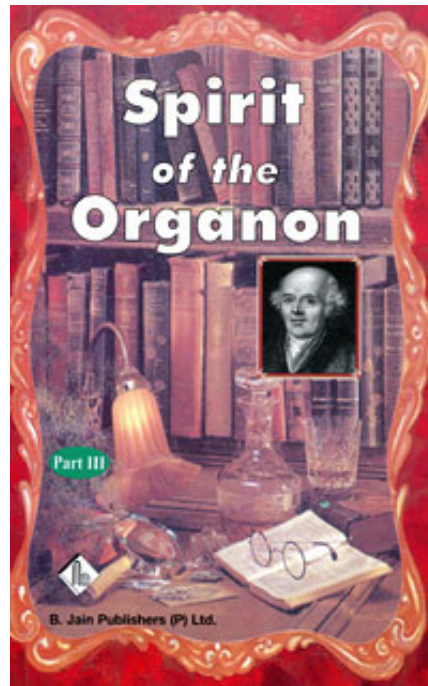


# Tapan Chandra Mondal

## Spirit of the Organon, Part 3

Reading excerpt  
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## CHAPTER 10

### MASSAGE

(Apho. 290)

Pressure makes us tense and tension can cause illness and pain. Massage helps to break the circle of stress by relaxing taut muscles and stimulating the systems of the body to work efficiently. Massage is one of the world's oldest and most powerful de-stressing techniques. In America thousands of stressed-out strivers and sole-weary shoppers drop in at 'massage shops'-called Great American Back Rubs-everyday to ease minor aches and pains. Staying fully dressed, they quickly undergo a 10-minute foot or back rub and then go about their business. Seeing the enormous demand for the various types of touch techniques, massage options have started multiplying at salons, spas, gyms and holistic health centres. But how does a good rub help in soothing the weary soul?

A massage by definition is almost always gentle manipulation of the skin and superficial muscle layers. But therapeutic massages dig deeper into muscle and tissue, relaxing muscle fibres and increasing blood flow throughout the body.

#### **Benefits :**

The long gliding motions and therapeutic rubbing strokes found in most full-body rubdowns are techniques derived from Swedish massage. Facial massage, lymphatic drainage and polarity therapy, all employ similar motions.

Acupressure (shiatsu or trigger-point treatment), on the other end of the spectrum, uses direct finger pressure (and sometimes the therapist's elbows or knees) with varying degrees of intensity on specific problem areas. Many currently popular forms of body-

work, like sports massage, often include both freely mixing techniques based on centuries-old Eastern methods with modern Western knowledge of physiology. Inherent in all schools of thought is a basic reality : Stimulated blood flow delivers nutrients to cells more efficiently, helping to heal tiny muscle tears and ease physical aches. Certain stress hormones, like cortisol, may decrease, while endorphins, the body's own natural narcotics, are released to moderate pain, elevate mood and create feeling of well-being. With deep muscle relaxation, the mind focuses more clearly. Experts also say that one of the chief benefits of a massage is psychological. The touch technique is a soothing encounter. That's why today the spiritual side of massage is an integral part of programmes at most religious retreat and holistic centres.

### **How to massage :**

**First** you'll need massage oil, available at any health food store (or buy a squeeze bottle and fill it with safflower or other vegetable oil, mixing in a drop or two of essential oil per teaspoon). A few teaspoonfuls will usually do.

**Secondly**, collect some old sheets and towels-the oil will stain clothes and bed linen.

**Thirdly**, choose a firm, steady surface. Soft mattresses absorb impacts, stealing benefits from the body. A massage table is ideal, but you can simulate its advantages by kneeling or straddling your partner on a futon, yoga mat or firm bed.

**Fourthly**, massage is a physical activity for the giver as well as the recipient. Because of the stretching and leaning required, the massager's body is open to injury. To prevent muscle strain, breathe deeply. Avoid pressing just from the hands or arms. Position your torso over your hands, but don't bear down-glide forward using your legs rather than your back. To keep hands from tiring change move frequently, or switch from palms to knuckles, thumbs, even forearms or knees. Variety protects your physiology and feels great for your mate.

Concentrate on always stroking toward the heart, not away from it. Veins have little valves in them that keep the blood flowing heartward, and you can damage those valves if you push away from the heart (especially on legs, where veins are visibly near the surface; areas with deep-set veins, like the torso, pose less of a problem).

As you explore your partner's body, encourage him or her to tell you where massaging hurts or where you are being unnecessarily gentle. The body is tougher than you think, but it's up to your partner to speak up. Massage is a relationship that requires communication.

### **Basic moves :**

Swedish massage consists of five essential strokes :

**Glide.** This is the initial stroke of any massage, known technically as effleurage. Use relaxed palms, knuckles or forearms, exerting more pressure when going toward the heart than when pulling back. This gets the blood and lymph circulating and helps spread oil. For smaller parts, like the feet, try using just your fingers.

