



## FRESH LIGHT ON THE MYTHOLOGY AND ICONOGRAPHY OF BHRĪNGI

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**Abstract:** In Hindu iconography the deities are generally shown with multiple heads, arms, eyes and legs to exhibit their superhuman powers and to distinguish them from the figures of mortal beings. Śiva is carved with a single leg, two legs and even eight legs as in Śarabhēśa form. On the other hand, Agni, Bhairava (Atiriktānga Bhairava) and Jvaraharēśvara are some of the divine beings whose figures are depicted with three legs. The figures of the mortal being Bhrīngi with three legs sometimes confuses the onlookers, devotees and art historians and make it difficult to identify the figures as that of an ascetic, who was a staunch devotee of Śiva. The multifarious personality of Bhrīngi illustrated in the stone sculptures and paintings has not drawn the attention of the scholars that it deserves. Further, regarding the relations between Bhrīngi and Śiva described in the literary works, his religious status among the divine and semi-divine beings is not well addressed except for the legend of Pārvatī's curse on him. To unravel the less known facts about Bhrīngi an attempt is made here to discuss these things as well as to report for the first time a rare sculpture of Śiva blessing Bhrīngi that can be referred to as Bhrīngīsānugrahamūrti from the Virūpāksha temple at Pattadakal.

**Keywords:** Bhairava, Bhrīngi, Bhrīngīsānugrahamūrti, Lepakshi, Virūpāksha temple

Received : 10 November 2023

Revised : 29 November 2023

Accepted : 10 December 2023

Published : 30 December 2023

### TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Kumari, M.K. (2023). Fresh Light on the Mythology and Iconography of Bhringī. *Journal of History, Art and Archaeology*, 3: 2, pp. 143-157. <https://doi.org/10.47509/JHAA.2023.v03i02.05>

Bhrīngi, a Saivite ascetic is generally known for his emaciated, skeletal body accompanying Śiva and his family in visual arts but many of the details of his iconology and iconography are

not well addressed by the scholars. This may be attributed to the vastness of the archaeological data including the stone, wood, metal and mural paintings depicting the Saivite imagery where

Bhṛiṅgi is depicted and the stray references to Bhṛiṅgi found in the literary texts of different periods. Mostly the images of Bhṛiṅgi are shown in miniature form amidst several other divine and semi-divine figures who attend Śiva when compared to the large figures of Śiva in the relief sculptures. Sometimes it is found to be difficult to identify properly the figures of Bhṛiṅgi since a third leg is also depicted in the case of the figures of Jvarahara and Bhairava associated with the figures of Śiva. However, some eminent Indologists and art historians like T.A.G. Rao (1914), H.Krishnasastri (1916), C.Śivaramamurti (1974), K.V.Soundararajan (1981), S.K.Ramachandra Rao (1991) and Thomas E Donaldson (2007) have referred to Bhṛiṅgi in their studies either briefly or about the mythological legend that concerns with the transformation of Śiva into Ardhanari form in which combines in Himself Pārvatī on his left half of the body thus making himself inseparable from the goddess Pārvatī. Peter Bisschop (2010) has brought to the notice of the academic world the relationship between Bhṛiṅgi and Śiva and a few other details based on his study on Śivadharmasāstra. Recently, a rare wooden image of Bhṛiṅgi from Rijksmuseum has been critically analysed by Anna A Slazcka (2022) and in this connection, she has discussed some stone sculptures and paintings of Bhṛiṅgi from South India as well as the mythological background of modelling the images of Bhṛiṅgi in South Indian context. As the need for further probing on the subject has been expressed by the scholars, an attempt is made here to look into the iconographical details of Bhṛiṅgi from stone sculptures and mural paintings and to focus on Bhṛiṅgi's relationship with Śiva, the nature of the devotional faith of Bhṛiṅgi within Saivism and the development of the iconography of Bhṛiṅgi during the medieval and late medieval times.

The images of Bhṛiṅgi are rarely carved in isolation or as independent figures. Always he is demonstrated in both stone reliefs and mural paintings as associated with lord Śiva. Among the group of Gaṇas he is shown prominently and

quite often he is represented along with the sons of Śiva i.e., Gaṇeśa and Skanda or Kārttikēya. Before discussing the details of the iconography of Bhṛiṅgi it is needed to examine the textual references about Bhṛiṅgi which provides some new insights into the better understanding of the nature and character of Bhṛiṅgi that was demonstrated by his images. Given below are the iconographic and other details of Bhṛiṅgi drawn from various texts such as the *Purāṇas*, *Śaivāgamas*, *Dhyānaślōkas*, iconographical and other texts. Some of them mention just the name of Bhṛiṅgi along with the other divine beings that were invoked without mentioning the physical descriptions while some other texts mention the skeletal structure of the body and some other iconographical details. The list of the texts consulted here is arranged in Table I in chronological order (tentative dates of the texts as generally accepted by the scholars) rather than alphabetically.

