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Title

The Dancing History Collection: Cultural Dances, Part 1. Chapter 3: India, Krishna Steals the Buttersweets

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3qg8b4vn>

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Publication Date

2001

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3

INDIA: KRISHNA STEALS THE BUTTERSWEETS

Jill Beck and Indrani

3.1 EXCERPTED SUMMARY

The roots of many Indian dances are in religious story and practice. However, many of these dances are now performed simply as entertainment, as a result of a long process of the secularization of dance in contemporary India. The dance tradition in India is thousands of years old, but it has not been continuous. Many interruptions and revivals through history have produced a tradition that is both ancient and changing. Most dances we see today are revivals of traditional dances, restaged by various authorities. Indrani, who restaged *Krishna Steals the Butter Sweets* while a faculty member at The Juilliard School, was one such cultural expert. Krishna is popularly believed to be the most important of several human incarnations of the god Vishnu (the Preserver). Together with Brahma and Siva, Vishnu forms the Hindu trinity, and is considered by many to be its supreme god. The story of this dance about Krishna casts him in a playful, clever role, reveling in the delights of sweets and temptations.

3.2 MATERIALS

Audio CD
Ankle bells

3.3 OBJECTIVES

1. To experience that Indian dance is linked with story-telling and communication
2. To observe, experience and recognize distinctive features of Indian dance: its stance with bent knees and turn-out in the legs; complex uses of the hands (mudras); and facial expressions
3. To perceive and interpret dance gestures, and to observe that the same dancer can portray multiple characters and movement qualities, in order to communicate personalities and story
4. To apply a basic vocabulary for discussing movement, including the following terms: stance (how one stands); gestures (in this dance, gestures indicate primarily actions of the arms and head); turning the body vs. tilting (leaning) the body; light versus strong energy; quick versus sustained action; isolation (using one body part separately from the others)

3.4 RECONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES**Preparatory**

1. Become familiar with the general story of Krishna, and with the specific story of this dance. The sequence of events in the story determines the sequence of actions in the dance, and will facilitate learning and memory of the choreography.

2. Listen to the music and find the basic underlying beat. Identify the musical introduction, the beginning of the metered song, and the entry of the drum.
3. Practice mudras (use photos as guide) and learn what each mudra means in the dance. Learn that mudras in a sequence, with walking and posing, can make a dance. Perform mudras while music is playing.

Dance

1. Practice walking heel to whole-foot with mudras, and sound the ankle bells.
2. Learn feminine half of the dance (measures 1-10), by proceeding one measure at a time. Coordinations may be unfamiliar, and therefore the pace of reconstruction will need to be slow and careful. Notice the recurring rhythmic pattern of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5& 6& 7& 8. Actions in the first halves of measures quicken in the second.
3. Learn masculine half of the dance (measures 11-19). Practice the changing movement qualities and roles. Use the transitional measure (measure 10) as a time to fade out of the milkmaid character and fade into the Krishna character. Notice the disappearance of the rhythmic pattern.
4. Perform the entire dance, with coaching about character and story-telling.

Discussion

1. Define and discuss the dance terms listed in objective 4, as they help to understand the dance.
2. Compare with other dances in this Collection. (For example, in *Olokun*, percussion communicates long-distance and non-verbally; in *Krishna*, mudras communicate similarly. How does the storytelling in *Krishna* compare with that of *Ganh Lua*? etc.)
3. Compare mudras with signing.

3.5 ASSESSMENT

1. View a second Indian dance with mudras. Are there any recognizable gestures? Can a story be formulated from watching the dance?
2. Practice *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets* and perform it with clarity of gesture, rhythm, and facial expression.
3. Have dancers create their own series of mudras and explain them. If the dancers find this difficult, give them a list of words to make mudras for, or give them a short story. Put the mudras into a sequence with walking and posing to make a dance. Choose music that blends with the theme of the dance-story.

3.6 INDIA: Dance in Hinduism and the Bharata Natya tradition

Ragini Devi, in her book Dance Dialects of India, wrote of the spirituality that is at the core of traditional Indian dance. “In India, all forms of art have a sacred origin, and the inner experience of the soul finds its highest expression in music and dance.”¹ Indian dance was created with the most elevated goals in mind: to find harmony between religious belief and physical expression; and to bring the dancer and audience to a state of understanding of experience that is different in quality from most other moments in life.

The dance that is featured in this chapter is based on a story from Hinduism, the most important religion of India. The Hindu attitude toward art in general is that it is an expression of the inner beauty or the divine in people. Other world religions may object to dancing, or find it unsuitable for the expression of spirituality, but dancing has been glorified by Hinduism for thousands of years.

The oldest available text on Hindu performance is the Natya Sastra, presumed to have been written in the second century by the sage Bharata. In this book, drama is defined as involving speech, mime, dancing, and music. This means that for the last 2,000 years, the plays and stories that have been written to explain and renew Hindu beliefs have included dancing. Those Westerners who tend to think of ballet as a very old art form, need to remember that Indian dance has deep roots into a timeless past, measuring its life in thousands rather than hundreds of years.

Two ancient and well-known epics of Hindu literature, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are, in effect, danced plays. Their stories capture the ideals, beliefs, and characters of the Hindu religion. Performances of these lengthy tales have always been a principal means of guarding and perpetuating the knowledge and values of Hinduism. They have functioned historically, as Ragini Devi says, as “precious unwritten literature.”² For a population that did not own or read books, dancing and plays were traditionally a means of passing on what was important to know. Re-telling the stories, by performing the dances and plays, was and is “a sign of devotion.”³

India is a country that has been invaded several times, and occupied by foreign powers for lengthy periods. Its dancing traditions have suffered from this; dance teaching and performance have been disrupted. The latest attempt to revive ancient dance practices and compositions was undertaken in the 1930's. The state of Madras, in the south of the country, has been the center for this revival.

Bharata Natya

There are many different dance traditions in India. Look at Illustration 25, and notice that different areas of the huge subcontinent of India have nurtured dance traditions with such names as KATHAKALI, MANIPURI, and CHOW. Locate the part of India from which BHARATA NATYA comes.

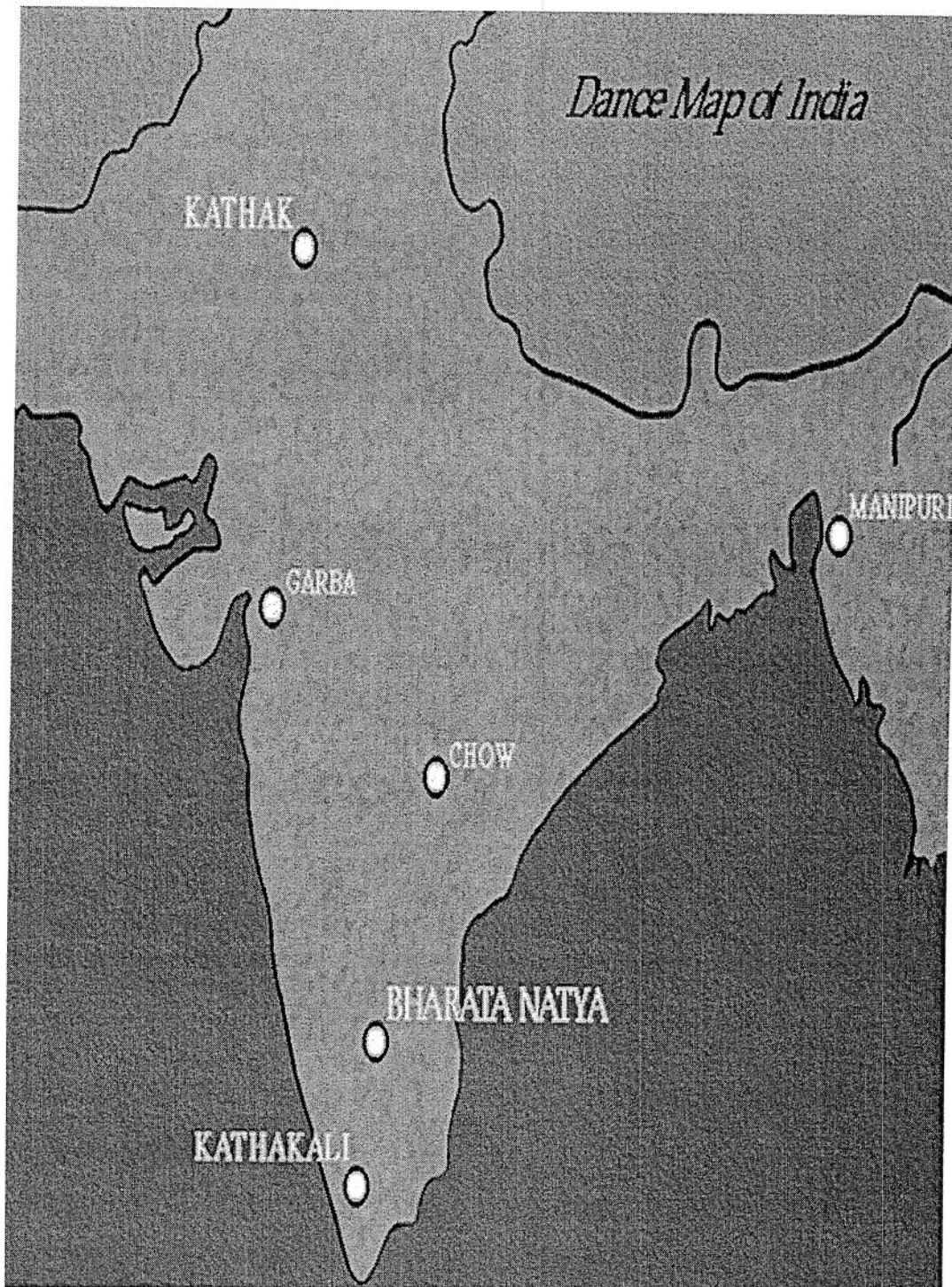


Illustration 25
MAP OF INDIA
Showing the area that specializes in Bharata Natya Dance

The Bharata Natya style, usually performed by professional or highly trained dancers, is characterized by continuous footwork, precise rhythmic movements of the hands, and curving shapes in the body. But most importantly, it is dance that tells a story. Because of this, the gestures of the hands and facial expressions need to be performed clearly and in a somewhat exaggerated style. The audience must receive at least a general idea of what the dancer is trying to communicate. The hand gestures of Bharata Natya are specific. A good way to begin to reconstruct the dance in this chapter is by practicing its hand positions. The names of these hand positions are pronounced in Selection 11 of the audio CD.



