



Marie Bell (left), the former Poly Styrene, and Susan Whitby (Laura Logic) relax with Marie's daughter Celeste at their Aldenham home



Outrageous punk star Poly

OUTRAGEOUS punk princesses Poly Styrene and Laura Logic have le... drugs and strident protest behind for a strict, religious life.

They now want to revolutionise the world by the peaceful chanting of the words Hare Krishna, the Eastern god to whom they have dedicated their lives.

Poly Styrene (or Marie Bell) was lead singer with the group X-Ray-Spex, which broke up in 1979. Laura Logic — real name Susan Whitby — wrote music and performed with her for almost a year until she formed her own outfit called Essential Logic.

As they sat in bright cotton saris enjoying the brilliant sunshine on the grass outside their new home in Aldenham, near Watford, the two women seemed a long way and long time from the brash music world they once inhabited.

Susan, who once lived in what she called a "hellish squat" in Stoke Newington, said: "I was an atheist, very much into doing my own thing. I enjoyed experimenting with all drugs from the age of 15.

"This life feels very natural now — even after only a few months."

She said the transformation started when she was 18 and started visiting her best friend who had joined a temple.

"I saw how she had changed from being very violent to being peaceful and had become more of a personality."

Punk's wild star Poly finds a new mould

'I didn't know what was right... now I do'

SANDRA PERRY talks to a pair of 'reformed' punk rock stars who changed their tune to Hare Krishna

Marie, married two years ago but separated, played with her eight months old daughter, Celeste (or Radha Shakti) as she talked of her new happiness.

Gratification

"When you start in the music business you don't have much money, don't know any people, and then you are successful and get wealth — so you indulge in sense gratification. I was taking drugs but stopped at cocaine.

"I was into having a

revolution. I was wild in my lyrics. Through music I constantly wanted to change the world but I could not do that so I felt very frustrated. I didn't have sufficient knowledge to know what to change into. I didn't know what was right. Now I do."

Marie, aged 24, said that previously she could not find meaning to her life and was unhappy — but all that had changed.

Krishna, she believed, had given her the answers. She had been attracted to the religion since she was 15 and had grown closer to it over the last four years.

It led to her eventually banding X-Ray-Spex.

About her musician

husband, Adrian Bell, she said: "He is pleased I am happy. I am not an unchaste wife. Occasionally we meet. I love him enough to think it would be nice for him to become a devotee."

Prayer beads

Krishna followers are strict vegetarians and have three other basic principles no pre-marital or extra-marital sex, no wasteful activities, and no intoxicants. They include tea, coffee and cigarettes.

They rise at 3am and meet in the temple at 4.15am. They go to bed at 8.30pm. Disciples are required to chant on prayer beads 16 rounds each day, which is repeating the 'chant 108 times to complete a round.

Susan said her family, who live in Pinner, believe she has gone from one extreme to the other. Her mother would like her to go to university and believes her daughter will only spend a short time with the sect.

"I cannot say whether I am willing to spend the

rest of my life here. At the moment I am very happy and it's the best life I have found," Susan said.

Neither woman has stopped writing music and both have current solo albums, released before they joined the temple.

Susan's is called Pedigree Charm under her Laura Logic name and Marie's is called Translucents.

Both would also like to join a band again. Marie is seriously thinking about getting another group on the road as Poly Styrene.

She said: "I want people in it who would follow the four basic Krishna principles. It would be unique in the pop world. They would probably have to be other devotees and it could still be New Wave music. Any money made would be given to Lord Krishna.

"Just because we are a peaceful society, it doesn't mean we are not angry at corruption and sinful activities and the way young people are exploited by materialistic persons. We can fight that," Marie added.

Her highest chart spot was a song called Germ Free Adolescence. It is still her favourite record.

These two thoughtful and introspective women do not appear to be hankering after the fame they have given up.