The mythological story of Bhṛiṅgi is closely connected with the manifestation of Ardhanarisvara form of Śiva. The fusion of Śiva and Pārvatī suggests the co-existence of two strong and competitive sectarian faiths in Hinduism that is ultimately syncretised by the union of Śiva and Sakti in a single anthropomorphic form known as Ardhanārīśvara. As the South Indian legend says it was Bhṛiṅgi who took a vow not to pay homage to any other God except the male god Śiva. On one occasion, when all the other sages went to Kailāsa to pray to Śiva, the latter was seated with Pārvatī and all the other sages worshipped both Śiva and Pārvatī but Bhṛiṅgi who followed his vow strictly disregarded Pārvatī and performed circumambulation only around Śiva. As a result Pārvatī became enraged and out of her anger she cursed Bhṛiṅgi and reduced him to a skeletal form. Bhṛiṅgi was unable to stand erect and on his prayers, Śiva provided Bhṛiṅgi with an additional leg to support his body (Sastri: 1916: 165, Pl. 105). Thereafter, Pārvatī performed penances and Śiva being pleased with it granted her wish and united Pārvatī on his left half. As there was no space now left between Śiva and Pārvatī in the Ardhanārīśvara

Table 1: Description of Bhṛiṅgi in Literature

Sl. No.	Name of the Text	Date of the Text	Details
1	Niśvāsaguhyā, 16.50; 16.52	200-500 CE	Bhṛiṅgi is listed along with Skanda, Bahurūpa and Vṛishabha; Bhṛiṅgi is mentioned in the list of seven gaṇas-Dēvī, Skanda, Vighnēśa, Nandi, Kapālin and Vṛishabha.
2	Kumārasambhava, 9, 48 (of Kālidāsa)	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Bhṛiṅgi joins in the dance of Śiva; Grotesque figure; Flexions in the body; grinning teeth
3	Śivadharmasastra, 6.1, 8; 6.25;6.26	6 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Bhṛiṅgi is referred to as Rudrasyanaya; Rudrātmaḥ, Mahāvīra; Body without flesh and three-eyed; Tranquil disposition
4	Agni Purāṇa, 50,40	7 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Emaciated body, dancing pose, pumpkin-like head
5	Skanda Purāṇa, 170; 4.2.53	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Participation in Tripura battle as Andhaka along with Chaṇḍēśvara, Vināyaka, Vīrabhadra and Śaṅkukarna. Bhṛiṅgi struck the demon king Vidyutprabha with a spear causing the enemy to flee from the battlefield. Śiva granted gaṇahood to Andhaka who is known later as Bhṛiṅgi.
6	Śivānandalahari, 51	8 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Lord Śiva likes to dance as per the wishes of Bhṛiṅgi 'Bhṛiṅgīncanatanōtkatah'
7	Ajitāgama, 36.356	Middle of 8 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Bhṛiṅgi should be shown with three arms, three eyes and three legs
8	Vāmana Purāṇa, 44.49; 44.72	9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Śiva renamed Andhaka as Bhṛiṅgi and made him a leader of Śivagaṇas when Andhaka realized his folly and offered prayers to both Śiva and Pārvatī.
9	Kālikā Purāṇa, 47-50	Late 9 <sup>th</sup> and early 10 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Bhṛiṅgi was born out of the semen of Śiva that was received by Agni. Bhṛiṅgi was entrusted with the administration of the Śivagaṇas. Bhṛiṅgi and Mahākāla were made as Pratihāras (door-guardians)
10	Saura Purāṇa	10 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Previously known as Andhaka, Bhṛiṅgi was granted the status of the head of the gaṇas by Śiva.
11	Kāraṇāgama, I, 30, 325, 326	10 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	In connection with the description of Uma-Mahēśavaramūrti, Bhṛiṅgi is mentioned along with Nārada, Bāna, Bhairava, Gaṇēśa, Skanda and Vīreśvara in eight cardinal directions
12	Kāmikāgama, I, 4-475	Late 11 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	In the Bhujangatrāsa mode of a dance of Naṭarāja, Bhṛiṅgi or Bhadrakālī should be on the right side of dancing Śiva.
13	Subhāshitaratnakōśa of Vidyākara	1100 CE	Bhṛiṅgi has worried so much about seeing the contradictions of Śiva and his body got emaciated.
14	Aparājita-prchcha, 213,4; 25-27	The later half of the 12 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	In the Umā-Mahēśvara form, Kārttikēya and Gaṇēśa should be carved along with the fleshless, dancing Bhṛiṅgiriti. He should carry in his four arms a mace, a ḍamaru, a Khaṭvaṅga and the forefinger in tarjanimudra
15	Kunchitamgrihastava (devotional Hymns in praise of Śiva)	1300 CE	Refers to the third leg of Bhṛiṅgi
16	Dēvatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, 6,163,164  6, 31-33	15 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Hērāmba Gaṇēśa and Bhṛiṅgi are mentioned as door-guardians of left and right, respectively. Four armed Bhṛiṅgi should carry in his hands an elephant, a ḍamaru, akhaṭvaṅga and tarjanihasta. The images of Bhṛiṅgi and Hērāmba should be installed at the Southern doorway and it is auspicious. Below the image of Umā-Mahēśvara should be placed the figures of Nandi, Kumāra, Gaṇēśa and fleshless Bhṛiṅgiriti dancing to complete the composition of the image.
17	Rūpamaṇḍana, 4,103;4, 27-29	15 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Same as above
18	Śrītattvanidhi (cited by T.A.G.Rao, II, Pt.ii, p.72)	19 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Uma-Mahesvara forms of Śiva should include the figures of Bhṛiṅgi, Nārada, Bana, Bhairava, Gaṇēśa, Skanda and Visvesvara
19	Śivaparākramam (Tamil work)	19 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Mentions the third leg of Bhṛiṅgi
20	DhyānaŚlōkas, Ms.T. No 102, p.36	19 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	Refers to the third leg of Bhṛiṅgi

