

5,000 to 3,500 BCE:

Meditation was first developed in India, the oldest *documented* evidence of the practice of meditation are wall arts, and showing people seated in meditative postures with half-closed eyes.

1500 BCE:

Written evidence of any form of meditation was first seen in the Vedas

6th to 5th centuries BCE:

Other forms of meditation developed in Taoist China and Buddhist India.

4th century BCE:

Dhyana in early Buddhism also takes influence on Vedanta.

1st century BCE:

Early written records of the multiple levels and states of meditation in Buddhism in India are found in the sutras of the Pāli Canon.

100CE:

Buddhism was spreading in China, the Vimalakirti Sutra included a number of passages on meditation and enlightened wisdom, clearly pointing to Zen.

20 BCE:

In the west, Philo of Alexandria had written on some form of "spiritual exercises" involving attention (prosoche) and concentration.

3rd Century:

Plotinushad developed meditative techniques, which however did not attract a following among Christian meditators.

6th Century:

The first "original school" in East Asia was founded by his contemporary Zhiyi in central China. Zhiyi managed to systematically organize the various teachings that had been imported from India in a way that their relationship with each other made sense.

7th Century:

Wonhyo and Uisang promoted Korean Buddhism.

Going "lasuach" in the field - a term understood by most commentators as some type of meditative practice (Genesis 24:63). There are indications throughout the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible) that Judaism always contained a central meditative tradition.

8th Century Onwards:

With the growth of Japanese Buddhism, meditative practices were brought to and further developed in Japan.

In 653:

The Japanese monk Dosho learned of Zen during his visit to China and upon his return opened the first meditation hall in Japan, at Nara.

Meditative practices continued to arrive in Japan from China, and were subjected to modification.

Around 1227:

Dōgen returned to Japan from China, he wrote the instructions for Zazen, or sitting meditation, and conceived of a community of monks primarily focused on Zazen.

By the Middle Ages:

Early practices of Jewish meditation grew and changed. Jewish meditation practices that developed included meditative approaches to prayer, mizvot and study. Some forms of meditation involved Kabbalistic practices, and some involved approaches of Jewish philosophy.

11th and 12th Centuries:

Sufi view or Islamic mysticism involves meditative practices. Remembrance of God in Islam, which is known by the concept Dhikr is interpreted in different meditative techniques in Sufism or Islamic mysticism.

12th century:

The practice of Sufism included specific meditative techniques, and its followers practiced breathing controls and the repetition of holy words.

Between the 10th and 14th Centuries:

Eastern Christian meditation can involve the repetition of a phrase in a specific physical posture. Hesychasm was developed, particularly on Mount Athos in Greece, and continues to the present. It involves the repetition of the Jesus prayer.

Western Christian meditation progressed from the **6th century** practice of Bible reading among Benedictine monks called Lectio Divina.

16th Century:

Western Christian meditation was further developed by saints such as Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila.

18th Century:

The study of Buddhism in the West was a topic for intellectuals.

There was also some influence from the Enlightenment through the *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot (1713–1784), although he states, "I find that a meditation practitioner is often quite useless and that a contemplation practitioner is always insane".

Late 19th Century:

Meditation has spread in the West.

Accompanying increased travel and communication among cultures worldwide. Most prominent has been the transmission of Asian-derived practices to the West.

1840s and the 1880s:

Ideas about Eastern meditation had begun "seeping into American popular culture even before the American Revolution through the various sects of European occult Christianity", and such ideas "came pouring in to America during the era of the transcendentalists.

In 1893:

The World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago. It was the landmark event that increased Western awareness of meditation. This was the first time that Western audiences on American soil received Asian spiritual teachings from Asians themselves.

In 1904:

Swami Vivekananda [founded] various Vedantaashrams, Anagarika Dharmapala lectured at Harvard on Theravada Buddhist meditation.

In 1907:

Abdul Baha [toured] the US teaching the principles of Bahai, and Soyen Shaku toured and teaching Zen.

1890s:

New schools of yoga developed in Hindu revivalism. Some of these schools were introduced to the West, by Vivekananda and later gurus.

In 1927:

The first English translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* was published.

In the 1960s:

Another surge in Western interest in meditative practices began. Observers have suggested many types of explanations for this interest in Eastern meditation and revived Western contemplation.

Thomas Keating, a founder of Contemplative Outreach, wrote that "the rush to the East is a symptom of what is lacking in the West. There is a deep spiritual hunger that is not being satisfied in the West.

In the 1950s:

In addition to spiritual forms of meditation, secular forms of meditation have taken root. These were introduced in India as a modern form of Hindu meditative techniques, arrived in Australia **in the late 1950s**, and the United States and Europe **in the 1960s**.

In the 1960s:

Rather than focusing on spiritual growth, secular meditation emphasizes stress reduction, relaxation and self-improvement. Other schools of yoga were designed as secularized variants of **yoga** traditions for use by non-Hindus, e.g. the system of Transcendental Meditation popular in the 1960s, and numerous forms of Hatha Yoga derived from the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga school, which became known simply as "Yoga" in western terminology.

In 1931:

Research on meditation began, and with scientific research increasing dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s. Both spiritual and secular forms of meditation have been subjects of scientific analyses.

Beginning of the '70s:

More than a thousand studies of meditation in English have been reported.