Illustration 26

A. Anjali (prayer or salutation)

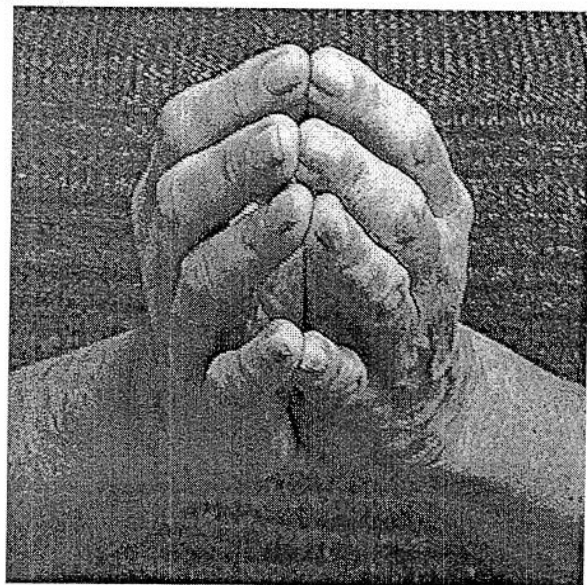


Illustration 27

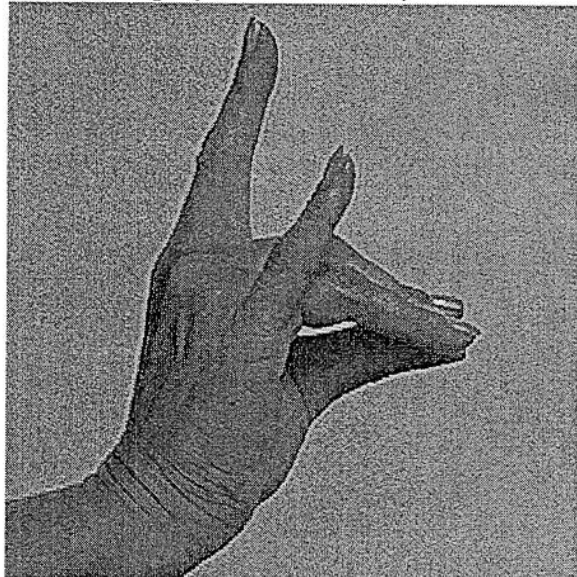


Illustration 28

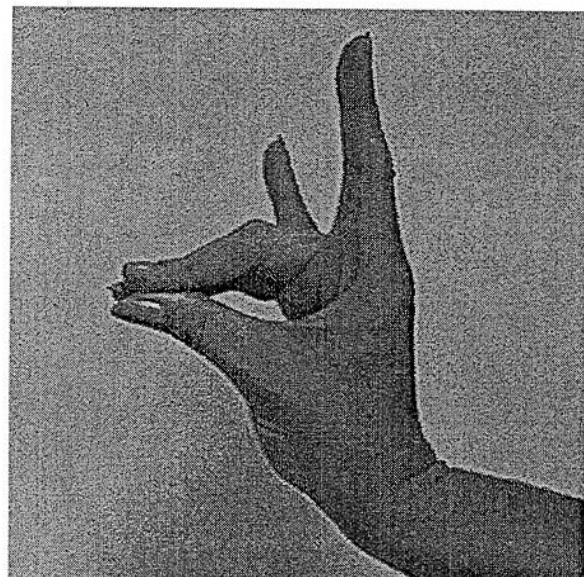


Illustration 29

B. Mrga-sirsa (with one hand: a cow. With two hands: Krishna's flute position. For the flute, the left palm faces back, and the right palm faces forward, with the hands touching and to the right of the mouth)



Illustration 30

C. Sucimukha (scolding)

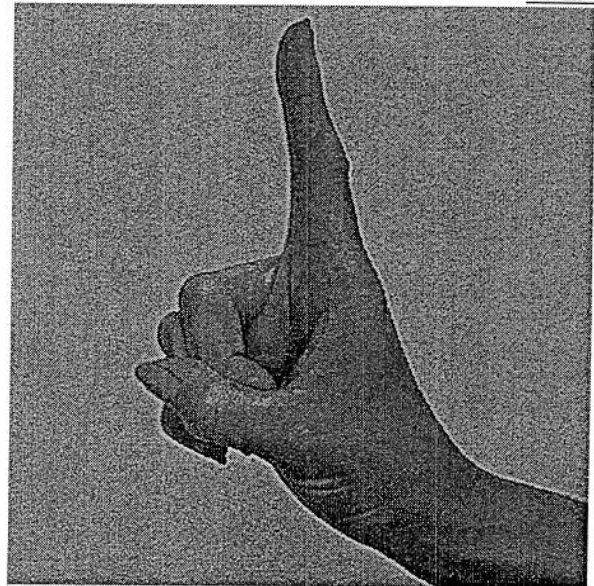


Illustration 31

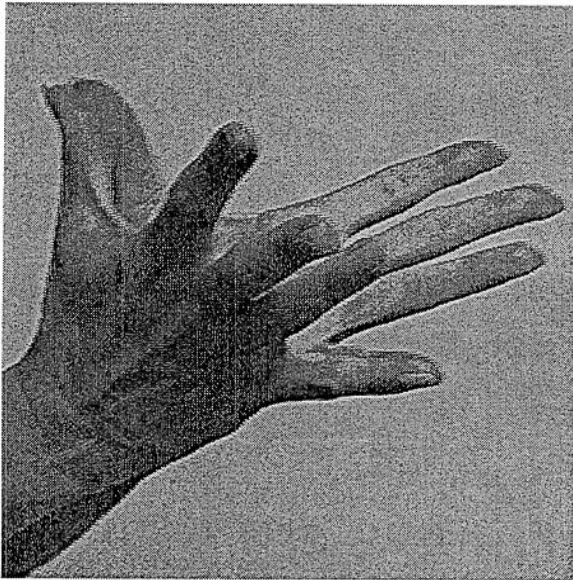


Illustration 32

D. Alapadma (with two hands: carrying a pot or with one hand: a fan shape)

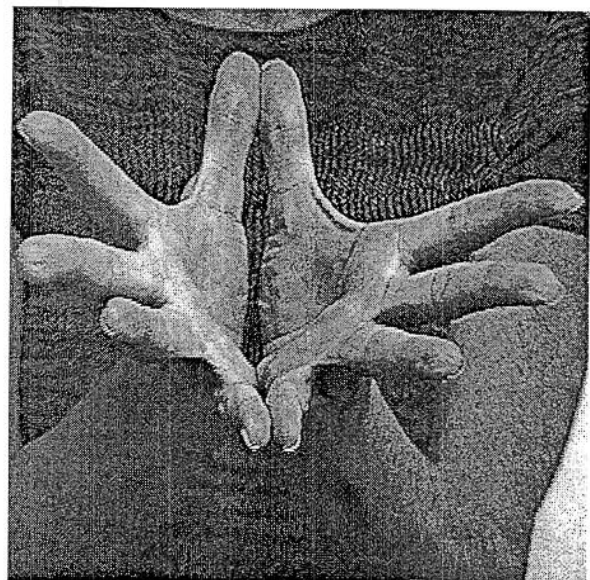


Illustration 33

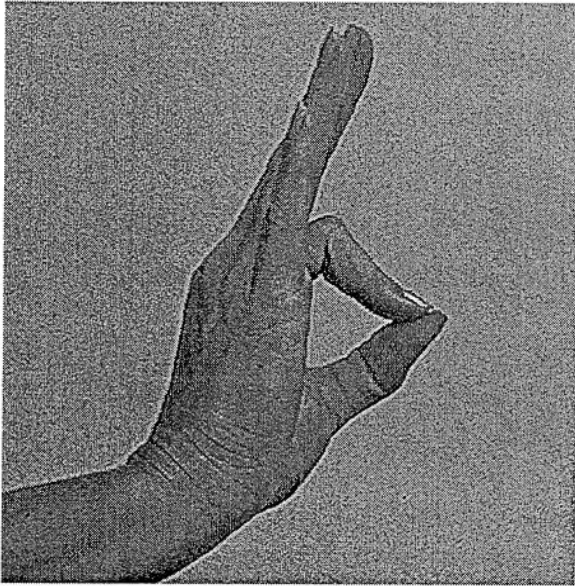


Illustration 34

E Samdamsa (prepare to tie things)

