

# Two Stories about the Transmission of Knowledge

Andrew Ollett

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I felt that, to make the film work as a whole, it needed to be very strongly rooted in somewhere familiar—if not in sound, in an image, in some sort of form and structure.

I always start with wanting the sound to say something about image that's not already there, and vice versa. Either the sound has to go against the image or with it, or it has to do something completely different, but it can always stand on its own. It says something about or against the visual.

For this film, I used three sonically strong ideas: the first is a double bass rumbling, recorded on two different tracks that I could split; the third consists of three sustained electric guitar tracks; and the second is a long transition from first into third. The second idea is very simple material in terms

The most general term for “knowledge” in the Jain tradition, in the sense of something that can be taught and learned, is *suyam*, literally “what has been heard.” It refers implicitly to an act of hearing, a moment of presence before one of the “bearers of knowledge” (*suyaharā*), those members of the community who retain in their minds, and thus in their bodies as well, what they themselves have heard. The very idea of knowledge therefore implies its transmission within a community. **S1** What follows are two stories, from the Śvētāmbara and Digambara Jain literary traditions, about that transmission.

1.

The first comes from a work of about the fifth century CE, called *Titthōgālī* (*The Dissolution of the Teaching*).<sup>1</sup> Śvētāmbara Jains include it among their “canonical” texts, that is, those said to have been collected and redacted in the sixth century CE under the leadership of the monk Dēvarddhi.<sup>2</sup> In the guise of a prophecy, it tells the story of how the Jain teachings were gradually lost—not only the texts disappearing from cultural memory, but what they taught, including the practices constitutive of the path to liberation, inevitably disappearing as well.

There was a famine in North India. At the time, the Jain teachings were transmitted orally. Many of the senior monks who remembered

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of tonality—baby xylophone played with a drill. These three things hold the structure together, joining up in the end with the other sounds, which sometimes very literally explore the movement or materiality of the place—you see stone or sand somewhere and also have that association, in the sound, of stone and sand on your fingers.

As it's a two-screen film, I figured out that I needed to also make two soundtracks—one for the left and one for the right screen. There's all kinds of panning and splitting of tracks. In principle, you should be able to watch the left screen and only play the sound in your left ear and have a complete experience. You would also have a complete experience for the right, but different—image and sound are unique for both sides.

the teachings did not survive. Those who did got together after the famine and tried to reconstitute the teachings. Nobody, however, could remember the last of its twelve aṅgas or “limbs.” The only person who remembered them was the monk Bhadrabāhu, who was practicing silent meditation in an isolated place. The community asked him to “give a recitation” of the twelfth aṅga. At first he refused, but the community threatened to impose sanctions on him, and he grudgingly agreed to recite a few words here and there in between practicing his silent meditation. The students, by and large, failed to retain anything. Only one student, Sthūlabhadra, managed to learn the text this way. He patiently learned word after word for eight years, at which point Bhadrabāhu finished his meditation and spoke to him for the first time:

“I hope you are not exhausted by this way of studying.”  
“Not at all,” he said. “But how long will it take me to finish?”  
“A man drops a mustard seed near Mount Mandara. The amount you’ve finished is the mustard seed, and Mount Mandara is how much there is left.”

Sthūlabhadra was discouraged by this, but Bhadrabāhu assured him that it would go quickly, now that he was available for questioning. And in this way Sthūlabhadra mastered ten of the fourteen parts of the twelfth aṅga.

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I don’t know if it actually works; I never tried it. I did a lot of very, very close miking and, especially if you’re using headphones, you hear sounds as close by, which produces a sense of anxiety. I used drills on a brick—a crunching that’s uncomfortable. I also hear the motor of that drill as one huge beep with different frequencies. I put those together, and it’s too close for comfort. S8

AB: How did engaging with Anupu influence the sound composition?

