

Cambridge Elements

Elements in New Religious Movements

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THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION MOVEMENT

Dana Sawyer

Maine College of Art

Cynthia Humes

Claremont McKenna College



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-36549-9 — The Transcendental Meditation Movement
Dana Sawyer, Cynthia Humes
Frontmatter
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
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103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009365499

DOI: 10.1017/9781009365482

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First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-36549-9 Paperback

ISSN 2635-232X (online)

ISSN 2635-2311 (print)

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009365482
First published online: January 2023

Dana Sawyer
Maine College of Art

Cynthia Humes
Claremont McKenna College

Author for correspondence: Dana Sawyer (dsawyer@meca.edu).

Abstract: This Element provides a comprehensive overview of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement and its offshoots. Several early assessments of the TM movement as a cult and/or new religious movement are helpful, but are brief and somewhat dated. This Element examines the TM movement's history, beginning in India in 1955, and ends with an analysis of the splinter groups that have come along in the past twenty-five years. Close consideration is given to the movement's appeal for the youth culture of the 1960s, which accounted for its initial success. The Element also looks at the marketing of the meditation technique as a scientifically endorsed practice in the 1970s, and the movement's dramatic turn inward during the 1980s. It concludes by discussing the waning of its popular appeal in the new millennium. This Element describes the social and cultural forces that helped shape the TM movement's trajectory over the decades leading to the present and shows how the most popular meditation movement in America distilled into an obscure form of Neo-Hinduism.

Keywords: meditation, Maharishi, Beatles, Neo-Hinduism, gurus, New Age, Ayur Veda, Deepak Chopra, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

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ISBNs: 9781009365499 (PB), 9781009365482 (OC)
ISSNs: 2635-232X (online), 2635-2311 (print)

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