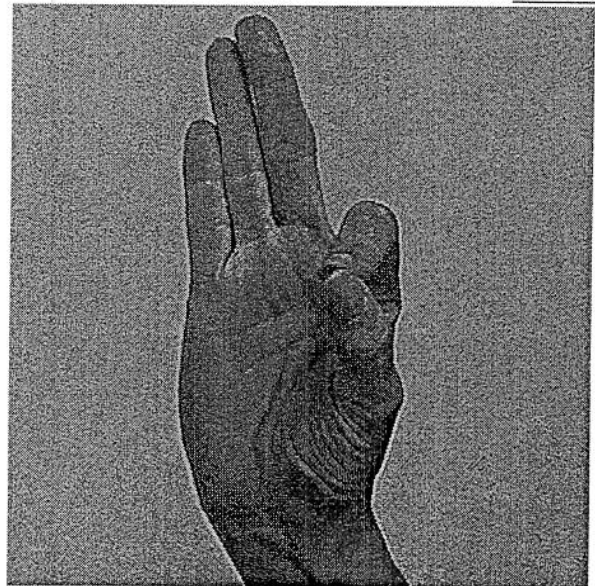


Illustration 35



Illustration 36

F. Puspaputa (a pot)

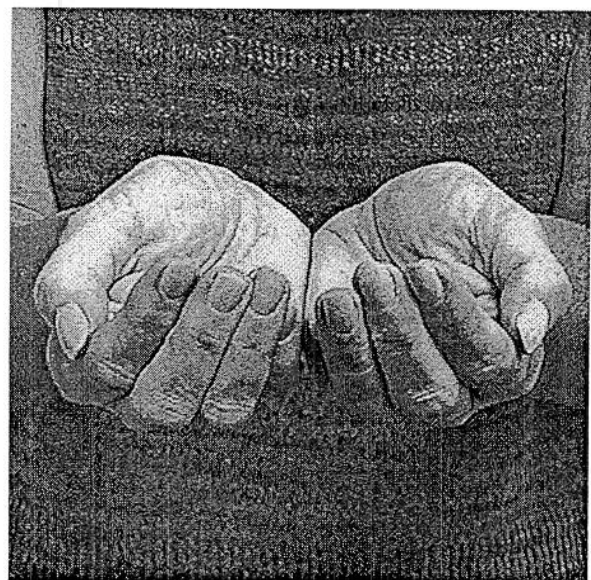


Illustration 37



Illustration 38

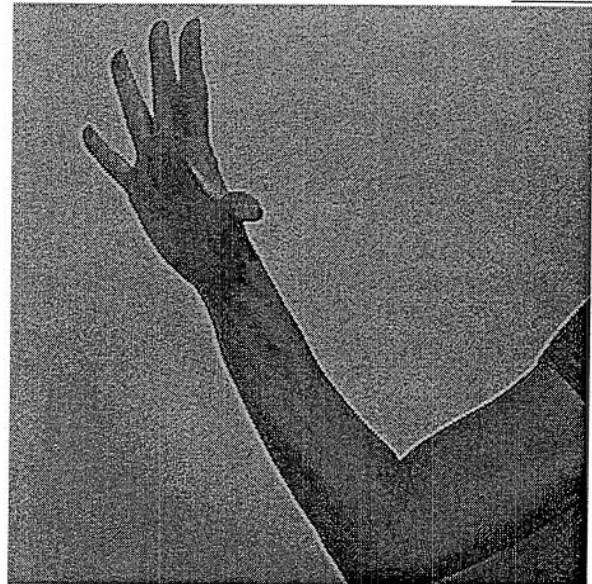


Illustration 39

G. Mukula (fingers flaring suddenly from this starting position represent fire)

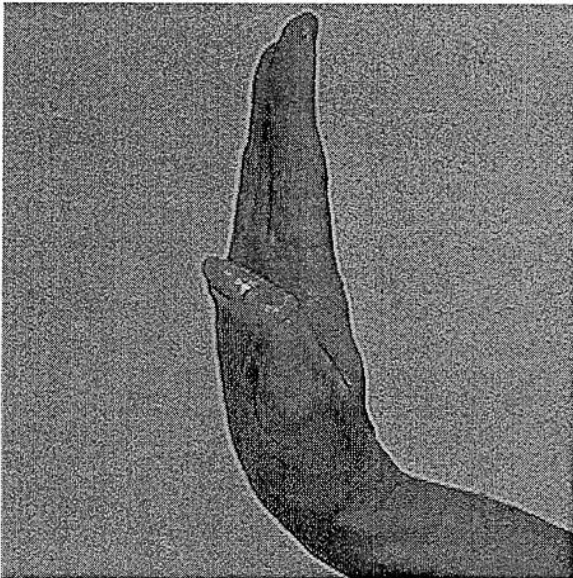


Illustration 40

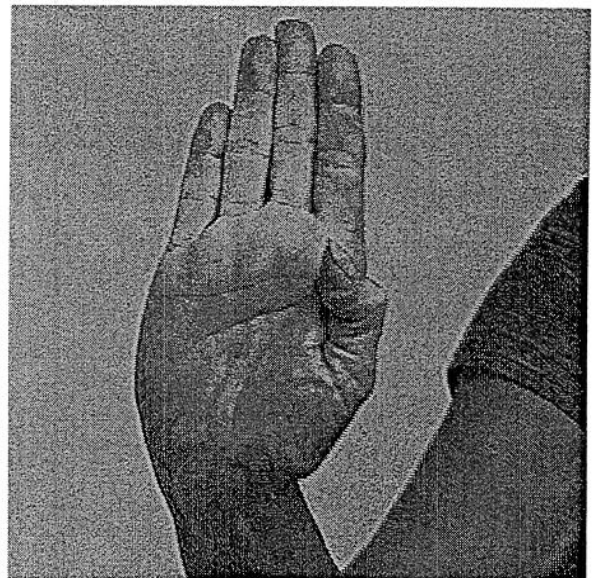


Illustration 41

H. Pataka (stop, or "wait a minute")



Illustration 42

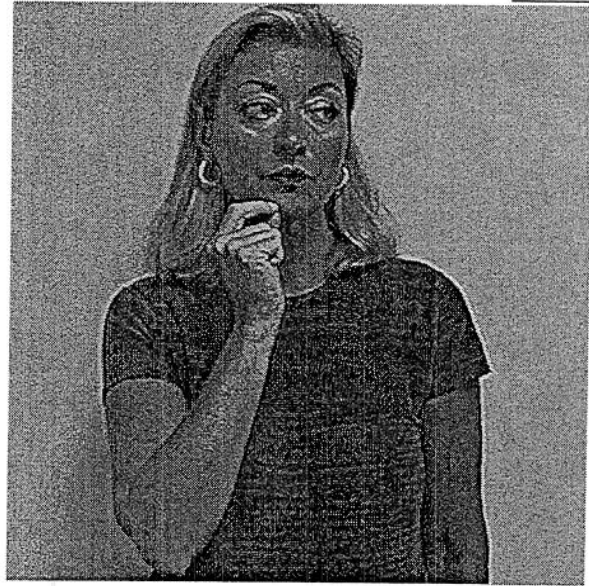


Illustration 43

- I. Kapittha (grasping, or, when brought to the chin, thinking)

You will find these gestures scattered through the dance *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets*. Practice showing them clearly, and walking across the floor heel-first, maintaining a hand position.

3.7 COSTUMES

The current costume of Bharata Natya is a tailored one. (See Illustration 44.) Earlier in history, dancers draped an embroidered *sari*, nine yards long, worn over a pajama style bottom. The costume and the dancer's ornaments were rich in craftsmanship and materials, as this description reveals:

“The traditional dance costume of Devadasis (a term used to describe resident dancers in South India beginning in the 9th Century AD) is the tight bodice or *choli* and the gold embroidered draped *sari*, a silk cloth of nine yards. Bright colours with wide borders of contrasting colours are favoured. The *sari* is pleated in front, and the long end is draped over the left shoulder and wound around the waist, the embroidered end falling in front. The other end, tied at the waist, is folded and brought through to the back and tucked in at the waist.

The traditional ornaments are of gold, set with rubies and diamonds and decorated with pearls. The jeweled band that frames the face consists of small gems and pearls and gems covering the parting of the hair. On either side, on top of the head are the *sun* and crescent *moon* ornaments. A golden disk on the crown of the head is encircled with white jasmine or mogra flowers, and a cluster of flowers decorates the back of the head.

The long plait of hair is covered with the *jadai naga*, the hooded serpent symbol of space and eternity. This ornament is studded with gems and usually has a triple tasseled

ornament at the end. Earrings are cup-shaped and attached to ear ornaments. Nose jewels are the diamond droplet under the tip of the nose and a semicircular ornament attached to one nostril. A gold belt is worn around the waist and armlets and bracelets decorate the arms. Neck ornaments are the pendant and the 'mango' garland inlaid with gems.

When the art of the Devadasis emerged as 'Bharata Natya', a new style of costume was created for the dance. The sari was cut and shaped into draped pajamas with a fan-like pleated piece in front, and a separate piece around the hips. This costume has become fashionable as it is easy to change dress several times during a performance. It is also considered to be modest as it completely covers the lower part of the body."³

Some well-known dancers prefer the highly artistic draped sari of tradition, tied in a slightly different way.



Illustration 44

Indrani in a Bharata Natya pose

3.8 MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Krishna Steals the Buttersweets is in the Bharata Natyam classical dance style of Tamil Nadu (South East India). The music is in the Karnatic style (South Indian classical style). The

accompanying instruments are: the Voice, Mridangam (a drum), Flute, Cymbals, and Tanpura (stringed drone).

“The Mridanga is a very ancient musical drum of acoustical perfection. The South Indian Mridanga is a concert drum that accompanies classical music and dancing, and is a solo instrument also. The drum is a hollow wooden shell of seasoned wood that in shape resembles two flower pots joined at their rims. Drumheads are attached to each end of the shell by a circular hoop of interlaced thongs of leather. A long strip of leather passes through the hoop at 16 equi-distant points around the drumhead and the ends are tied. The right-hand drumhead is loaded with a permanent black disk symmetrically fixed, made of a mixture of fine iron filings, charcoal, starch, and gum. The mixture is applied layer by layer and rubbed with a smooth stone. The left-hand drumhead is temporarily loaded with a small piece of dough made of moistened wheat flour, and this serves to lower the pitch of the drumhead to the octave below the tonic. The dough is scraped off at the end of the performance. The Mridanga is played by strokes of fingers and palms on the tuned drumheads.”⁴

3.9 TERMINOLOGY

Note: Some of the terms for hand gestures listed below are defined in relation to *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets*. These terms may convey other meaning in the context of another dance. Please refer to Selection 11 of the audio CD for the pronunciation of these terms.