MV: It’s a site that wasn’t there—it had been put there because there needed to be an artificial lake. That’s a very contemporary

One day Sthūlabhadra’s family visited him. Wanting to impress them with his learning, he turned himself into a lion. His teacher was displeased with this trick, and stopped teaching him the texts. Sthūlabhadra said:

“I am not so upset that I have not learned these texts, since after all I have only myself to blame for that. And as it says in the teachings, these texts were bound to disappear, even were it not for me. No, what tortures me, in every part of my body, is that it is my fault. The teachers in the future, and indeed today, will say that it was in the arrogant Sthūlabhadra that these texts were lost.”<sup>3</sup>

The community begged Bhadrabāhu to forgive Sthūlabhadra and teach him the rest of the texts. He agreed to teach Sthūlabhadra the remaining texts, but he refused on principle to give him permission to teach the texts to subsequent students: if even so devoted a monk as Sthūlabhadra was subject to ethical lapses, minor as they were, then it was inevitable that those lapses would accumulate over time, and inevitably the knowledge contained in the texts would be used for malign purposes. Sthūlabhadra thus received the textual tradition without being permitted to transmit it further. And it feels strange to apply the term “tradition” to a text that cannot be shared. In the end the twelfth aṅga really was lost *in* Sthūlabhadra, the last person to learn them. R6 ☹

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issue, and so needed a contemporary sound. In addition to that, it’s sort of a place of entertainment, a wrestling pit. I felt the need to reflect that idea of a wrestling pit in the sound somewhere, the whole politics of repositioning this amphitheatre from somewhere else, which I hope was done carefully so that the acoustics are not completely gone. That’s where you get all the sand and bricks, as ultimately you just have a bunch of old bricks in a very new situation. These are the two ideas: one that is the low—the sand, brick, sweat, heat, intense physical activity—and the other is the opposing sound: the sky, the lake, these sounds with some sense of purity. And then the baby xylophone in the middle, which I then played with a drill to make it a bit of both. It becomes very banal when I say it

The second story comes from the *Dhavalā* (*White Commentary*) by the Jain monk Vīrasēna.<sup>4</sup> Vīrasēna belonged to the Digambara Jain community, which was distinct, in terms of key beliefs and practices, from the Śvētāmbara community that produced and transmitted the *Titthōgālī* discussed above. In fact the two communities hold very few authoritative texts in common. Vīrasēna's *Dhavalā*, completed in 816 CE, comments on an earlier work, the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgamaḥ* (*Teaching in Six Parts*), which is unknown to the Śvētāmbara tradition. In his introduction, Vīrasēna explains how that earlier work came to be. Thus while the *Titthōgālī* thematizes the *disappearance* of a textual tradition, the *Dhavalā* reflects on the continuous existence in the past—although with several major shifts in its *mode* of existence—of the tradition that readers of the text find before them.

The last person to retain some part of the Jain teachings was Dharasēna. Aware of his impending death, and worried that it would mean the death of the tradition, he sent a letter to the Jain community from his solitary cave in northwest India asking for two students. Two students arrived, and once Dharasēna confirmed their suitability he composed a text specifically for them. The students, named Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali, were then dismissed, and Dharasēna ended his life.

like this—that happens when you talk about it too much—but I didn't find it banal when I was hearing it.

AB: As contemporary artists, you're engaging with this ancient site—and this contrast is really striking because a contemporary dancer who doesn't fit into the existing idea of heritage dance categories is encountering a space that is symbolic of antique culture. Could you talk a bit about how you're creating a relationship with the space through your movement, or drawing attention to an alienation from it? Or are you interrogating it—the temporality and history it represents? What is your relationship as contemporary artists to the history that this site summons?

Some time afterwards, when Bhūtabali was in South India, he received a visitor: Jinapālita, the nephew and student of his colleague Puṣpadanta. From the manuscript Jinapālita brought, which represented the first part of the teaching they had received from Dharasēna, Bhūtabali inferred that Puṣpadanta was not long for the world. He therefore finished writing the text that Puṣpadanta had started and that Jinapālita had brought to him, which would become known as the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgamaḥ*.

Several different timescales are overlaid in these stories. First of all, there is the span of a human life. We have but a few dozen years to both learn everything we will ever learn and pass it down to future generations: "Aber was sind auch siebenzig Jahre!" (But what is even seventy years?).<sup>5</sup> In the case of Jain teachings, there is even less time. Sthūlabhadra only became a Jain monk well into adulthood. This is one point of contrast with the transmission of the Vedas, which are taught to Brahmin boys when they are very young and their brains are most plastic. The Vedas exist, in a certain sense, within the temporality of the family. The claim that the Vedas are eternal, which is met with in Brahmanical schools of thought, depends on the ability to imagine families extending infinitely into the

PC: You've mentioned the disconnect between the "contemporary" and national heritage. There's a sense of that, of being outside the discourse of what is in India itself. But the contemporary is very complex, especially in a country so vast and complex, as are discussions around different modernities. There's no one idea of the contemporary within India, and contemporary practice is completely derived from Western contemporary dance idioms. Where I come from, the work is always in conversation with the past. We've never really seen ourselves as just sort of dropping down from the sky into an amphitheatre and being contemporary artists—we have always existed within this tension and interrogation between the past and the present. RS ✕ The advantage is that

past and the future. But the biological family is not the only way to stitch human generations together. These stories are about succession within a line of teachers: Bhadrabāhu was the seventh in line from Mahāvīra, the final tirthāṅkara or “ford-maker” of Jainism, essentially the founder of the religion in its current historical dispensation. Dharasēna was twenty-sixth.