form Bhṛiṅgi took the form of a beetle and pierced a hole at the neck of Ardhanārīśvara and in that beetle form he continued to roam around Śiva only, to the embarrassment of Pārvatī. On the other hand, Pārvatī has admired the steadfast and single-minded devotional faith of Bhṛiṅgi towards Śiva and bestowed her grace on Bhṛiṅgi (Rao:1914:II,i:322-23). The *Skanda Purāṇa* provides some additional details of this legend and according to which Pārvatī disliked the attitude of Bhṛiṅgi worshipping only Śiva and not Śiva and Pārvatī. Henceforth, she has argued with Bhṛiṅgi by asking him why when Bhṛiṅgi considers himself as the son of Śiva, why he disregards her as his mother. At this Bhṛiṅgi replied that he was the son of Śiva alone and he would pay respects to Śiva only. Pārvatī then remarked that everyone owes flesh, blood and intestines to his mother while the nails, teeth, bones, speech and head to his father. On listening to these words from Pārvatī, Bhṛiṅgi forsook all that he has got from his mother and is satisfied with what he has got from his father only (Donaldson: 2007:62). Thus Bhṛiṅgi obtained the skeletal body without flesh by his yogic power while Pārvatī cursed him to be a mortal (Joshi:1989:I,ii:61-62). Wendy Doniger (1980:317) has described another version of the myth of Bhṛiṅgi that combines with the episode of asceticism practiced by Pārvatī to win the love of lord Śiva. When Pārvatī had closed the eyes of Śiva in a playful mood, it results in total darkness causing great trouble to all creatures of the Universe. To expiate this wrongdoing, Pārvatī had to undergo pilgrimage and finally, she was rewarded by being joined to the body of Śiva as Ardhanari. This episode has been combined with the story of Bhṛiṅgi who adhered to his vow of worshipping Śiva only and Śiva's persistent desire to help his devotee against the wishes of Pārvatī which resulted in the penance of Pārvatī until Śiva accepts her into his body (Adiceam 1968:145-46). These myths with some variations show the 'undying animosity that reigns between Bhṛiṅgi and anything feminine' (Handleman and Shulman: 1997:115). The narrative of Bhṛiṅgi's

role in the transformation of the masculine form of Śiva to an androgynous form and his persistence in paying respects to only the male form of Śiva emphasizes the masculinity of Śiva as a paradigmatic male endowed with high-value valourising traits which characterise various aspects of Brahmanical masculinity (Taylor: 2013:153)

Another account mentions that Bhṛiṅgi's emaciated body was derived from his anxieties about Śiva's nature of succumbing to playing dice and women (*Saduktikarṇāmṛita*, 155,156 as cited by Don Handleman and David Shulman: 1997:113). Also in Vidyakara's *Subhāshitaratnakōśa* it is mentioned that on seeing the contradictions of Śiva, Bhṛiṅgi was very much worried to the extent that physically there is nothing left in his body except the hard bones knotted with tough sinews (Bisschop: 2010:246). In a Telugu work, *Kumārasambhavam* written by Nannechōḍa (Eleventh-Twelveth Century CE), Bhṛiṅgi is mentioned as a kind of clown or jester at Śiva's court- "*parihāsapēsālālāpahāsyalāpavyākūl itahāsyaraserasāyanapūritasthānamandirūṇḍai*" *Kumārasambhavam* 3.2). About the parentage of Bhṛiṅgi the texts refer to him as the son of Śiva (*Rudrātmajō*, *Rudratanaya*) and as a valorous person, a great hero (*Mahāvīrō*) and singularly devoted to Rudra (*Rudraikagatamānasa*). The *Kālikā Purāṇa* states that he was the son of Śiva, born out of his semen along with Mahākāla and Agni received the semen. Bhṛiṅgi and Mahākāla were made the doorkeepers of the South entrance (Ramachandra Rao: 1988:205-08). This legend is somewhat similar to the mythology of the birth story of Skanda or Kumāra particularly in disturbing Śiva and Pārvatī when they were in an erotic mood by Agni and Agni receiving the semen for a while in his hands and dropping it into the waters of the river Ganges. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* also mentions that Bhṛiṅgi was the son of Śiva and he is the same as the demon Andhaka. On the other hand, the *Skānda Purāṇa* describes that the demon Andhaka was born to Śiva and Pārvatī when Pārvatī closed the eyes of Śiva plunging