Mudras: hand gestures; expression (a more semantic meaning)

Hastas: hand gestures (a more abstract meaning)

Tala: rhythm

Abhinaya: facial expressions dramatizing the dance story

GoonGroos: ankle bells

Raga: the musical mode

Bharata Natya: dance tradition with style characterized by continuous footwork, precise rhythmic movements of the hands, and curving shapes in the body

Natya Sastra: the oldest available text on Hindu performance

Ramayana: an ancient and well-known epic of Hindu literature

Mahabharata: an ancient and well-known epic of Hindu literature

Kathakali: a dance tradition of India

Manipuri: a dance tradition of India

Chow: a dance tradition of India

Anjali: hand gesture meaning “prayer” or “salutation”

Mrga-sirsa: hand gesture meaning (with one hand) “a cow” and (with two hands) “Krishna’s Flute”

Sucimukha: hand gesture meaning “scolding”

Alapadma: hand gesture meaning (with one hand) “a fan shape” and (with two hands) “carrying a pot”

Samdamsa: hand gesture meaning “prepare to tie things”

Puspaputa: hand gesture meaning “a pot”

Mukula: hand gesture representing “fire”

Pataka: hand gesture meaning “stop” or “wait a minute”

Kapittha: hand gesture meaning “grasping” or (when brought to the chin) “thinking”

3.10 KRISHNA STEALS THE BUTTERSWEETS

A mimed dance in the Bharatha Natya style, *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets* comes from the state of Madras. Since Bharatha Natya dancing emphasizes storytelling and expressivity, the dancer’s hands and face are especially important in the choreography. In different regions of India this dance about Krishna may look slightly different in performance, but the story the dancers tell with their hands remains the same.

The dance *Krishna Steals the Butter Sweets* is perhaps two thousand years old. One aspect of its tradition is that the performers wear bells tied around their ankles, which sound with each step they take.

The first half of the dance is called “the feminine part,” while the second half is “the masculine part.” The two parts of the dance can be performed separately by a girl and a boy, but usually both roles are danced by the same person. If *Krishna* is danced by a group of people, they must be careful to perform as much in harmony as possible.

In the “feminine part” of the dance, the performers portray village girls in good spirits tending their cows, then hard at work producing pots of delicious, thick cream. The dance begins with the village girls walking to the river, balancing clay pots on their heads. They bathe their cows in the river, then lead them back to the cowshed. The girls place their clay pots on the ground, tie the cows’ legs, and milk the cows. They then boil the milk, churn it, scoop off the heavy cream-butter and stack their pots. Their long work finished, they leave.

The dancers must now change character for the second, “masculine part” of the dance, in which they portray Krishna himself. Krishna tip-toes in with his friends. After sneaking into the cowshed, he eats the sweet butter, cracks open a pot, and drinks the milk inside. Then he smashes all the pots and runs away!

It would be a mistake to think that all the dances in the Bharata Natya tradition are serious or solemn, simply because they tell Hindu stories. Some are playful and mischievous, as is this dance about the milkmaids and Krishna.

Notice how the supports are choreographed in both sections of the dance. When the storyline requires travel—movement from one place to another—the support is in the feet, and the choreography involves traveling steps. When the storyline is about actions taking place in one spot, the dancer kneels and remains stationary. This positioning has the added benefit of shifting audience focus to the dancer’s hand gestures and facial expressions, for complex storytelling.

It is an artistic challenge to capture the character of the young girls with their cows in Part I, and then of the stealthy, tip-toeing Krishna in Part II. *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets* may be

difficult to master at first, because of its coordination of hand gestures, rhythmic walking, and body movements. But practice will yield great rewards, not the least of which will be an appreciation of the extent of motor coordination and stylized expressivity that Bharata Natya dancing requires. It is a tradition that necessitates lengthy study in order to achieve its sophisticated blend of rhythm, communication of meanings, execution of character, and a graceful synthesis of differentiated choreography for multiple parts of the body.

Krishna Steals the Buttersweets

Notated by
Sian Ferguson
as taught by
Indrani

at

The Juilliard School, 1991

Music: traditional, arrangement by
Alan Terricciano

Dance score checked by
Ray Cook

Labanotation Reading Level:

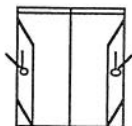
Intermediate

Theory and Score-reading Elements:

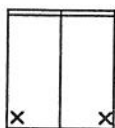
Parts of the torso
Foot hooks
Turns and tilts of the torso

3.11 Krishna Steals the Buttersweets

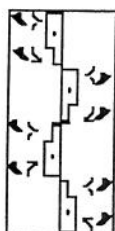
Key:



The legs are turned out slightly throughout the dance. They turn out a little more when kneeling, and a little less when walking.



All middle level steps are performed with relaxed knees.

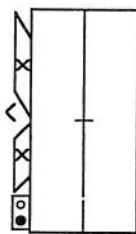


Each step, forward or back, has two accents; these are in order to make the ankle bells jingle. The only exception is in M. 11-12 where Krishna enters and tries to tip-toe quietly.

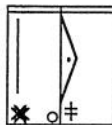
All counts are dancers counts.

Fingers are referred to by number, as shown. The second finger is the index finger. The third finger is the middle finger. The fifth finger is the little finger.

Glossary:



M. 1, ct. 1-2: The torso twists a little to the right, then a little to the left of center.



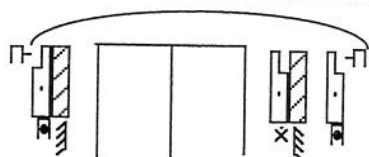
M. 1, ct. 8: The left foot stays on the floor, and the left knee bends considerably. The right knee steps to the side (kneel) and the ball of the right foot remains on the floor. Both legs turn out substantially.



M. 1, ct. 8: The palm of the hand faces up.



M. 2, ct. 5-7: Ad-lib timing.



M. 3, ct. 8: Both hands point up, palms facing away from you, and thumb sides of hands touch each other.



M. 4, ct. 1: The hands point upwards.



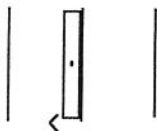
M. 7, ct. 1: Churning. Inclusion bow on the right arm means to include the body in the arm movement. Here, it will produce a slight torso twist to the left.



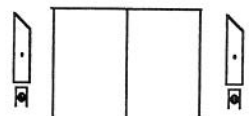
M. 8, ct. 1: The arms bend past 90 degrees, but not totally bent.



M. 9, ct. 2: The ad-lib sign here refers to the level of the arm. The arm takes an appropriate level to allow the hand to stack up above the other hand.



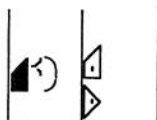
M. 9, ct. 5: Leave the left foot where it was and transfer weight onto it (that is, do not release the foot before stepping).



M. 9, ct. 8: The palms face the left front diagonal, that is they face away from you.



M. 11, ct. 7: While stepping back on the diagonal, turn an eighth to the left.



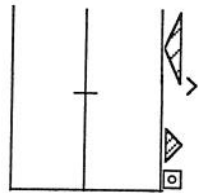
M. 13, ct. 1: The left leg gestures to the front right diagonal, the foot touching the floor and bearing partial weight.



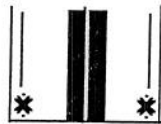
M. 13, ct. 1: Clap palms together.



M. 13, ct 5: Kick lower leg to back middle, ie. lift up your heels.



M. 13, ct 1-2: Tilt the chest to the right, then the left side, high level.



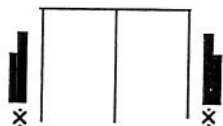
M. 14, ct. 1: The legs bend completely, that is, you squat down.



M. 14, ct. 3: The right arm bends almost completely, the hand staying in front of the shoulder.



M. 14, ct. 4: The right arm extends (neither stretched nor bent) to end forward middle.



M. 14, ct. 8: Both arms bend 90 degrees (making a right angle at the elbow) and the hands are forward low from the shoulder.



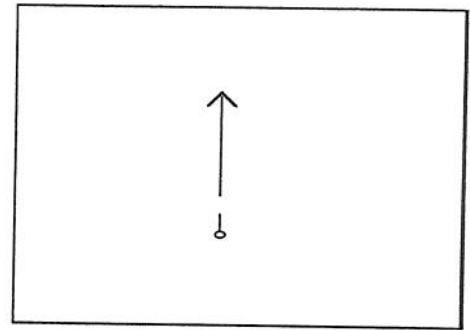
M. 18, ct. 5: Both arms are in front of you, bent almost completely.



M. 19, ct. 6-8: Circle counter-clockwise three-eighths to finish facing upstage as you exit.

Music Note: Dancers hold in "anjali" position for approximately 15 seconds of the musical introduction. As the introduction ends and the metered song begins, the arms begin to move. During the approximately 3 seconds before the drum enters, dancers complete their opening arm position. The first step (M. 1, ct. 1) is taken as the drum enters.

3.12 India: *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets*



1

ct. 7: Eyes and head return to normal.

