

SNS COLLEGE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY COIMBATORE-35

COURSE NAME : BPT., Physiotherapy II Year
SUBJECT : Exercise Therapy II
UNIT : I
TOPIC : HISTORY OF MASSAGE
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Massage is one of the oldest known therapeutic modalities used across civilizations for healing, relaxation, pain relief, and restoration of physical function. The evolution of massage therapy reflects humanity's continuous attempt to understand the body and promote health through touch-based techniques.



A. Ancient India (Ayurveda) – Around 3000–1500 BC

- Ayurveda describes massage as **Abhyanga**, a vital component of daily health routines (Dinacharya).
- Used for:
 - Improving circulation
 - Reducing fatigue
 - Enhancing flexibility
 - Promoting overall wellness
- Oils (herbal, medicated) were integral to the practice.
- Massage was also part of traditional postpartum care.



B. Ancient China – Approx. 2700 BC

- Massage techniques documented in **Huangdi Neijing (The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine)**.
- Massage called *Anmo* and *Tui Na*.
- Used for:
 - Balancing Qi (energy flow)
 - Musculoskeletal pain
 - Digestive complaints
 - Fatigue
- Early Chinese physicians developed systematic manipulations still used today.



C. Ancient Egypt – Approx. 2500 BC

- Tomb paintings show healers using massage on feet and hands.
- Egyptians contributed to **early reflexology concepts**.
- Massage integrated into beauty and hygiene rituals.



D. Ancient Greece – Approx. 500–300 BC

- Greek physicians advocated massage as a part of athletic training and general health.

- **Hippocrates (Father of Medicine)** stated:

“The physician must be experienced in many things, but assuredly in rubbing.”

- Used as:

- Preparation for sports
- Recovery after physical exertion
- Management of injuries

- Techniques such as friction and kneading were documented.

Ancient Greek Massage



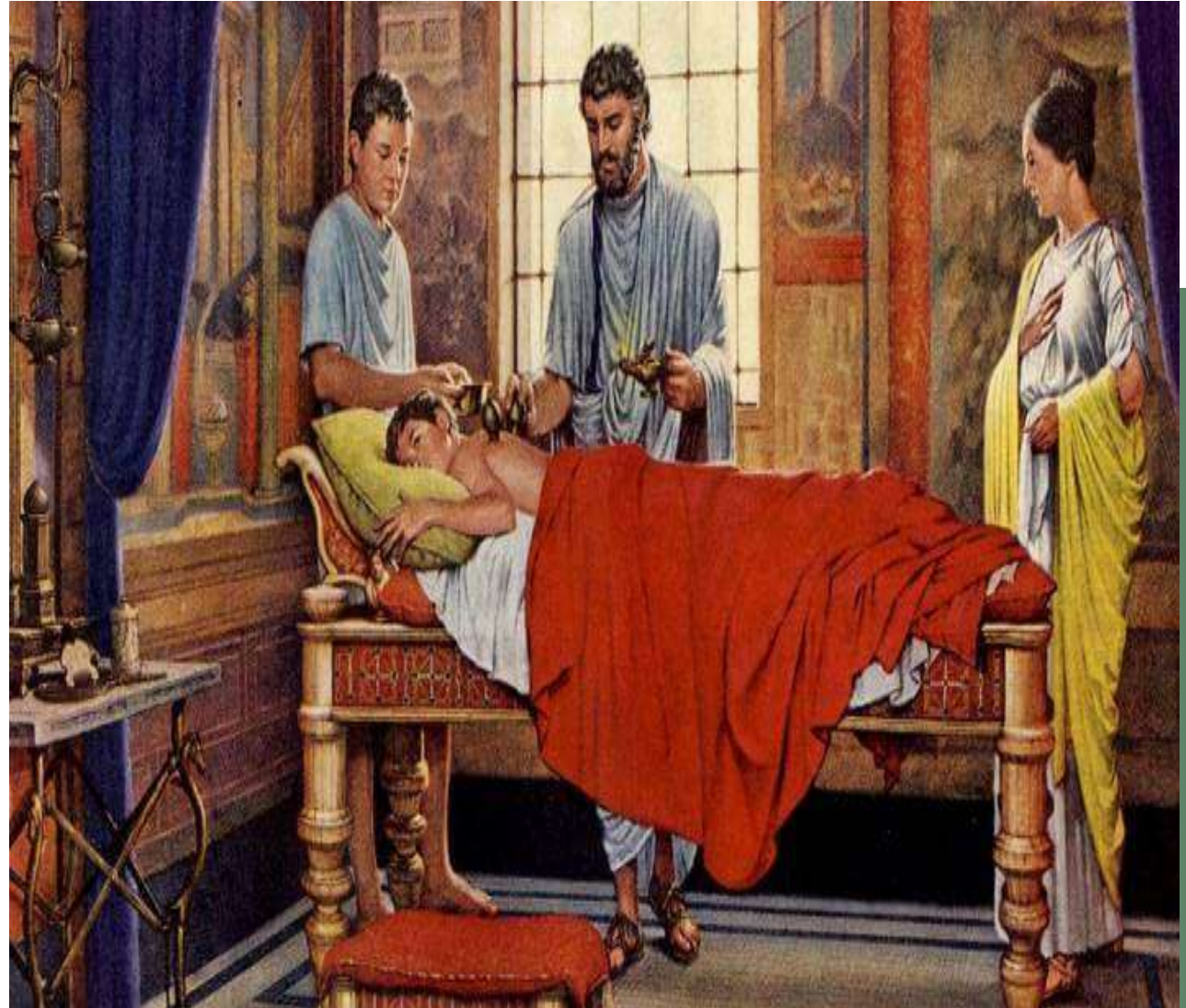
E. Ancient Rome – *Approx.* *200 BC – AD 400*