the whole Universe into darkness. Although the *Skānda Purāṇa* does not mention that Bhṛiṅgi was earlier known as Andhaka, it describes that Andhaka was reduced to sinews and bones. Regarding the iconographical details the images of Bhṛiṅgi the texts describe three and four arms, and three eyes and likewise we find the mention of the third leg provided to the lean, skeletal and flesh-less body. As the head of the *Śivagaṇas* he leads the other *gaṇas* and he dances to the tune and rhythm of the dance of Śiva and is always looking towards him. Further, the texts describe him as the door guardian along with Mahākāla and also with Hērāmba Gaṇēśa at the southern portal of a temple.

A rare stone sculpture of Śiva blessing Bhṛiṅgi is noticed on the outer wall of Virūpāksha temple at Pattadakal that belongs to 740 CE (Fig.5.1). In this sculpture, the Chalukyan artist has shown Śiva in *abhanga* stance with flexions in his body. Śiva carries a snake and a trident with a long handle in the upper right and left hands respectively, and the palm of the normal right hand is placed on the head of Bhṛiṅgi. Śiva stands with his right leg crossed behind his left leg as his toe touches the ground. Śiva wears a long dhoti that covers his lower body up to his ankles. The deity is adequately adorned with all kinds of ornaments and a tall *jaṭāmakuṭa* is shown on his head. A long *yajñōpavīta*, *udarabandha*, *hāras* and necklaces adorn his body. Bhṛiṅgi is carved in small size as standing on the right of Śiva and embracing his right leg. The lower part of his body is slightly damaged but the image can be identified as Bhṛiṅgi based on his slender and skeletal body. His facial expression is that of joy and happiness since Śiva is blessing him by keeping his right hand on his head and this can be seen from his partially opened mouth exposing his teeth with a grin on his face. So far we are not aware of this type of stone sculpture displaying the *anugraha* aspect of Śiva showering on the sage Bhṛiṅgi. Although Hindu mythology refers to the blessing of Bhṛiṅgi by Śiva on the event of Pārvatī's curse on him no iconographical description is given in

the texts for reasons not known. Like Nandīśa, Chandēśa and Gaṇēśa who were blessed with the grace of Śiva, Bhṛiṅgi or Bhṛiṅgisa or Bhṛiṅgirisī was also blessed by Śiva for his strong devotional faith for Siva, and this is successfully illustrated in the stone sculpture by the Chalukyan artist that can be identified as *Bhṛiṅgīśanugrahamūrti*.

The images of Bhṛiṅgi either in stone sculptures or in mural paintings are found in close association with Śiva and his attendants. Rarely, we come across the life-size dancing figures of Bhṛiṅgi as at Lepakshi in which he is shown as a youthful figure, covered with clothes and a body adorned with all kinds of ornaments (Fig.5.2). A third leg is carved and his image is shown without a beard and a small moustache. In this sculpture, his hair is arranged above his head with a topknot and decorated with a flower garland. His right hand is rested on his thigh and the left hand is bent and raised high showing *saṁdamśamudra* in which his thumb is joined with the index finger. (*Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni 2014: 141-42). According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *saṁdamśamudra* connotes imparting knowledge and the hand of Bhṛiṅgi in *saṁdamśamudra* emphasises his role as a teacher of dance like Śiva which in Brahmanical tradition is conceived as a spiritual practice of knowledge (Śivaramamurti:1975:15 & 24). In this sculpture, the Vijayanagara artist has paid more attention to grace and ease rather than a vigorous dance form. The body flexions and the planting of the left leg firmly on the ground while the additional leg is bent at the knee and raised high up to the knee level and the toe pointing downwards are beautifully sculpted.

A similar figure of Bhṛiṅgi is observed from the mural paintings on the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* hall of the same temple. Except for the missing third leg in the case of the painting the rest of the iconographical details agree well with those of the stone sculpture of Lepakshi. The *saṁdamśamudra* discussed above is also seen in the mural painting in the same gesture on the upraised left hand. Another stone sculpture of Bhṛiṅgi dancing with three legs holding a lyre (*veena*) in his left hand

and another musical in his right hand is noticed from a temple at Sirechelma in Adilabad district of Telangana State (Fig.5.3). He is depicted as a youthful figure with no beard and moustache. His head is adorned with *karaṇḍamakuṭa* and he wears all kinds of ornaments on his body such as *chakrakunḍalas* on his ears, necklaces *hāras* and a long beaded chain on his body. His shoulders, arms and wrists are adorned with ornaments. His face is shown in cheerful and peaceful countenance.

