

A **hands-on** exercise from Kerala

X O
X X O
X X X O
X X X X O

How to do it?

Form a circle with your peers, then repeat the above figure 10 times as follows:

X = 1 clap = 1 count

O = pause = 1 count

(repeat without interruption)

[Click here](#) and listen to this exercise as it was taught in Kerala - as seen above, then also **in reverse**.

Recombine our hands-on exercise

X O	X X X X O
X X O	X X X O
X X X O	X X O
X X X X O	X O
X X X X O	X O
X X X O	X X O
X X O	X X X O

How to do it?

Practice one figure at a time; then combine both into a single *swaying* movement as done by Kerala's drummers for dramatic purposes.

Quiz: how is the outline of the first figure called in geometry? And what does the second one remind us of?

Number quiz

1 cycle = ?

Repeat the figure while calling out the numbers as follows:

1 0

1 2 0

1 2 3 0

1 2 3 4 0

Question: How many "claps" do you get if you fit the above figure into a cycle?

Tip: first add up the numbers seen in the above figure.

But what about the pauses "0"? Each pause lengthens the figure by one count!

Accordingly, the total number of counts in the above figure is ... (?)

Let your **voice** be heard in this
exercise from Kerala!

X O
X X O
X X X O
X X X X O

How to do it?

One **half** of your group keeps repeating
the above figure times as before; the **other**
half accompanies it with the following "call
for freedom":

Tei Ama Ta Tei Ama Ta Ta
Tei Ama Ta Ti Ti Tei O

Duration: Ama = one count, O = pause
Pronounce **Tei** as "tame", **Ta** like "tub",
and **Ti** as "tip" (without "m", "b" or "p").

A geography question: Where is Kerala?



Answer: near the southern tip of India! More precisely, along the coast of the Arabian Sea. The southern tip of India is known as "Kanyakumari" which now belongs to Kerala's neighbouring state, Tamil Nadu. Find out more: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Kerala

Map © Wikimedia

A musical call for freedom

"Keralites", the natives of Kerala, cherish their freedom! This includes freedom of religion, education and, of course, equal rights for girls and women. The above "hands-on exercise from Kerala" is said to have originated in a secret call for young people to join the freedom movement during colonial times. So feel free to adapt the underlying figures in any way that suits your own quest for freedom and solidarity with others!

The syllables "Tei Ama Ta" have no meaning as such: here, as in many art forms seen all over the country, syllables are used to coordinate all kinds of movements: for drumming, drama, martial arts and dance choreography just as rowing a large boat together. The resulting figures have helped learners to remember intricacies without notation for centuries.

The above figure (vaitari) was shared by Thrikkamburam Krishnan Kutty Marar, a respected drumming teacher in 2005, during a research project supported by the Bern University of the Arts (Switzerland). [Learn more](#) >>

Historical background

People from all walks of life joined the Indian independence movement led by "Mahatma" Gandhi: rich and poor including many artists and writers from all over the country. For instance, a newspaper still popular in Kerala, "Mathrubhumi" was founded by K. P. Kesava Menon, an active volunteer in the Indian freedom struggle against the British. — Learn more above this movement on [Wikipedia!](#)