the Boston temple at the age of 13 by representations, the suit said, that it "would look after all her worldly needs, teach her absolute knowledge and inner tranquility," feed her properly and provide adequate medical care.

Against the express wishes of her mother, the suit says, she was persuaded to run away with Damaghosa Das "as householders, meaning that Susan should live with him as his wife. "She was told, the suit says, that they were "married in the eyes of Krishna and no civil marriage was necessary."

She and Damaghosa Das were sent to temples in Toronto and Los Angeles "in order to escape Mary Murphy and any legal authority she might bring against Susan," the suit alleges.

In those cities, the suit says, although Susan was a minor, she was

put to work in incense factories run by Hare Krishna.

"**HER WAGES** were either given to the temple or to Damaghosa Das, and she received nothing," the suit says.

She was also sent to Krishna temples in Hawaii and West Virginia as Damaghosa Das' wife, the suit alleges.

"In West Virginia," it says, "she was forced to sleep in an attic and eat animal fodder."

Back in Boston in May, 1974, the suit says, she and her "husband" lived in an apartment occupied by Harold Conley, then president of the Boston temple.

SHE SAID SHE didn't consider herself married to Damaghosa Das and did not want to live with him any longer, the suit alleges, but "she was told women should subordinate their lives to men . . . she should do whatever was requested of her by Damaghosa Das because (he) was not only a man, but a valuable member of the Boston Krishna and one of its chief incense salesmen."

"During this time, Damaghosa Das and Susan had sexual intercourse with the knowledge, consent and approval of officers of the Boston Krishna," the suit says.

With a false identification card which said she was 18 and with a phony Social Security number, Susan was allegedly sent into the streets of Boston and neighboring towns to beg with instructions to conceal she was a Hare Krishna devotee. She was to say, the suit alleges, that "she was a missionary raising money in order to build a university in India."

SHE WAS TOLD to dress attractively

and "to use her feminine charm," the suit alleges.

"She was sent into barrooms," it charges, "to solicit money from the male patrons . . . who were often intoxicated and made indecent proposals and remarks" to her.

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Throughout all this, Susan's activities were allegedly concealed from her mother.

The suit also alleges:

- Susan was forced to rise at 2:30 a.m. to begin chanting until 6 a.m. She usually had less than five hours' sleep a night. The food she was fed was malnutritional, "at times rancid and tainted." Sometimes she got no food at all.

- Propaganda broadcast all day long through loudspeakers and threats controlled her to the point where she became totally dependent.

- "She was told to break all contact with the outside world, including her mother. She was told not to go to school, and she was told if she left the temple or 'fell down,' meaning failure to obey orders, Krishna would kill her."

- Susan returned to her mother in 1975, when the latter was ill, and finally decided to stay with her when she was told a fake passport was prepared for her so she could be sent to Germany and "be free forever from her mother's control."

At a press conference in the Boston Park Plaza Hotel after the suit was filed, mother and daughter read brief statements.

"I was finally able to return Susan to our home, where I fought successfully to free her mind from the insidious in-

fluence of the Hare Krishna people," Mrs. Murphy said. "I won that battle, but along the way my other daughter, Eileen . . ."

HER VOICE broke momentarily and she stopped until she regained her composure.

" . . . then 18 years old, was induced to leave our home by the Hare Krishna people," she said. "I am now engaged in a second struggle to rescue Eileen, who is an epileptic in need of her family and physician."

Aja Das, the temple president here, said Susan ran off at 13 with a boy who was a former Hare Krishna devotee, and traveled with him for 2½ years.

On her return to Boston, he said, she became involved with the temple for only eight months, and "four of those were spent living with her boy friend in an apartment near the temple."

"The remaining four months were spent as a devotee in the temple . . . with the permission of her mother," he said. "The temple president at that time Harold Conley was in constant communication with her mother."

"**AS FAR AS** a fake passport is concerned, if there is any truth to that statement, it occurred without the knowledge or consent of the leadership of our temple."

He said a New York judge recently dismissed a charge of false imprisonment in the case of another Hare Krishna devotee, Edward Shapiro, 22, son of Newton physician Eli Shapiro.

"We do not try to coerce or brainwash anyone," he said.