The transmission of texts within this line of succession is lossy. <sup>T2</sup> The loss is represented most obviously in numerical terms: Mahāvīra’s teaching was represented by twelve āṅgas, the twelfth of which was represented, in turn, by fourteen immense collections of technical teachings called the pūrvas. These texts, starting with the pūrvas, were gradually lost. In the *Titthōgālī*, we are told that four entire texts simply winked out of existence with the death of one person, Sthūlabhadra. But this is not the only kind of loss to which that story alludes. Sthūlabhadra becomes Bhadrabāhu’s disciple in the first place because of a crisis of memory within the community: natural disaster had decimated the ranks of senior monks, and those who survived struggled to remember what they had been taught. The bitter irony of the *Titthōgālī* is that the texts that survive are in fact those that had been half-remembered and stitched together in a time of crisis, while the texts that the most gifted student patiently learned over many years were lost immediately and forever.

The eruption of natural disasters onto the relatively predictable temporality of human generations is an important motif in the *Titthōgālī* and in the Jain tradition more broadly. Disasters challenge the

assumption of a uniformity reaching into the distant past and future, and articulate the tradition into stages. A different famine than that described in the *Titthōgālī* is held to have occasioned the redaction of the Jain teachings under the leadership of Skandila and Nāgārjuna, and, later, yet another famine led to their being put into written form under Dēvarddhi. These articulations resemble, in their outer form if not in how they are experienced, the way in which political formations structure historical time. The *Titthōgālī* makes this comparison explicit: “the lineage (vaṁsa-) of the Āṅgas, the Nandas, and the Mauryas came to a sudden end, alongside the lineage (vaṁsa-) of the textual tradition.”<sup>6</sup>

As the very title of the *Titthōgālī* makes clear, the history to which these developments ultimately belong is that of the tīrtha, the salvific path taught by Mahāvīra—in a word, Jainism. The *Titthōgālī* reckons time in years that have passed since Mahāvīra’s death, which is traditionally dated to 537 BCE.

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In both stories, the oral transmission of a text comes to an end. Only in the *Titthōgālī*, however, does this imply the text’s total disappearance. In the *Dhavalā*, Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali avail themselves of writing,

I can come without baggage and say, “I’m an Odissi dancer, a Kathak dancer,” in South India and perform a form that geographically belongs to another space. My aesthetic can be anything; it is not bound.

This is how I propose that my aesthetic connects somewhere to the aesthetic of the space, not in a kind of a superficial “Oh, now I’m going to do something that looks ritualistic, etc.” sense, but as something essential. Ironically, the theatre that Chandralekha built when she started to develop her work is called Mandala. I spent ten years working a lot on the geometric systems with which she created work and how conversations around the body were held, understanding these notions of the circle within

the square. The minute I sent those photographs of Anupu to friends who shared that history with me, they said, “This is a mandala.” Even if I wasn’t going to overtly reference it, having been a classical dancer and acknowledging this within the Indian historical context, reconstructing the past or literally conversing with it, there was a great familiarity with the proportions of the space. It is built to contain many, but the single human body seems to fill it with an incredible ease. After watching the early footage we made, I said to Nida, “I should have planned the whole film with just two people—it feels like more would be too much.”

I’m in relation to the space more than making a relationship with the space. As a performer, I bring acute

which allows some version of the text, at least, to reach the commentator Vīrasēna, and ultimately readers like us.