A relief sculpture from Mallikārjunasvāmy temple at Kambadur of Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh State that belongs to the eleventh Century CE demonstrates the dancing figure of Bhṛiṅgi with four arms and three legs (Fig.5.4). While the upper two hands carry *chiḍatalu*, a kind of musical instrument the two lower hands are in *nāṭya mudras*. His body is flexed and decorated with ornaments and the knees of all three legs are bent. The left normal leg is raised high with the toe pointing downwards. Besides the anklets and *pādasaras*, small bells (*gajjelu*) are usually worn by the dancers while dancing is tied on the ankles of the three legs. His bones and sinews are prominently shown to emphasise his skeletal body frame. He wears a tight-fitting dhoti and additional waist cloth and its frills can be seen on either side of his body. His hair is arranged above his head with a top knot.

Another dancing image of Bhṛiṅgi is found among the divine and semi-divine images that adorn the walls of the Kēdārēśvara temple at Nagalapura below the arch of a decorative motif of creepers that belongs to the thirteenth century CE. Bhṛiṅgi is shown here with four arms and the front two arms are engaged in playing with cymbals and the additional hands on the right and left also carry the musical instrument called *chiḍatalu*. His hair is neatly tied with a top knot and he is well adorned with ornaments. His chest bones are prominently shown and his ligaments on the hands and legs are visible. The additional third leg is shown at the back of the right leg and the foot turns laterally to the right. Small bells

are shown on the ankles beside the anklets and *pādasaras* like the image of Kambadur (Fig.5.5. a). It is interesting to note that in the case of the images of both Kambadur and Nagalapura the four-armed and three-legged Bhṛiṅgi is shown as playing the *chiḍatalu* while dancing at the same time with his skeletal body.

A relief sculpture of Bhṛiṅgi with three legs and two arms is carved on a pillar that belongs to the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries CE in a temple at Tirupporur in Chengleputt district of Tamil Nadu State (Fig.5.5b). In this sculpture the two hands are raised high above his head like *añjalihasta* and holding some object between the two palms. His long *jaṭas* are spread and they are shown on either side of the body. He has a cone-shaped long beard and long and curved moustaches. His body is flexed and he raises his front left leg above the knee level (*ūrdhvajānu*). His ascetic nature is well represented by the long *jaṭas* that spread, the beard and moustaches and the bones shown below the skin. He wears long *yajñōpavīta* and beaded chains on his body. His undergarment covers up to his knee level. His right leg is bent at the knee and the foot turns to his right. Faint traces of a third eye arranged vertically can be seen on the forehead.

The iconography of Bhṛiṅgi gradually evolves and it is not stereotyped although he is represented as an attendant figure of Śiva as we can see from the rock cut carvings in the cave temples of Western Deccan such as Elephanta, Badami, and Ellora, etc. In the case of the large sculptures at Elephanta Bhṛiṅgi is shown as seated observing Śiva and Pārvatī playing dice along with the other attendants of Śiva (Handleman and Shulman:1997:113). In cave no. 1 of Badami Bhṛiṅgi's image is carved on the extreme right of the large image of Śiva as Vinadhara (Fig.5.7) (Soundararajan 1981:59, Pl. XIB). In this sculpture, Bhṛiṅgi is portrayed as an emaciated figure displaying bones, with bulging eyes and a grin in his mouth. He is two-armed and his hands are folded close to his chest in *añjalimudra*. In Ellora Cave no. XIV (Rāvaṅ-

ki-khāi) Bhṛiṅgi's emaciated figure is depicted which is visible partly within and partly outside the legs of Naṭarāja form of Śiva. Again, in Ellora cave no. XXIX (Dhūmerlēna), on the Kalyāṇasundara panel, Bhṛiṅgi's skeletal body is shown as an ascetic in the upper zone on the top left of the panel above the figures of Indra and Varuṇa (Soundararajan:1981:121). On the ceiling of the Huchchayappa temple at Aihole, the seated figure of Bhṛiṅgi is carved as an emaciated body (Śivaramamurti: 1975: 184, fig.25; Michael Meister, M.A. Dhaky & H. Krishna Deva 1998:II, Part I:Pl. 633). The skeleton-like dancing figure of Bhṛiṅgi is also noticed along with the Nataraja sculpture found in the Sangamēśvara temple at Kudavelli (Śivaramamurti:1975:190, fig. 33). In all the above sculptures Bhṛiṅgi is portrayed as two armed and two-legged figure with the skeletal body.

In the Kalingan art as well as in the sculptures of the Pāla period, the dancing figure of Bhṛiṅgi is carved between the legs of Naṭarāja sculptures (Donaldson 2007:247-48; figs.C-47,196). On the tower of Paraśurāmēśvara temple at Bhuvaneshvar, we find a seated Bhṛiṅgi carved with a fleshless and bony body in the sculpture of Ravana lifting Kailasa while Śiva and Pārvatī are seated along with their family members-Gaṇēśa and Kumāra and other Śivagaṇas (Fig.5.8). The two-armed and two-legged Bhṛiṅgi is carved within the beaded arch that goes around the entire composition of the sculpture to the right of Śiva and Pārvatī along with the standing figure of Gaṇēśa. It is interesting to note that Bhṛiṅgi holds a spear in his right hand which he intends to throw against Rāvaṇa as he is shaking the Kailāsa with all his strength. Gaṇēśa also lifts the *paraśu* high with his right hand suggestive of the mood of the *gaṇas* in trying to give a counter-attack to Rāvaṇa with their weapons. In the Madhukēśvara and Sōmēśvara (Fig.5.6 a, b) temples of Mukhalingam of Andhra Pradesh State also Bhṛiṅgi is carved in the sculptures of Naṭarājamūrti form of Śiva as dancing to the tune of the dance of Śiva.