- Massage used widely in public bath houses.
- Roman physician **Galen** expanded Hippocrates' work, classifying massage techniques and prescribing them for diseases.
- Used for:
 - Muscle recovery
 - Improving circulation
 - Joint mobility



Massage in Middle Ages (5th–15th Century)

- Decline in medical knowledge in Europe due to cultural and political changes.
- Massage practices survived through:
- Arab physicians
- Monastic healers
- **Avicenna (Ibn Sina)** in Canon of Medicine described massage to regulate body temperature, circulation, and wellbeing.



A. Per Henrik Ling (Sweden)

- Founder of **Swedish Gymnastics** and the **Ling System** of medical gymnastics.
- Developed systematic massage techniques:
 - Effleurage
 - Petrissage
 - Tapotement
 - Vibration
 - Friction
- Laid foundation for **modern Swedish massage**.
- His work integrated:
 - Anatomy
 - Physiology
 - Movement therapy
 - Manual techniques

B. Advancement in Europe

- Massage accepted into hospitals and medical practice.
- Training schools were established.
- Used for orthopedic injuries, chronic pain, and neuromuscular disorders.

Used extensively for:

- Rehabilitation of injured soldiers
- Treatment of muscle fatigue
- Post-surgical recovery

Integration into Physiotherapy

Massage became part of:

Physical therapy education
Rehabilitation programs
Sports medicine
Orthopedic practice



Massage in Modern Physiotherapy (21st Century)

Massage has evolved into a structured, evidence-informed component of physiotherapy practice.

Modern roles:

- Pain management
- Muscle relaxation
- Sports performance enhancement
- Scar mobilization
- Improving joint mobility
- Reducing stress & anxiety

Types of massage used today:

- Swedish massage
- Deep tissue massage
- Myofascial release
- Sports massage
- Trigger-point therapy
- Lymphatic drainage



Case 1:

A physiotherapy student is preparing a presentation on “Traditional Massage Methods Across Cultures.” She wants to highlight how massage evolved differently in India, China, and Greece.

Questions:

- a) Identify one key contribution from each of these civilizations.
- b) How did their approaches shape modern massage techniques?

Case 2:

A patient undergoing rehab asks you why massage is considered a scientific treatment and not merely a traditional practice.

Questions:

- a) Which historical figures helped transition massage from tradition to science?
- b) How did 19th-century developments influence this transition?