The *Titthōgālī* makes no mention of writing at all, and represents the normative conditions of transmission: the student learns the text and its meaning from his teacher over a period of many years, until he is finally given permission to teach it to others in the same way. The oldest Jain texts make no clear mention of writing, and the earliest texts to do so—the *Niryuktis*, a set of commentaries composed in verse around the beginning of the common era—clearly state that monks really ought to have nothing to do with it: they were prohibited from possessing manuscripts, and penalized for every letter they wrote.<sup>7</sup>

Dharasēna and his students, by contrast, live in a world where literacy is presupposed. Dharasēna himself resorts to writing, but only as a technology of communication, when he sends a letter to the Jain community. He does not write down what he has learned, even as his death approaches. His student Puṣpadanta, when he finds himself in the same situation, resorts to writing as a technology of storage.<sup>8</sup> I am tempted to read this story as an allegory of the gradual acceptance of writing as a means of storing the Jain teachings. By Vīrasēna's time, there is no longer any trace of opprobrium attached to writing.

The *Dhavalā*, like the *Titthōgālī*, shows us a moment of crisis, a point of articulation in the tradition. The articulation here is writing. Once

scorned as a support for unserious monks, or associated with love letters and other cultural phenomena monks ought to avoid, writing emerges as the only conceivable way of forestalling the disappearance of the Jain teachings. It was a compromise that would shape the tradition ever after. The story of Bhadrabāhu raises the possibility of a different compromise, only to reject it. If the survival of the Jain teachings is at stake, couldn't he have simply overlooked his student's momentary arrogance, which was after all harmless? His rationale for withholding the teachings from Sthūlabhadra seems to have been the following: such moments might not seem very serious in themselves, but they contribute to the normalization of a situation in which learning is not used for its intended purpose of liberation, but instead for shallow displays of erudition, or worse, for more cynical and destructive purposes. In relation to this outcome, the need to preserve the teachings is not absolute. Teachers such as Bhadrabāhu are not obligated to ensure their continued transmission at all costs. They can, and often do, intervene in their transmission: "the law is not in heaven."<sup>9</sup>

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We have been talking about the "teachings" of Jainism, and only now has the identity of those teachings been called into question. On the

awareness—a lot of my work is about concentration, not just on what's happening within the body, but a concentration which brings the viewer to see what's around the body. These were some of the strategies with which I tried to make friends with the space and not disrespect it. I've seen choreographers from Europe come to produce works at historical sites in India and end up with such a clash of aesthetics. I was cautious to the extent that I thought it was just not possible to dance here. But if dance is not possible, other kinds of movement are.

AB: It's really interesting that at a certain stage you wanted to work with stillness because the possibilities of movement

had already been mined in your previous explorations. This site seems to be in a very good location to explore that idea of stillness in the choreographic decisions you make around the tempo of the piece. The film's opening image begins already as part of the site. We see this still body on one side, on one screen, and then, on the other, a torso with the face turned away from us, and the gesture of your palm dragging across the stone surface. It produces this fiery, crackling sonic texture. You begin with a mode of refusal, refusing a conventional approach to subjectivity and its representation, refusing the gaze of the spectator. Then we see the body begin to move in a medium shot and a long shot of a stilled posture. There's a dialectic between your status as subject

one hand, they were passed down with great care over the generations; on the other, what is passed down inevitably changes, whether due to unforeseen disasters, deliberate interventions, or simply the limitations of human memory. Clearly the dichotomy of preservation or loss is inadequate to this situation. Nevertheless, it has become a cliché that the Śvētāmbaras believe the teachings are “preserved” while the Digambaras believe they are “lost”—even though the Śvētāmbara *Titthōgālī* narrates the total loss of the twelfth āṅga, whereas the Digambara Dhavalā narrates its partial preservation in the form of the Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgamaḥ.

There is firstly a question of what should count as preserving a text. The transmission of the Vedas represents one model, where no linguistically relevant detail is omitted: the text has to be memorized by the student in exactly the form in which the teacher recites it, down to the length and pitch of its vowels. But the transmission of Jain texts, like Buddhist texts, was influenced to a much greater degree by the linguistic context of its transmitters, leading to a profusion of forms for what is ostensibly the same word (for example, kappaṁ, kappati, and kappadi for “is permitted”), and leading scholars to attempt to determine the “original” form.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, what degree of accuracy is sufficient for us to consider a text “preserved”? If one word out of every thousand were misremembered, would it still count? What about one out of every hundred?

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and object, almost like you want to engage as an object among the rest of the vibrant matter at Anupu?<sup>3</sup> I couldn’t help but think of how, in film, a dancing body marked as female is constantly subject to the male gaze and configured within a patriarchal economy of representation.<sup>4</sup>

How do you navigate this challenge of becoming an object in terms of the aesthetic, or something approximating an object with respect to your own relationship to the site, while also being aware of that tension around the imposition of the male gaze on the dancing body?