In Tamil Nadu, the figures of Bhṛiṅgi are carved in the Umā-Mahēśvara temple at Konerirajapuram (Barrett:1974:Pl.49(b)) as dancing. The Brihadisvara temple at Gaṅgaikoṇḍachōlapuram has one miniature form of Bhṛiṅgi dancing with three legs in the emaciated body on the right to Naṭarāja dancing in *bhujāṅgatṛāsita* mode of dance while Kālī on the left participates in the dance (Fig.5.10). In many of the North and Central Indian sculptures of Umā-Mahēśvara now preserved in the Museums the emaciated, dancing figures of Bhṛiṅgi are carved beneath the seat of Śiva and Pārvatī flanked by Gaṇēśa and Skanda or beneath Nandi or between the pendant legs of Śiva and Pārvatī.

On the *prākāra* wall of Mallikārjunasvāmy temple, the figures of dancing Bhṛiṅgi are carved in five different relief sculptures in the scenes representing the Sandhyātāṇḍava dance performed by Śiva and in the procession of divine and semi-divine beings going ahead to witness the marriage celebrations of Śiva and Pārvatī.

It may be noted here that Bhṛiṅgi is not shown here with bones and sinews but is well clothed and properly decorated with ornaments (Fig.5.9 a, b). Further he is three armed which is somewhat rare and he holds (a whip?) or a musical instrument or a flower garland with two of his upper hands raised high above his head. His front right hand is in *gajahasta*. He raises his front left leg high as *ūrdhvajānu* while dancing and the additional leg on the left also raises high and dangles. He looks toward the God and goddess with a gleeful expression on his face.

In another relief sculpture of the same place, Bhṛiṅgi is shown with two arms and three legs (Fig.5.12). The additional leg is on his left. His right hand is in *gajahasta* and the left hand raises showing *saṁdamsamudra*. He dances before Īśāna (Śiva) who is seated on his mount bull. Bhṛiṅgi wears a long garland the body is decorated with ornaments. The figure of Bhṛiṅgi appears in the relief sculpture when Śiva performs the Sandhyātāṇḍava in which many of the deities participate. Along with the figures of Gaṇēśa

and Hanumān playing the musical instruments Bhṛiṅgi is carved with three –legs and carrying a *veena* in one of his hands (Fig.5.13). In the mural paintings of Kailāsanātha temple at Nattam of 17<sup>th</sup> Century CE Bhṛiṅgi is shown dancing with three-legs along with his lord Śiva in Naṭarāja form.

In the mural paintings portrayed on the ceiling of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* in front of the Virūpāksha temple at Hampi (late Vijayanagara period) is noticed a standing figure of Bhṛiṅgi with three legs and four arms (Dallapiccola: 1997:55-66). He is shown in the company of Nandikēśvara, who is shown with a bull head and human body and Gaṇēśa as the onlookers of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. The upper two hands of Bhṛiṅgi carry *chidatalu*, a kind of musical instrument while the natural right hand hangs down on his right and the folded left hand is close to his chest. His hair is shown in three *śikhas* tied with a topknot. His body complexion is a brown colour and he wears a white dhoti. His body is smeared with *vibhūti* marks (three horizontal lines) and adequately decorated with ornaments. The third leg of Bhṛiṅgi is covered with *dhōti* is differently depicted here on the right side close to the waist and is in *ūrdhvajānu* pose.

A stone relief sculpture from Jambukēśvara temple (Fig.5.11) of late date, probably of late eighteenth-nineteenth centuries CE demonstrates the figure of Bhṛiṅgi in a new mode of iconography and he is shown here as an aged, fleshless person, who could not stand erect, supported by three legs as well as a stick (*daṇḍa*) that he carries in his right hand. He has a long beard and moustache and his head is adorned with a tall conical cap. His upper body is uncovered and he wears a tiger's skin as his undergarment and behind him is shown the tail of the tiger (Fig.5.14 a, b). A similar type of Bhṛiṅgi figures can be observed in the mural paintings of Avudaiyar Koyil the eighteenth-century paintings now at the National Museum, Delhi (Fig.5.15 a, b) (Śivaramamurti 1975:279, figs.148, 149) (Figs 5.9 & 5.10) and the loose wooden figure probably from a processional

*ratha* (chariot) of a South Indian temple now preserved in the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam (Slazcka 2022:18-27). In these figures Bhṛiṅgi's torso is bent and he takes the support of a stick to stand on his three legs.