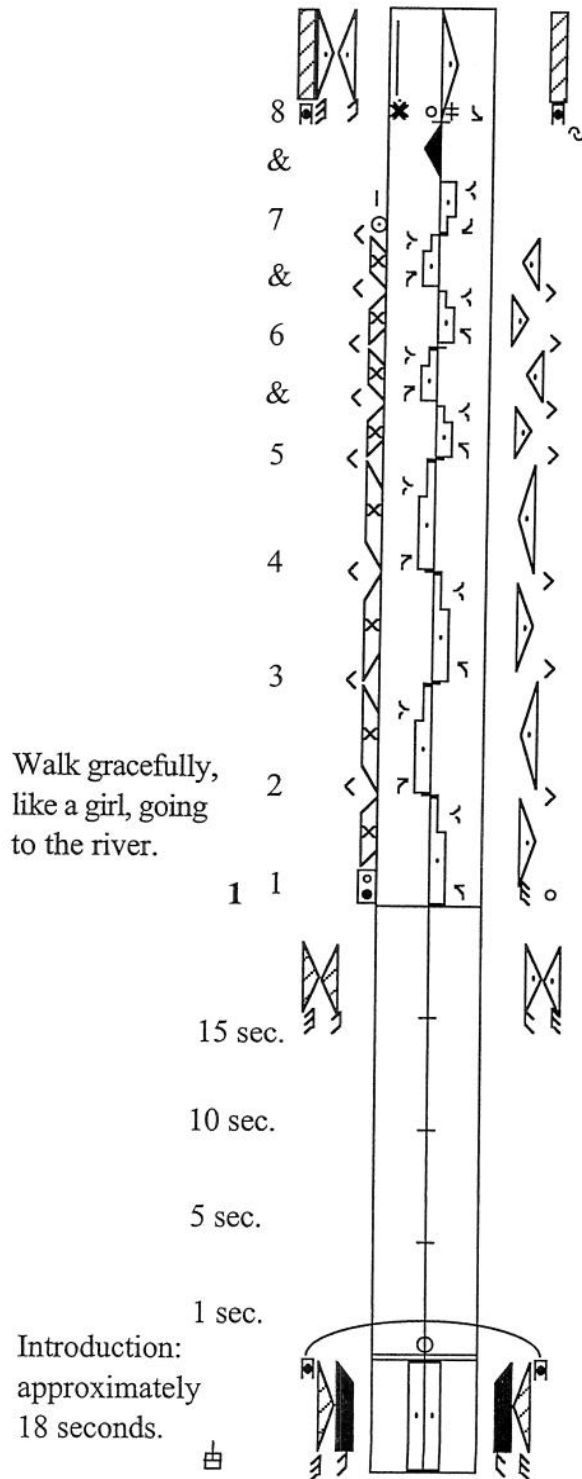
ct. 1-6: The eyes follow the right hand as it moves, resulting in a small head turn to the right and back to center.

First step is taken as drum enters.

Metered song begins.

After about 15 seconds, prepare the arms. The left hand is straight up, thumb facing back and fingers spread in a fan shape. ("Alapadma" is the gesture.) The right hand hangs loosely down from the wrist, thumb side facing back.

Palms touch in a salutation, a praying position ("anjali").



Shut door.

Cow.

Shed.

Walk cow
backwards.

Pat cow.

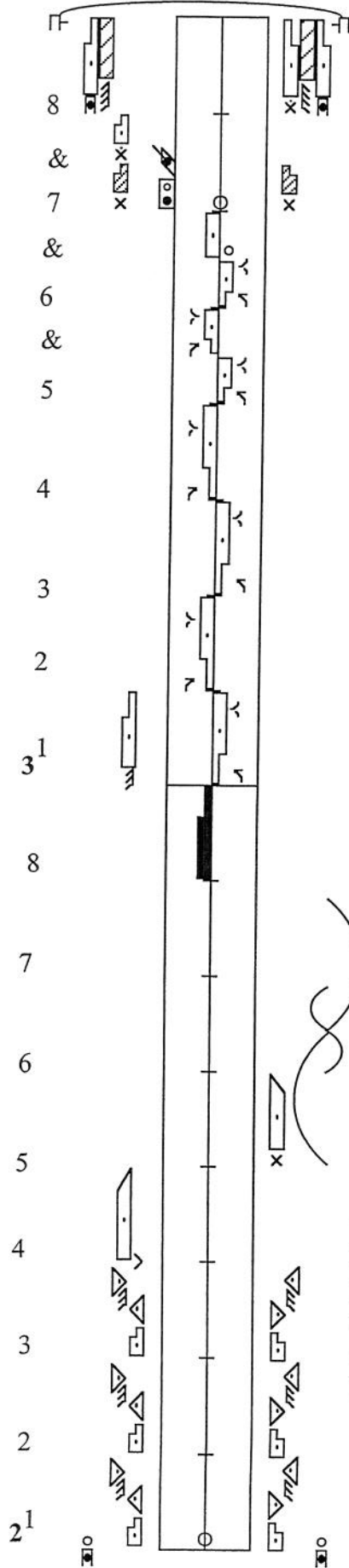
Bathe cow.

Cow.

River.

River.

River.

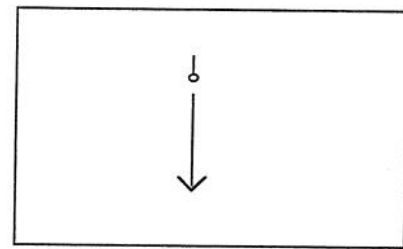


ct. 8: Thumbs come together in a gesture of shutting the barn door.

ct. &: Left hand makes cow shape (M.2, ct.4).

ct. 7: Stick both little fingers up in the air. Bend the other three fingers so they point horizontally, and touch the finger tips of one to the other. The thumb stays upright. This represents the cowshed.

ct. 5-6: Repeat right hand gesture on each step (5&6&).



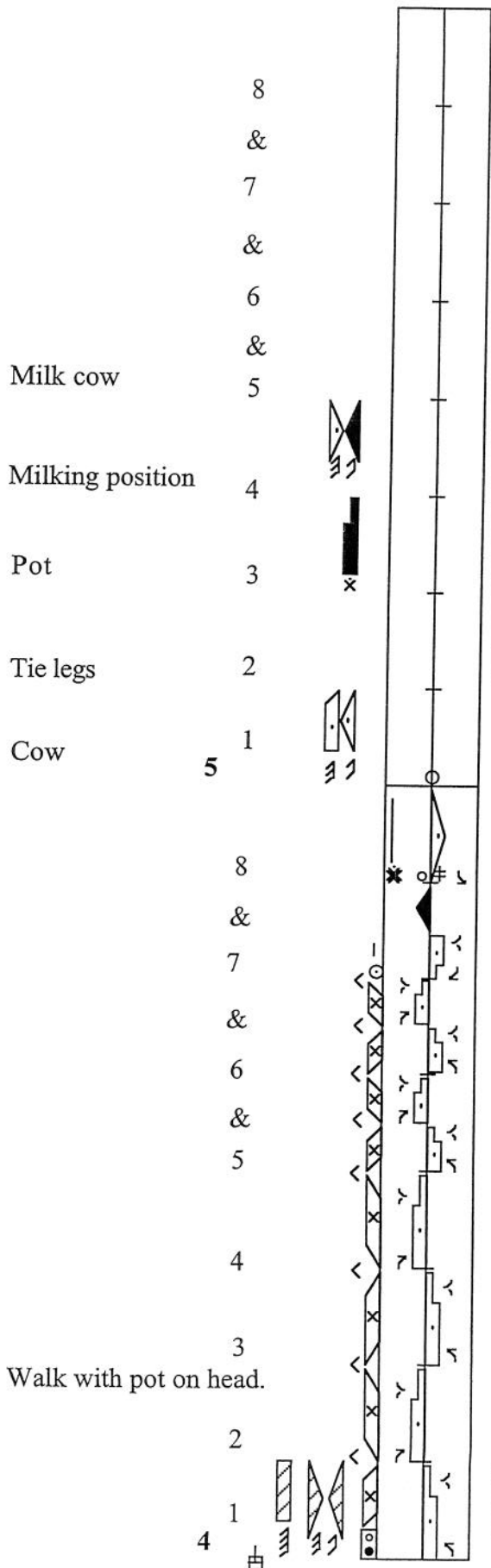
3

ct. 1-4: On each count, wag right index finger towards cow ("sucimukha")

ct. 8: Use right palm to pat cow dry.

ct. 5-7: Right hand bathes cow (fill cupped hand with water and smoothe over left hand). Focus on the action of the hands.

ct. 4: Left hand makes the shape of a cow: the hand points up, thumb towards you. Touch the third and fourth fingers to the thumb. Point the second and fifth fingers up in the air. All fingers are straight ("mrga-sirsa"; see page 98). Head turns to look at the left hand.



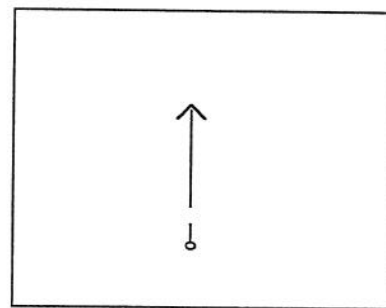
ct. 5-8: On the counts of 5, 6, 7, and 8, the right hand moves straight down a few inches as if milking the cow. On the "&" count, it moves back up to begin again. The left hand performs the same action, moving down on the "&" and up on the main beat.

ct. 4: Left hand makes finger fan ("alapadma"), palm up as if to catch the milk. Right hand assumes the milking position, thumb side up, thumb touching middle finger, 2nd and 4th fingers, straight.

ct. 3: Cup hands together in shape of pot, little finger side of hands joined and palms facing up ("puspaputa").

ct. 2: Right hand makes "samdamsa" gesture, thumb side up. Make a small verticle circle with the arm, as if tying the cow's legs together.

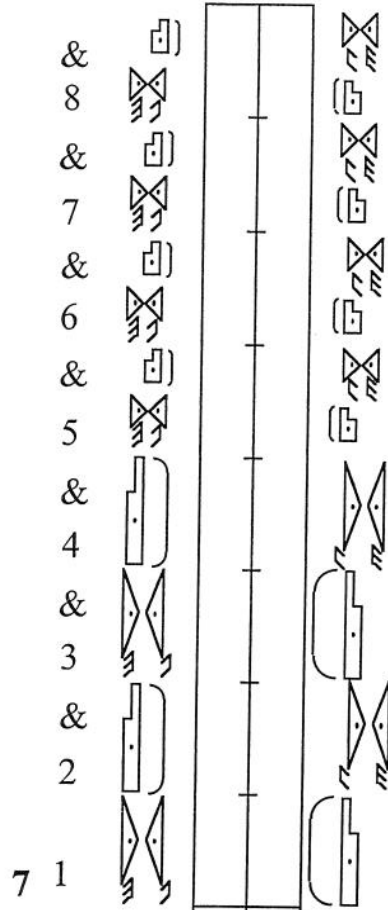
ct.1: Left hand makes cow shape (M. 2, ct 4). Look at cow.