PC: I’m not a filmmaker; I’m a performer-maker. This is my second film, and as before I chose to work with a director

There is, secondly, the question of what the “original” form of a text represents. In Brahmanism, the Veda is considered eternal, and revealed to men by seers in every cosmic cycle. In Buddhism, the teachings are considered to be “the words of the Buddha.” This is sometimes taken in an expanded sense, to mean things that the Buddha might have said or should have said. But all the same, the privileged textual form in this tradition is the discourse given by the Buddha to his disciples. In Jainism almost every teaching is framed as a restatement of an earlier teaching, and almost every text is framed as a textualization of a preexisting discourse. This is true even for Mahāvīra, who is considered to be the twenty-fourth in a line of teachers stretching back billions and billions of years. Discourses of Mahāvīra are in fact uncommon in the Jain “canon,” and when Mahāvīra’s words are presented, they are recalled by his disciple, Sudharman, to the latter’s disciple, Jambūsvāmin. The “canon” includes many texts that are clearly reorderings, restatements, and analyses of traditional teachings, and are attributed to monks who lived centuries after Mahāvīra. From this perspective, the textual tradition should not be imagined exclusively as the passing down of a pristine set of teachings in their original linguistic form—although this kind of transmission did take place to some degree—but as a process whereby ideas, stories, practices, and rules were periodically given textual form. R7 ■ While knowledge of the texts per se (suttāim) is a privileged domain of knowledge about

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who is normally a wildlife filmmaker. He’s used to lying patiently in wait for an elephant for a whole day. He watches more than intervenes in the frame, which gives me a free hand.

Nevertheless, my approach and my thinking, the politics, the sensibility, all of these questions around the gaze—the male gaze in particular—these are questions that have already existed within the context of making new performance in India.

Although this history is contested today, the popular narrative is that in the 1930s and 1940s, with Rukmini Devi, dance was taken from the temples and the courts and thrust onto the proscenium stage.<sup>5</sup> All the dancers could do was to suddenly deal with the front—the need to be frontal, the need to smile, to be seductive. That’s where all of this

the tradition, it is not the only one. We have seen that the community periodically intervenes in the regular course of the transmission of knowledge in order to create opportunities for certain teachings to be disseminated more broadly, or indeed to guarantee their survival into the future. Thus traditional knowledge, which, once again, is literally “what has been heard” (suyam), reflects the community’s judgments about what is worth learning. R5 ✕

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conversation around the male objectification of the dancing body discourse comes from.

Chandra had already started to deal with the problem. Her instruction to the dancers was: “Don’t smile, don’t seduce. Let’s de-objectify and see what else the body can propose. Can it propose itself as that which holds power and strength, to reclaim the spine and not to have to somehow fulfil?” This is a long trajectory that I have been a part of. In my own work, I still struggled with the whole question—even if the work is rid of narratives, the minute there’s a body on the stage, trying to give reason or meaning to movement, as a way for moving itself to happen, we always fall back into this idea of subjective expressivity. Then I made *Beautiful*

## Recording Classical Dance at Ranigumpha: What Does It Mean to Listen to Odissi’s Past?

Anurima Banerji

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*Thing 2*, one of my few solos. I always struggle with the solos because, at least with a group work, you have multiple bodies and attention can be on the space between them, to distract from their presence. With a solo it’s difficult; solo activity feels enhanced. I thought to myself, “Well, I am going to take this body back, I’m going to turn it back into an object,” an object that is only concerned with its form, the lines that it holds, the space that it holds. It became a good strategy, because the mind could become preoccupied with something other than its own subjectivity. All of a sudden, a lot of these problems, including the gaze, went away.

I love working with this idea of the body’s back surface, an important element, and giving equal importance to

CONVERSATION WITH  
PADMINI CHETTUR AND MAARTEN VISSER  
Anurima Banerji, Nida Ghouse

- 1 Alexander Keefe in *A Slightly Curving Place* digital discourse program, *Coming to Know* panel, September 5, 2020.
- 2 Chandralekha, “The Backbone of Freedom: A Statement” in *Ballet International/Tanz Aktuell* [English edition] (July 1997), 46–47.
- 3 See Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- 4 See Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Screen* 16, 3 (Autumn 1975), 6–18.
- 5 Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–1986) was an Indian classical dancer who was instrumental in reviving the Bharatanatyam dance form and who founded the Kalakshetra Foundation in Madras.