The relief sculptures, mural paintings and paintings on paper of different periods discussed here are only representative and not exhaustive. It is evident from the archaeological sources that the figures of Bhṛiṅgi are illustrated in different types such as two-legged and two-armed emaciated bodies reported mostly from Central and North India; three-armed, three-legged emaciated bodies; four-armed, three-legged and skeletal body; four-armed, three-legged with youthful body and two armed, three-legged with a stick in his hands. Likewise, his figures are shown with an undergarment *dhōti* that covers up to his knees or of full-length or with a tiger skin around his waist. In the case of hair sometimes it spreads or is neatly tied above his head and in certain cases adorned with flower garlands. Bhṛiṅgi is depicted mostly as dancing or delivering music with *chidatalu*, *vīna* or cymbals while Śiva is dancing. Most of the images of Bhṛiṅgi are shown as accompanying Umā-Mahēvara and Naṭarāja and few figures are found in the scenes of Rāvaṇa lifting Kailāsa, Śiva and Pārvatī playing dice, marriage scenes of Śiva besides very few independent images. The portrayal of the figure of Bhṛiṅgi in the centre of the pedestal or between the two legs of dancing Śiva and sometimes flanked by the other two sons of Gaṇēśa and Skanda, the sons of Siva and also by some other divine beings suggests his religious status besides his relationship with Śiva as his father, as mentioned in the text *Śivadharma Śāstra*. The high regard shown towards Bhṛiṅgi is well evident from the painting of National Museum since both Nandīśa and Hanumān are depicted standing with their hands in *añjali hasta* in front of Bhṛiṅgi. The study brings to light for the first time a relief sculpture of Śiva from Pattadakal, a new iconographical form of Śiva as Bhṛiṅgīśānugrahāmūrti.



**Illustrations**

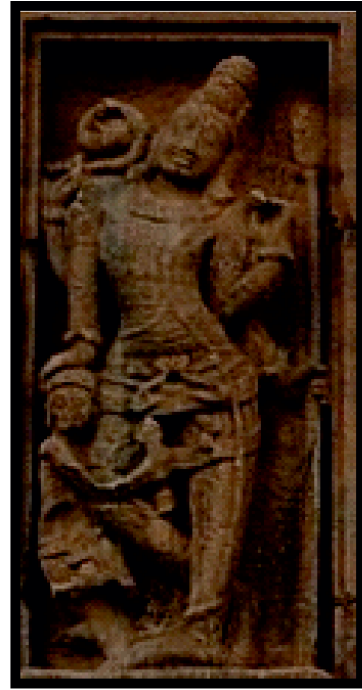
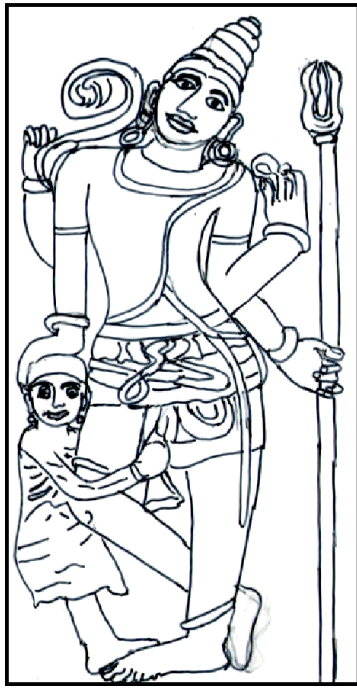


Fig. 5.1: Śiva blessing Bhṛiṅgi, Virūpāksha temple, Pattadakal, 750 CE



Fig. 5.2: Bhṛiṅgi dancing, Relief sculpture on a pillar in the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa of Vīrabhadrasvāmi temple, Lepakshi 16<sup>th</sup> Century CE



Fig. 5.3: Bhṛīngī, Sirichelma

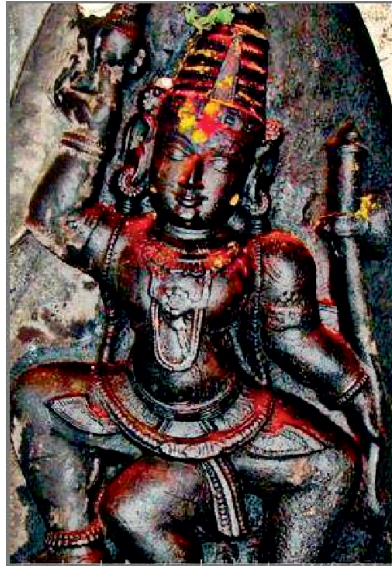


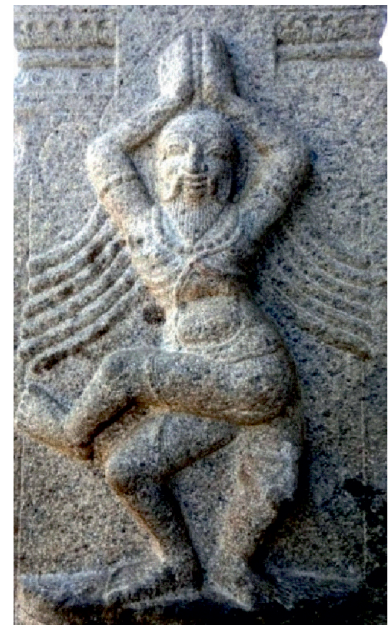
Fig. 5.4: Dancing Bhṛīngī, Mallikārjunasvāmy temple, Kambaduru