4

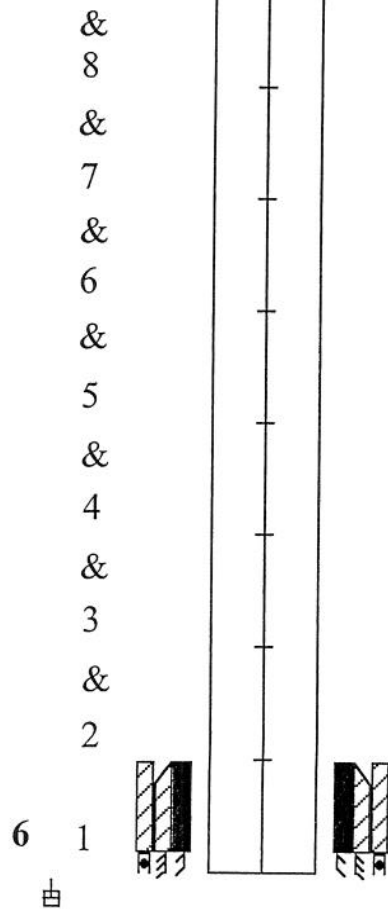
ct. 1: Focus returns to normal. Hands make finger fan ("alapadma" is the gesture), as if carrying a pot on the head.

Churning the milk



ct. 1-8: Both hands are thumb side up. The thumb tip and middle finger-tip touch to make a circle. As the arm (right or left, respectively) moves forward, the thumb releases from the middle finger, then rejoins it as the arm pulls back.

Fire



ct. 5-8: The right and left hands repeat the fire motion done by the right hand in ct. 2-4. The difference is that the right hand springs open on the count, as before, while the left hand springs open on the "&" count, so that the alternate hands produce the fire. The eyes blink wide each time.

ct. 2-4: The right hand moves slightly upwards on each count, the fingers springing wide open like flames. The eyes blink wide on each count. On the "&" count, the hand lowers back to the position of ct. 1.

ct. 1: Round the fingers slightly and bring them together so that they touch the thumb ("mukula").

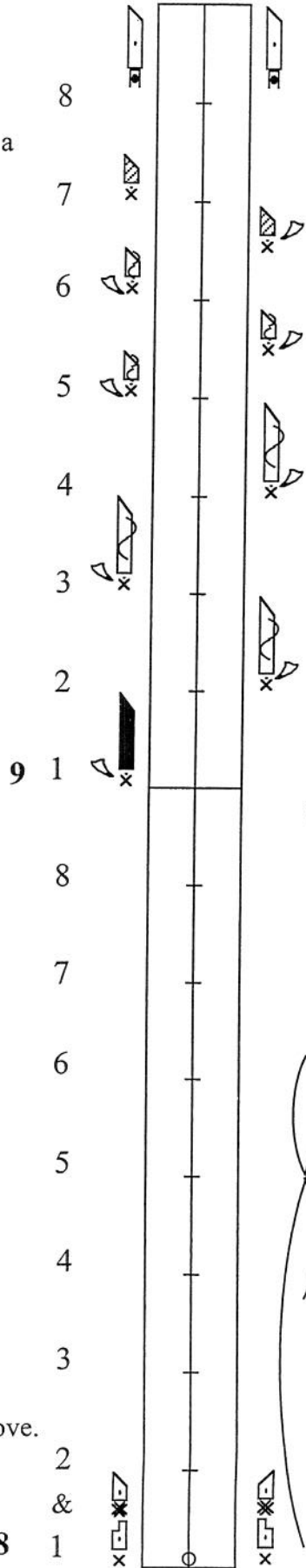
由

"There they are."

Tying the pots to a ceiling hook.

Stacking the pots.

Take pot off stove.



ct. 8: The hands, fingers straight up, make one small patting motion to say the pots are all there, stacked away.

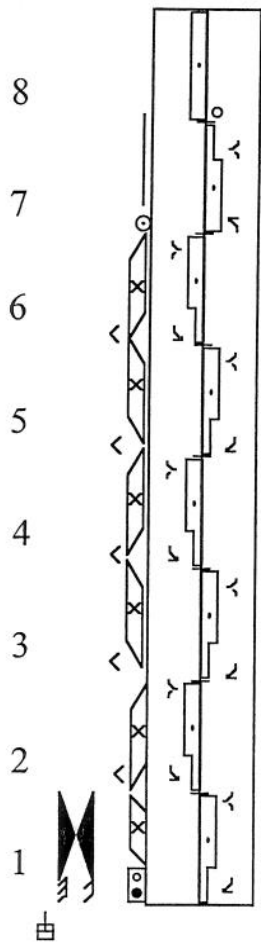
ct. 7: Both hands face thumb side up. The thumb tip touches the tip of the 2nd index finger ("samdamsa"). The hands make a small vertical circle as though tying a knot.

ct. 1-6: The palm of each hand faces outwards as each hand stacks up above the one before.

ct. 2-8: The left hand stays where it is, representing the pot. With the right hand palm down, make a small vertical circle just above the left hand (the pot). While doing this, jiggle the right hand from side to side. This is cooling the pot. Then cup the right hand and skim across the left hand. This is skimming the butter off the milk. Then slide the little finger side of the right hand over the outer edge of the left hand. This is scraping the butter off the hand. Repeat all this a total of three times.

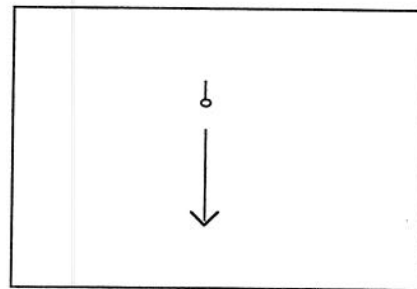
ct. &: Retain hand position.

ct. 1: Cup both hands, little finger side of hands joined ("puspaputa"), and palms facing up (the pot).



Transition.

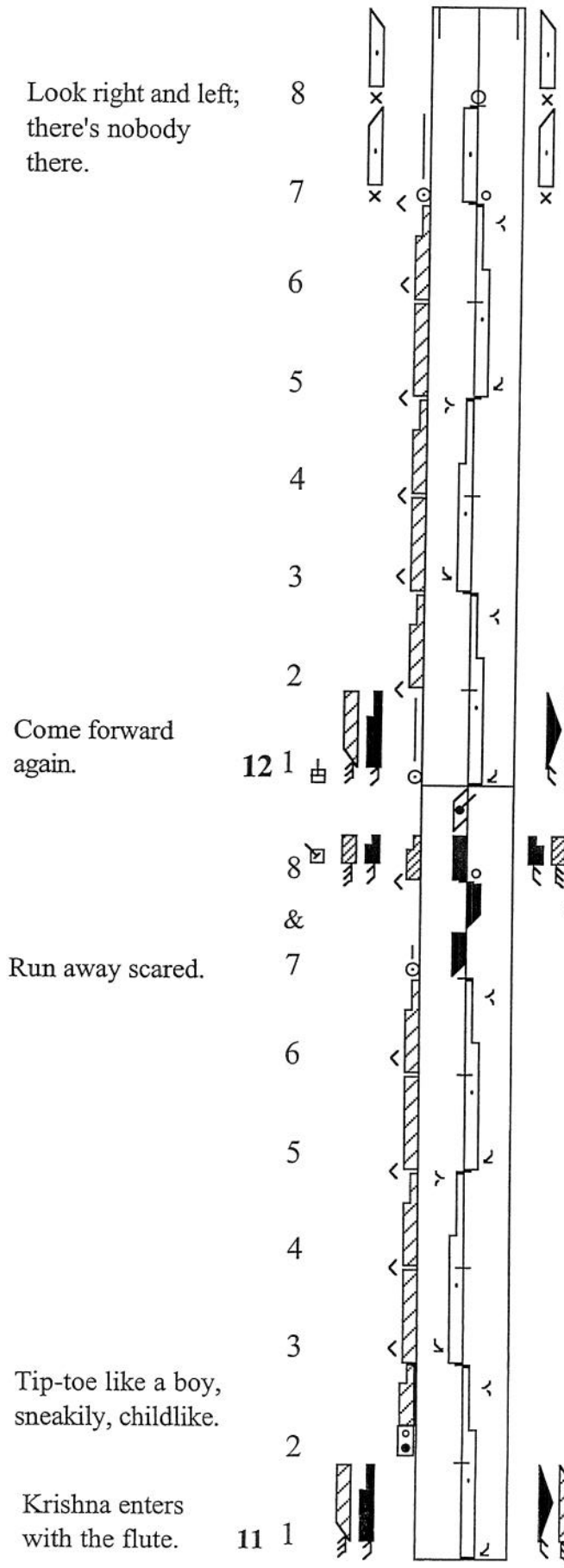
ct. 7: The eyes return to normal.



10

ct. 1-6: The eyes (not the whole head) move alternately to the left then to the right on each step.

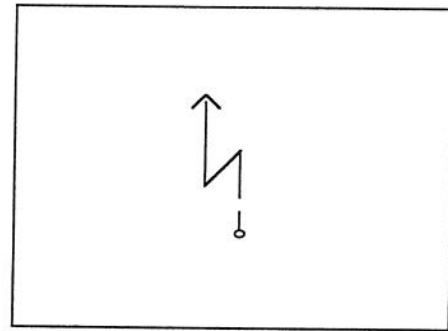
ct. 1: Touch the backs of the hands to the small of the back.