*Voice, Listening, and Sonic Memory  
as Primary Recorders*  
Annette Wilke

- 1 See Annette Wilke and Oliver Moebus, *Sound and Communication: An Aesthetic Cultural History of Sanskrit Hinduism*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011; and most recently Annette Wilke, “Sonality” in Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens, ed., *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020, 107–16.
- 2 Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters. Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 118–130.
- 3 Michael Witzel, “Vedic Sacred Sound Across Time and Space.” Digital lecture, Tübingen research project Sacred Sound, 24 March 2021.
- 4 Frits Staal, “The Fidelity of Oral Tradition and the Origins of Science” in *Medelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* NR 49, 8 (1986), 3–40.
- 5 See Wilke and Moebus, *Sound and Communication*, 492–503 for many examples.
- 6 Finnian Gerety, *This Whole World is OM: Song, Soteriology, and the Emergence of the Sacred Syllable*. PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, Department of South Asian Studies, 2015.
- 7 For Greek aesthetics prior to and beyond Aristotle and Plato, see James I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. For the aesthetics of religion approach, see Alexandra Grieser and Jay Johnston, “What

is an Aesthetics of Religion? From the Senses to Meaning – and Back Again” in *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017, whose concept of aisthesis is indebted to Aristotle. Nevertheless, similar to Porter, sensation and materiality are the major focus, although not relating to art, but to religion and the claim that religions essentially consist of “sensory practise” (ibid. 3).

8 Grieser and Johnston, “What is an Aesthetics of Religion?,” 3.

9 Sheldon Pollock, *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

10 Annette Wilke, “Classical Indian Aesthetics and Rasa Theory: Observations on Embodied Rhetoric, Reader Response, and the Entanglement of Aesthetics and Religion in Hindu India” in Sabine Dorpmüller et al, ed., *Religion and Aesthetic Experience. Drama–Sermons–Literature*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2018, 47–89.

11 For this and the following two paragraphs, see Wilke and Moebus, *Sound and Communication*, 288f., 292f., 361, 370–390, 405, 415f., wherein also the original quotes are found.

12 Andr Padoux, *Vāc – The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, xiii.

*Two Stories about the Transmission of Knowledge*  
Andrew Ollett

- 1 Paṃnyāsa Kalyāṇavijaya Gaṇivara and Gajasīmha Raṭhōḍa, ed., *Ajñāta Prācīna Ācāryakṛta Tittthōgālī-paiṇṇaya*. Ajmer: Arcanā Prakāśana, 2500 V.N. [= 1974 CE]. The story is related in verses 716–806.
- 2 See Hiralal Rasikdas Kapadia, *A History of the Canonical Literature of the Jains*. Ahmedabad: Sharadaben Chimanbahi Educational Research Center, 2000 [1941], 58.
- 3 *Tittthōgālī*, vv. 771–773: na vi tāva majjha maṇṇuṃ jaha mē ṇa samāṇiyāi puvvāiṃ ~ appā hu maē avārāhito tti paḍiyaṃ khu mē maṇṇuṃ ~ ētēhī nāsiyavaṃ maē viṇa vi jaha sāsaṇē bhaṇiyaṃ ~ jaṃ puṇa mē avaraddhaṃ ēyaṃ puṇa dāhati savvaṅgaṃ ~ vocchanti ya mayaharagā aṇāgayā jē ya sampatikālē ~ gāraviya-thūlabhaddammi nāma naṭṭhāi puvvāiṃ.
- 4 Hīralāla Jaina, ed., *Śrī Dhavalā-tīkā-samanvitaḥ Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgamah*, vol. 1. Amraoti: Jain Sāhitya Uddhāraka Fund Kāryālaya, 1939, 67–71.
- 5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe*. Leipzig: Fritzsche, 1887, 196.
- 6 *Tittthōgālī*, v. 805: taṃ ēva aṇgavaṃsō ya nan-davaṃsō (ya) maruyavaṃsō ya ~ savarāhēṇa paṇaṭṭhā samayaṃ sajjhāyavaṃsēṇa.