**Rub.** This stroke (known as friction) consists of small back-and-forth sawing motions where, instead of sliding over skin, you exert more pressure and take the skin with you. Use heels, fingertips, knuckles or sides of both hands, moving them in opposite directions. Try up and down, side to side or circular moves. Unlike effleuages, this is not an even stroke, you create considerably more pressure going forward than back. This stroke, increases circulation and creates heat which can be good for problem areas.

**Knead.** In this stimulating stroke (called petrissage), you treat the skin like dough, so the stroke works best on meaty parts of the body (calves, thighs, upper arms). Using alternating hands, grasp flesh, lift and release. This stimulates the nervous system, stretches muscle fibres and is a great way to prepare the body for a game, race, or just a jog.

**Vibrate.** Done with fingers or hands, vibration is just what you'd think shaking, jiggling, stimulating or rocking. It can be slow and relaxing (a full-body rock) or rapid and invigorating (one quivering nerve point).

**Pound.** Known as tapotement, this percussion also stimulates, and is used at the end of massage so the recipient rises feeling refreshed. It's alternating-hand drumming motion. You can do it with cupped hands (good on the back for those with respiratory conditions) or use hango-drum slaps on the soles or other thick-skin areas.

This is definitely a skill to be shared, whether with a lover, family or friends. Be creative, enjoy what you are doing. Laughter, sighs and groans are all signs of success.

### **Caution :**

If you find a tender area while massaging, ease up for now and try returning to it later. Avoid touching sprains, bruises or other injured areas. Lay still hands on them instead. Other territory to be avoided : front of throat (home to airways, the carotid artery and other all-important blood vessels); soft folds or inner sides of joints (you can damage vital vessels and nerves behind the knee or elbow, along the sides of the ankle or in the crook of the groin); spine (always stroke alongside); varicose veins (where blood pools can clot and massage can dislodge a clot);

Consult your doctor before beginning a massage regimen, just as you would do before starting any new physical activity, especially if you are pregnant. For anyone with the following conditions, massage may not be appropriate : thrombosis, phlebitis or other cardiovascular disease, cancer, AIDS; boils or other skin infections, lumps or recent scar tissue, acute back pain.

### **Neck and shoulder massage :**

Position yourself behind your seated partner. Take a few deep breaths and relax.

1. Place both hands between shoulder blades and, using effleurage, let hands glide up alongside the spine toward the base of the skull (take care not to put direct pressure on the spine). Try stroking with flat hands or, for a different sensation, with fists.
2. Next, still employing an effleurage stroke, move sideways, out to one shoulder, then back to base of skull, out of the other shoulder, then lightly back to centre and straight down to other lower back.
3. With fingers, vibrate skin from base of skull out to each shoulder.
4. Use effleurage around and over shoulder blades.
5. In jerky circular motions, apply friction between the spine and shoulder blades.
6. Firmly squeeze and lift, using petrissage, from base of skull out to each shoulder.
7. Apply friction, again moving in circles at the sides of the spine, from lower back to base of skull.
8. Use effleurage along the rib cage.
9. Vibrate across entire back and shoulders.
10. Drum across the back and shoulders, using tapotement. Go wild.

### **Gistofapho. 290:**

Here belongs also the so-called massage of a vigorous good-natured person given to a chronic invalid, who though cured, still suffers from loss of flesh, weakness of digestion and lack of sleep due to slow convalescence, The muscles of the limbs, breast and back, separately grasped and moderately pressed and kneaded

arouse the life principle to reach and restore the tone of the muscles and blood and lymph vessels. The mesmeric influence of this procedure is the chief feature and it must not be used to excess in patients still hypersensitive.

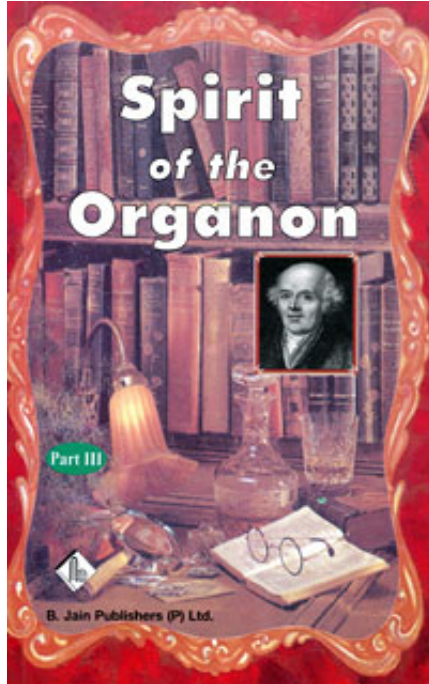
### **Exercise**

Q. 1 What is massage? Describe its benefits. How to give a good massage?

Q.2 Deal with the five essential strokes of massage.

Q.3 What are the cautions to be taken for massage ?

Q.4 Give the procedure of neck and shoulder massage.



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