Look right and left;
there's nobody
there.

ct. 8: Repeat ct. 7 to the left

ct. 7: Look to the right and gesture tentatively, with
the palms out, as if to say, "There's nobody there."



11-12

Come forward
again.

ct. 1: Hands in Krishna's flute position (M. 11, ct. 1).

ct. 8: Put palms over mouth in expression of fear and
surprise.

Run away scared.

ct. 7: Head returns to normal.

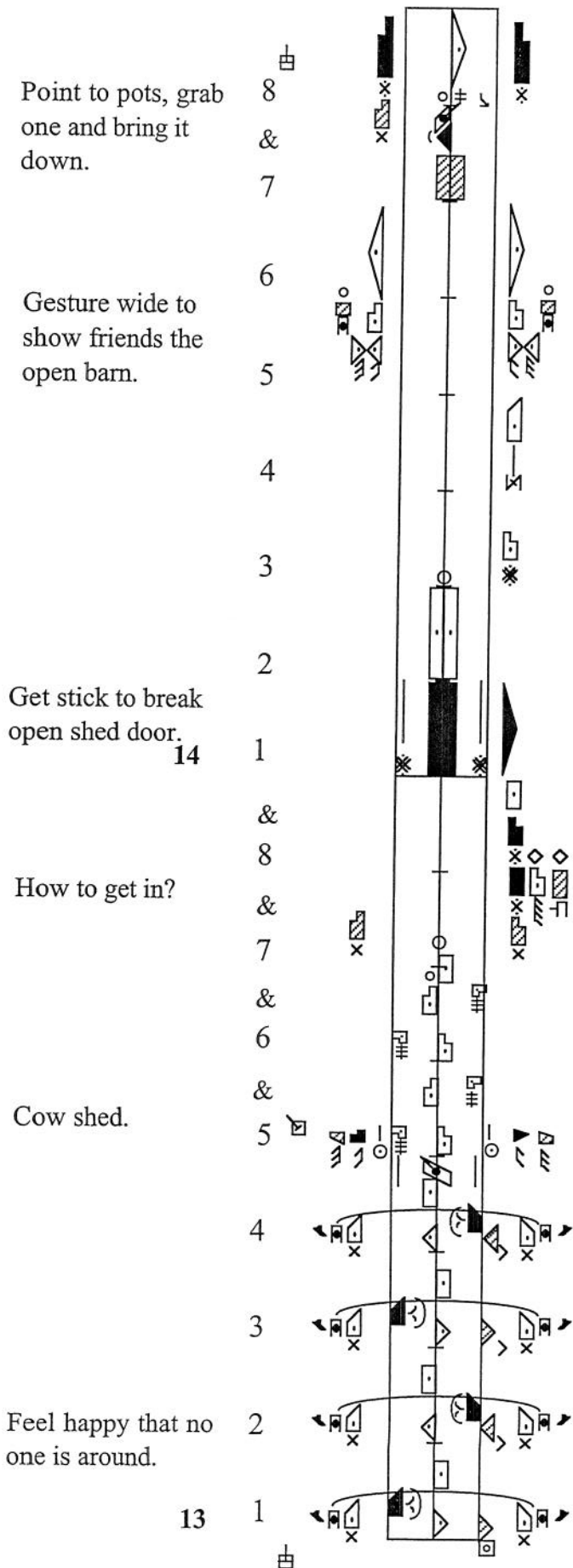
Tip-toe like a boy,
sneakily, childlike.

ct. 1-6: ct. 1-2 look right; ct. 3-4 look left; ct. 5-6 look
right to check if anybody is around.

Krishna enters
with the flute.

ct. 1: Both hands assume the "mrga-sirsa" gesture. The
left palm faces backward and the thumb is held near the
mouth. The right palm faces forward and the thumb
touches the left little finger. This is called Krishna's flute
gesture. Hold this through ct. 6.

M. 11-12: Try not to let ankle bells ring. Tip-toe.



ct. &: Spread fingers wide. Join hands together by touching thumbs, little fingers, and base of the palm ("alapadma"). This is grabbing the pot with both hands.

ct. 7: Point right index finger up towards pots ("sucimukha").

ct. 4: Drop the imaginary stick and push open door with right hand.

ct. 3: Rotate right hand in and out a few times as if fiddling with the stick to open the lock.

ct. 1: Look down to right and see an imaginary stick on the ground. Right hand picks up imaginary stick (still "kapittha").

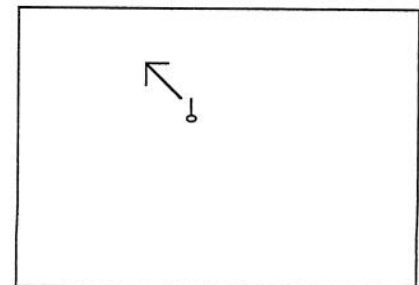
ct. &: Right hand is in "kapittha" gesture, touching chin thoughtfully, wondering how to get into shed.

ct. 8: Retain "pataka" gesture.

ct. &: Right hand is held in "pataka" gesture.

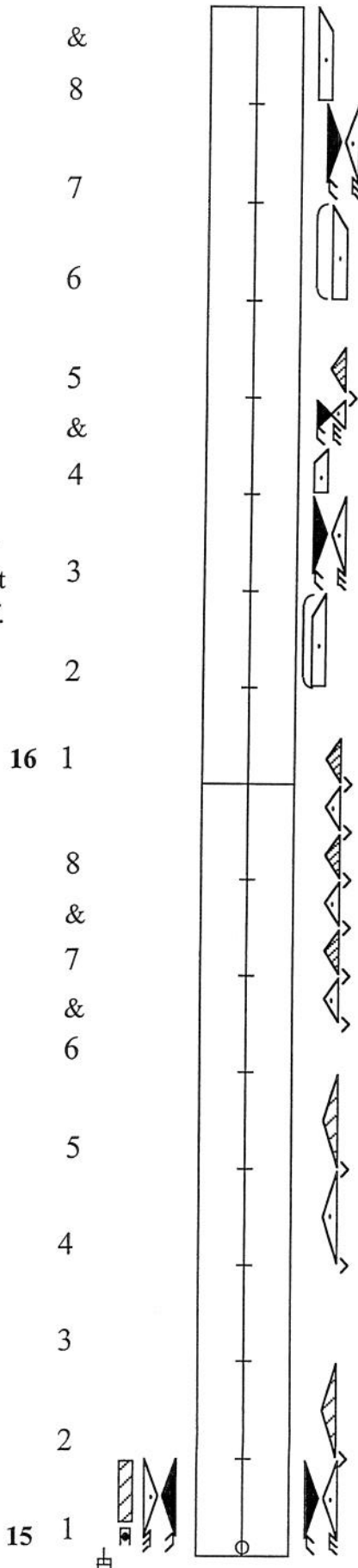
ct. 7: Hands represent cowshed (see M. 3, ct. 7).

ct. 5-6: Hands are in Krishna's flute position (see M. 11, ct. 1).



13

Tease friends by offering food, but eating it yourself.



ct. 5-8: Repeat ct. 1-4.

ct. &: Pick up food in right hand.

ct. 4: Right hand does "sucimukha" gesture, palm facing out. Wiggle index finger a few times at friend, teasingly.

ct. 3: Snatch food back and pop it in your own mouth. (Thumb-side faces up.)

ct. 2: Offer food to a friend, as if to ask, "Is this what you want?" (Palm faces up.)

ct. 1: You are just about to pop food into mouth, pause.

ct. 6 & 8: On the "&", right hand picks up food. On 7 and 8, the right hand pops food into mouth. On 7, the head tilts right, on 8 it tilts left, coming upright on each "&" count.

ct. 4-6: Repeat the actions of ct 1-3.

ct. 3: The food tastes good. Tilt head slightly to the right then to the left; this is repeated a few times quickly to give the effect of jiggling the head. The eyes look up high.

ct. 2: Right hand puts food in mouth.

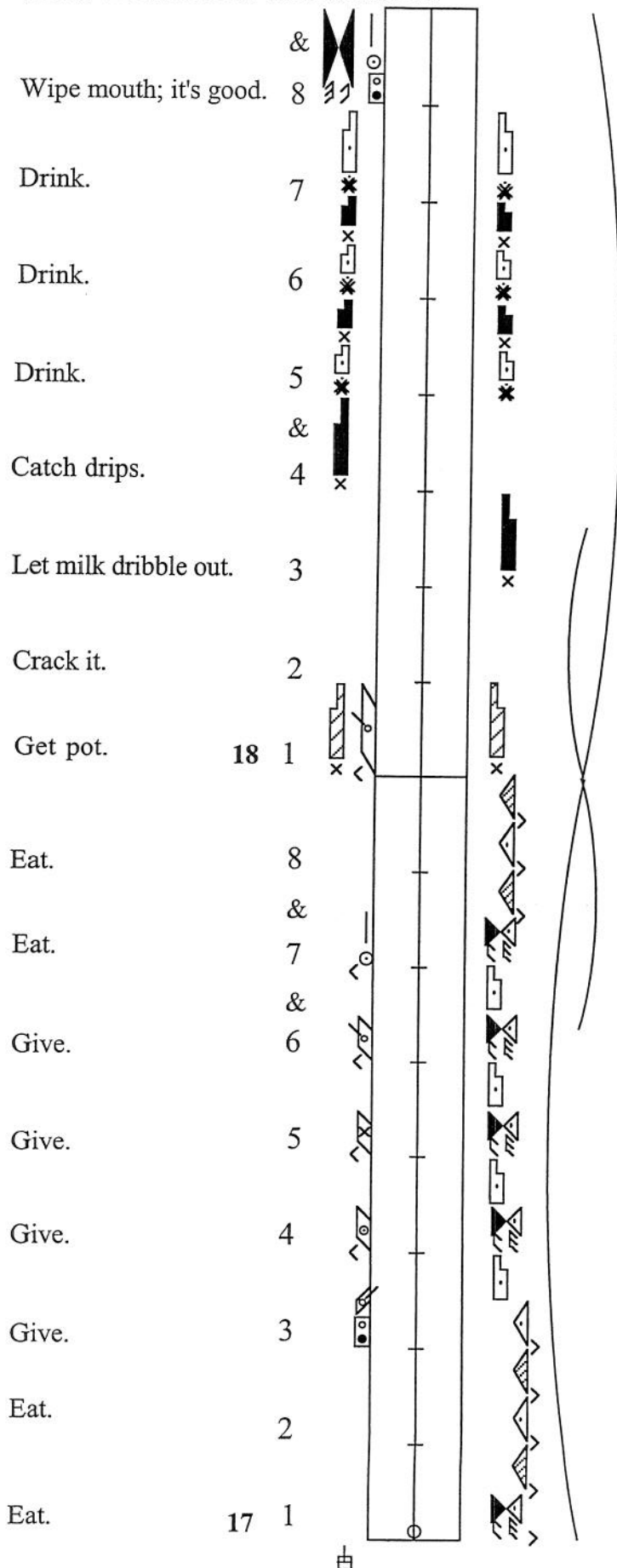
ct. 1: Right hand grabs a little food between thumb and second and third fingers.