7 Kapadia, 56.

8 The distinction is from the “Introduction” to Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 1–11.

9 Deuteronomy 30:12. The scholar Walther Schubring also suggested that “[the] preservation [of the twelfth āṅga, AO] appeared to be undesirable since the study of such disputes was apt to arouse heretical thoughts and activities.” See *The Doctrine of the Jainas*, transl. Wolfgang Beulen. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978, 76.

10 See, for example, K. R. Chandra, *In Search of the Original Ardhamaṅgaḍhī*, transl. N. M. Kansara. Ahmedabad: Prakrit Text Society, 2001.

*Recording Classical Dance at Ranigumpha*  
Anurima Banerji

1 On Ranigumpha’s histories, see N.K. Sahu, *Kharavela*. Bhubaneswar: Golden Jubilee Publications, 1984; Margaret Prosser Allen, *Ornament in Indian Architecture*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991; Shashi Kant, *The Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela and the Bhabru Edict of Asoka: A Critical Study*. Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2000; Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India from the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2002, 211–13; and Jayanti Rath, “Kharavela: The Great Philanthropic Emperor” in *Orissa Review* (April 2007): 40–41.

2 The other dances in the classical canon are Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam, and Sattriya. Classical dances are important symbols for the Indian state and central to endeavours of domestic and international cultural diplomacy. While such forms often claim a connection to antiquity, critical historians and dance scholars have argued they are essentially modern aesthetic constructions, invented in the mid-twentieth century as part of a postcolonial project of cultural recovery, in the wake of India’s political independence from imperialist rule in 1947. The Sangeet Natak Akademi, India’s national agency of performing arts, administers the cultural policies on dance, music, and theatre and has the power to designate a given form as “classical.” However, the criteria and process for establishing a style as “classical” remains ambiguous. See Pallabi Chakravorty, “Hegemony, Dance, and the Nation” in *South Asia* 21, 2 (December 1998), 107–20; “From Interculturalism to Historicism: Reflections on Classical Indian Dance” in *Dance Research Journal* 32, 2 (Winter 2000), 100–11; Ananya Chatterjea, “Contestations: Constructing a Historical Narrative for Odissi”

in Alexandra Carter, ed., *Rethinking Dance History*. London: Routledge, 2004, 143–56; Purnima Shah, “State Patronage in India: The Appropriation of the Regional and the National” in *Dance Chronicle* 25, 1 (2002), 125–41; and Anita Cherian, “Institutional Maneuvers, Nationalizing Performance, Delineating Genre: Reading the Sangeet Natak Akademi Reports, 1953–1959” in *Third Frame: Literature, Culture, and Society* 2, 3 (July–September 2009): 32–60.

3 On Odissi’s purported ancient status and links to Ranigumpha, see Charles Fabri, *History of the Art of Orissa*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974; Mohan Khokar, *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance*. Delhi: Clarion Books, 1984, 175; Sunil Kothari, *Odissi: Indian Classical Dance Art*. Bombay: Marg Publications, 1990, 1; D. N. Patnaik, *Odissi Dance*. Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1990; Kapila Vatsyayan, *Indian Classical Dance*, 3rd ed. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 2007, 49; Ragini Devi, *Dance Dialects of India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002, 138; and Anurima Banerji, *Dancing Odissi*. Kolkata and Chicago: Seagull Books/University of Chicago Press, 2019, ch. 1, 48–96.

4 The *Natyashastra* (c. 2nd century BCE–2nd century CE) is a wide-ranging manual on the performing arts that is also considered the source text for many Indian classical choreographies. It catalogues the styles, techniques, and aims of performance in the Indian subcontinent, serving as a comprehensive compendium of dance knowledge from the ancient period. See Anupa Pande, *The Natyashastra Tradition and Ancient Indian Society*. Jodhpur: Kusumanjali Prakashan, 1993; Kapila Vatsyayan, *Bharata: The Natyasastra*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996; and Bharatmuni, *Natyasastra*, vols. 1–4, transl. and ed. Manomohan Ghosh. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 2007.

5 See Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. Campt reconfigures these photographs “as quiet, quotidian practices that give us access to the affective registers through which these images enunciate alternate accounts of their subjects”—“quiet” here not to be understood as silence, but “as a level of intensity that requires focused attention” (5–6). I am inspired by her approach to analyzing historical images, from which she harvests multiple hermeneutic possibilities by deploying the sonic metaphor.

6 I acknowledge that this move might necessarily sit in tension with the political need to identify, very definitively, historical facts that might otherwise risk erasure. So let me clarify that I am speaking about an approach towards interpretation of established facts, rather than debating their actual existence.