Fig. 5.5.a: Dancing Bhṛīngī, Kēdārēśvara temple at Nagalapura



Fig. 5.5b: Dancing Bhṛīngī on a pillar, Tirupporur



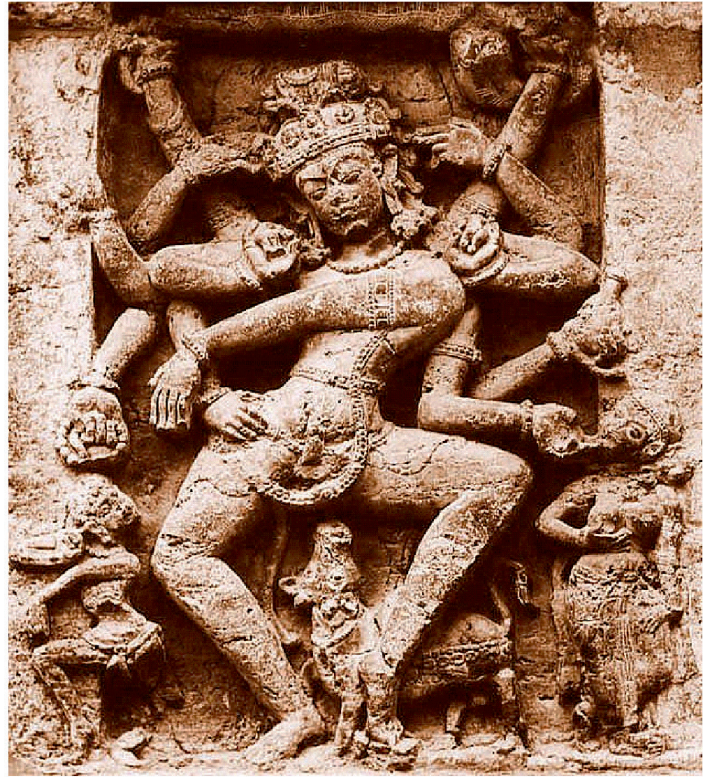


Fig. 5.6 a, b: Śiva Nataraja, flanked by Parvati and Bhṛiṅgi Sōmēśvara temple, Mukhalingam



Fig. 5.7: Bhṛiṅgi standing with hands in añjalihasta on the right of Śiva Viṅādharamūrti, Badami Cave no.1



Fig. 5.8: Rāvaṇa lifting Kailāsa, Paraśurāmēśvara temple, Bhuvanesar. Bhringi is seen to the right of Siva Parvati and Ganesa



Fig. 5.9 a Three-Bhringi dancing in front of Vrishabhārūḍha Umā-Mahēśvara, Mallikārjunasvāmy temple, Srisailam



Fig. 5.9 b: Bhringi dancing in front of Vrishabhārūḍha Umā-Mahēśvara, Mallikārjunasvāmy temple, Srisailam



Fig. 5.10: Śiva-Naṭarāja, Bhṛiṅgi and Kali dancing in the background, Gangaikoṇḁachōlapuram



Fig. 5.11: Bhṛiṅgi in a relief sculpture on a pillar, Jambukēśvara temple, Jambukesvaram



Fig. 5.12: Bhṛiṅgi dancing before Īśāna (Dikpāla), Mallikārjunaśvāmi temple, Srisaillam



Fig. 5.13: Bhṛiṅgi, Hanumān and Gaṇeśa playing musical instruments

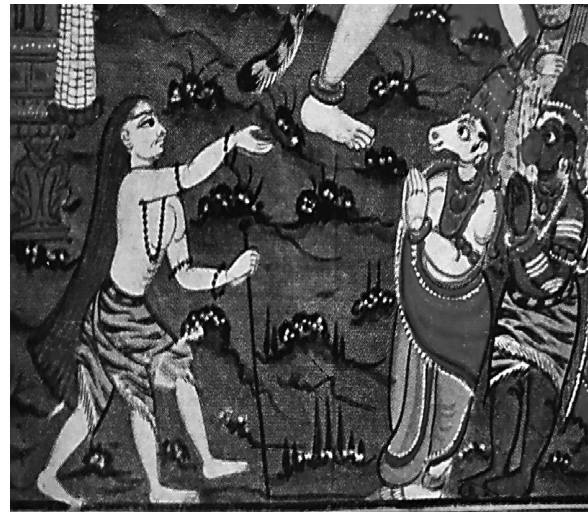


Fig. 5.14 a, b: Bhṛiṅgi, Nandikēśvara and Hanumān below the foot of Naṭarāja, National Museum Delhi



Fig. 5.15 a, b: Bhṛiṅgi with three legs and a staff, mural painting, Avudaiyar Koyil, now at the National Museum, New Delhi



Fig. 5.16: Four-armed Bhṛiṅgi standing with Nandikēśvara and Gaṇēśa, Virūpāksha temple, Hampi

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