-it's good!

Eat...

15

16



ct. 8: Wipe the back of the hand across the mouth from right to left. Raise eyes to ceiling. Put left hand behind back.

ct. 5-7: On ct. 5, 6 and 7, bring the cupped hands up to the mouth to drink the milk. On the "&" count, lower the hands to catch more drips.

ct. 4: Cup hands to catch drips. (Gesture is "puspaputa" as in M. 5, ct. 3.)

ct. 3: Jiggle the right hand by rotating it in and out quickly as you lower the hand straight down. This represents the milk dripping out of the pot.

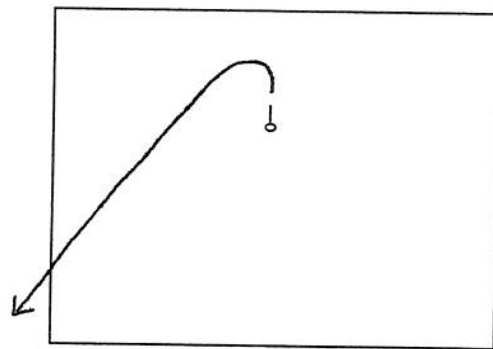
ct. 2: Right hand assumes "samdamsa" gesture, thumb side facing up. Strike the base of the right thumb against the inside of the left wrist. You are cracking the pot.

ct. 1: Grab pot with both hands, as in M. 14, ct. 7 &.

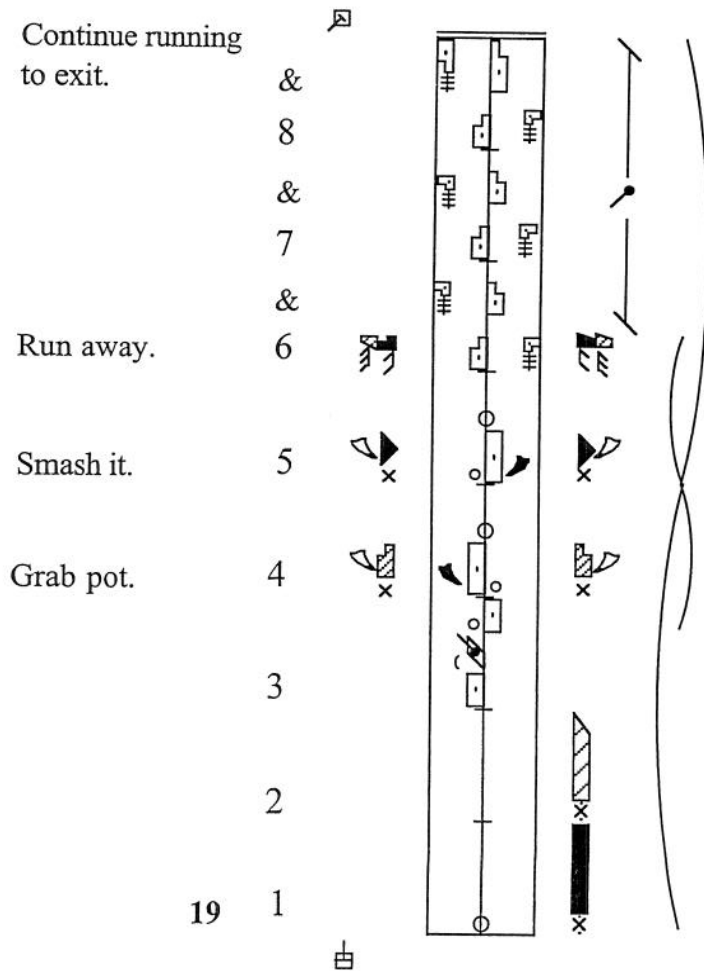
ct. 7-8: Repeat eating gestures.

ct. 3-6: Pick up food with right hand and give it to friends.

ct. 1-2: Repeat eating gestures, picking up food and putting it into mouth.



19



ct. 6: The hands are in Krishna's flute position (see M. 11, ct. 1).

ct. 5: Release hands with a throwing gesture to smash the pot on the ground. Stamp the right foot.

ct. 4: Grab pot with both hands, as in M. 14, ct. 7 &. Stamp left foot.

ct. 2: With right index finger extended (*sucimukha*), shake right hand at pots, looking up at them.

ct. 1: Using palm of right hand, rub tummy in a circle. Eyes still look up.

3.13 CONCLUSION

In reconstructing *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets*, differences between the “feminine part” and the “masculine part” of the dance become clear. In the feminine part, the milkmaids’ travel is restricted to direct paths forward and back. They are also represented within a fairly constant rhythmic framework, of

1 2 3 4 5 & 6 & 7 & 8.

The milkmaids perform tasks that are orderly and routine, and the choreography depicts them with uses of time and space that are regular, predictable, and tidy. The milkmaids emerge as neat, hardworking characters whose every effort tends toward productivity. The milk, cream and butter they produce and store are in themselves female symbols of plenty and fertility.

The rhythms and spatial structure of the choreography changes as it shifts to represent Krishna. Notice the floor-plans, which for the first time show diagonal and curving paths of travel. Also, rhythms in this section become erratic and unpredictable. With Krishna’s entrance, the choreography moves to thru-beats for the first time:

Measure 11: 1 - 2 3 - 4 5 - 6 7 & 8 &

Measure 12: 1 - 2 3 - 4 5 - 6 7 8

Krishna’s clapping and dancing in measure 13 breaks into a new rhythm:

Measure 13: 1y&a2y&a3y&a4y&a5 & 6 & 7 & 8

This rhythmic changeability becomes the norm throughout the second half of the dance.

Krishna’s use of time is idiosyncratic in other ways. For example, in his section we find the only overlap of movement material from one measure to the next (measure 15 into 16). All the milkmaids’ measures are self-contained. Also, the “ad lib” time signs in measures 15 to the end emphasize that the deity Krishna is not bound by the same temporal boundaries as the human characters.

Krishna enters playing the flute, which would enable the audience to recognize his character quickly. In graphic and sculptural images, Krishna has traditionally been represented as a flute-player. The flute as a male symbol equates with the female symbols of butter and cream for the milkmaids.

There are some distinctive uses of the body in the dance’s feminine and masculine sections. The milkmaids characteristically turn their torsos from side to side, and this action seems to define feminine walking. (Refer to measures 1, 4, and 10.) They also use

their eyes more: to decoratively follow arm gestures (measure 1); to open wide at the sight of fire (measure 6); and to accompany walking (measure 10). Notice that these distinctive actions are withdrawn in the transitional measure in which the dancer prepares to portray Krishna. In counts 7-8 of measure 10, as the dancer steps forward and into a closed position of the feet like the one at the start of the dance, the torso twist is cancelled and the eyes stop moving with each step.

Some of Krishna's distinctive movements are tilts of his torso off the vertical (measures 11 and 12), and he lifts his legs in running steps (measures 13 and 19). He also takes to the air in pas de basque-like steps, (measure 13), in contrast to the grounded milkmaids. Krishna is very noisy as well. After sneaking into the milkshed, he claps gleefully (measure 13); he stamps his feet and smashes pots (measure 19). The element of noise-making is one more sign of the bolder, traditionally masculine character of Krishna.

Krishna is funny, incorrigible, generous, mischievous, clever, and destructive. His "masculine" half of the dance is more unstable, and provides strong contrast to the feminine section. One of the goals in reconstructing *Krishna Steals the Buttersweets* should be to clarify as sharply as possible the many differences between the two halves of the dance.

On the surface, this dance about Krishna is a playful tale about a Hindu deity entering the life of some village milkmaids. On a deeper level, the dance seems to explore a traditional Indian perception of the feminine and masculine principles, using rhythm, spatial travel, grounded versus springing steps, order and disorder, and production versus destruction as opposing qualities. The joyful consumption by Krishna of the milkmaids' buttersweets, which they believed had been locked safely away, is the culmination of the masculine half. Krishna, male deity, revels in the symbolic female delights.

3.14 ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ragini Devi, Dance Dialects of India (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972) 25.
² Ibid., p. 27.
³ Ibid., p. 58.
⁴ Ibid., p. 221

3.15 RECOMMENDED READINGS & RESOURCES

Books:

- Ambrose, Kay. Classical Dances and Costumes of India. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
- Banerji, Sures Chandra. A Companion to Indian Music and Dance: spanning a period of over three hundred years and based mainly on Sanskrit sources. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990.
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- Vaikunth, Vasantha. Spirituality in Dance. Muscat: Shivsakthi School of Dance, 1995.
- Vatsyayan, Kapila. Indian Classical Dance. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1992.