7 This refers to a key question engaged in dance studies: can dance even have a history, since it

seemingly happens in a moment that can never be repeated or arrested in time? See Susan Foster, ed., *Choreographing History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995; André Lepecki, “The Body as Archive” in *Dance Research Journal* 42, 2 (Winter 2010), 28–48; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003; and Anjali Arondekar, *Abundance: Sexuality, Historiography, Geopolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming.

8 Brooke Holmes notes that this is a problem also attached to the concept of “documentation,” a word that so frequently comes up around the making, curation, and collection of live art, and bears the additional sense of getting the right “papers” so a subject or object can belong properly to history, to a nation, to some stable community, and also be authenticated (personal conversation, 1 October 2021).

9 Many theorists have troubled the idea that dance should be framed as an event that is primarily seen. From the perspective of the dancer, dance creates bodily vibrations, sensations, and experiences that may not be discernible to a spectator. Further, modes of perception other than history may organize the reception of dance in different settings. On this, see Marcia Siegel, *At the Vanishing Point*. New York: Saturday Review Press, 1973; Susan Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*. New York: Routledge, 2011; Sally Ann Ness, “The Inscription of Gesture” in Sally Ann Ness and Carrie Noland, ed., *Migrations of Gesture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 1–30; and Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

10 Dominant historical narratives of Odissi, for instance, suggest that proof of the form’s past iterations can be found in the dance carvings at Ranigumpha; in references in the *Natyashastra* and related texts on aesthetic praxis, like the Abhinaya Darpanam and Abhinaya Chandrika; in the sculptural and visual art traditions of Odisha; in the ritual practices of the maharis, female ritual specialists who offered song and dance as worship in Hindu temples; and in the art of the gotipuas, a tradition of female impersonation in Odisha. Collectively, these sources span from the ancient to the early modern period. The architects of Odissi drew from this broad repository to invent the classical dance in 1950s. For more on Odissi’s history, see Kothari, *Odissi: Indian Classical Dance Art* and Patnaik, *Odissi Dance*.

11 Michel Foucault, “On the Ways of Writing History,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, transl. Robert Hurley. New York: New Press, 289.

12 While Odra-Magadhi is an identifiable dance style from ancient Odisha (as described in the *Natyashastra*), there is little historically verifiable information about other dances that may have been prevalent in the region around the time

when Ranigumpha was built. There are visual and literary mentions of dance in general from the same period, indicating its importance and presence in the cultural life of Odisha, but the particular names are unknown. For instance, a nearby inscription at Hathigumpha notes that the king Kharavela was an enthusiastic patron of dance, music, and acrobatics, but doesn’t mention the specifics of the style(s) involved. The interpretation that Ranigumpha’s dance images might correspond to Odra-Magadhi is therefore completely conjectural, and I can only allude enigmatically to the kindred forms.

13 Hindutva is a modern political ideology invested in the project of claiming India as a nation fundamentally belonging to Hindus, to the exclusion or marginalization of adherents of other faiths. The colour saffron, sacred in Hinduism, has been appropriated by proponents of Hindutva. See Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva*. Noida: Harper Collins, 2015.

14 Even as the “classical” is a debated aesthetic category in India, it enjoys considerable strength as a major cultural discourse. For more on this topic, see Ranjabati Chaki Sircar, “Contemporary Indian Dance,” in Bimal Mukherjee and Sunil Kothari, ed., *Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last Twenty-Five Years, vol. I – Music and Dance*. Calcutta: Anamika Kala Sangam, 1995, 255–60; Daves Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory, and Modernity in South India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012; along with Chakravorty, “Hegemony, Dance, and the Nation” and “From Interculturalism to Historicism”; Vatsyayan, *Indian Classical Dance*.

15 There has also been a robust discussion in the dance world about which caste- and class-privileged bodies can appropriately signify classicism, and which ones tend to be excluded from this function. See Bishnupriya Dutt and Urmimala Sarkar Munsri, *Engendering Performance: Indian Women Performers in Search of an Identity*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010; Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, *Impersonations: The Artifice of Brahmin Masculinity in South Indian Dance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019; Brahma Prakash, *Cultural Labour: Conceptualizing the ‘Folk Performance’ in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019; and Nrithya Pillai, “The Politics of Naming the South Indian Dancer” in *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies, Decolonizing Dance Discourses* XL (2021), 13–15.