

II, 89) which refers to gifts to this Ganapati—"ikkanapati-yarukku"; the inscription being in the western enclosure, in which the Parivaralayattup-Pillaiyar Ganapatiyar is located, we may presume that the gifts relate to this Pillaiyar.

#### *Mural Paintings in the Rajarajesvaram Temple*

The *sanctum sanctorum* of the Rajarajesvaram temple as mentioned earlier, has a vestibule 1.88 ms (6 feet 2 inches) in width between the two parallel walls of the *garbhagriha*. In the 30's of this century, some remarkable paintings were discovered on the inter-facing walls of the vestibule by the late S.K. Govindaswami (See *Journal of the Annamalai University*, Vol. II, 1933; and *J.I.S.O.A.*, Vol. I, pp. 73-80). He however found on close scrutiny that the entire wall surface was covered with paintings belonging to the days of the Nayak rulers of Tanjavur and that in places the painted surface had crumbled, exposing to view exquisite paintings datable in the Chola period. Trying to preserve both the Chola and the Nayak paintings, the Archaeological Survey authorities have done a remarkable job of scientifically cleaning up the exposed portions revealing the excellence of the Chola paintings and at the same time retaining in tact the second layer on which the Nayak paintings are drawn.

The vestibule consists of fifteen chambers made up of four corner chambers, three central chambers and eight intervening chambers, two to each side. The space of the sixteenth chamber is taken up by the entrance to the *garbhagriha* from the *ardhamandapa*. On each side, the vestibule measures 17.07 ms (56 feet) from end to end. The chambers are nominally separated from one another by door-sills 0.46 m (a foot and a half) in thickness, without, however, any intervening door. All the chambers have recesses which in the case of the central ones are deep, and in the case of the longer intervening chambers, shallow. The wall surfaces of these recesses and in some cases those of the adjoining jambs have provided the lithic canvas for the Chola paintings, though not all of them have been made use of. For convenience, the chambers have been numbered in the clockwise order as seen in the Ground Plan. Presenting a grand view from the

*prakara* round the *srivimana*, through the central openings in the outer wall of the *garbhagriha*, are three giant-size sculptures in the central chambers, one each on the north, west and south faces, with their backs to the inner wall. The one on the southern side (in chamber no. 4) is of Jvarahara-Isvarar, with two arms carrying a sword and a trident (?). This deity is generally covered over with a thick layer of *chandana kavacham* (sandal-wood paste) and local tradition has it that the deity has healing qualities. The sculptures in the western central chamber (no. 8) is described as Sadyojatamurti, wielding the *gada*, the *tanka*, the sword and the *sula* in the arms to the proper right, while on the proper left one arm is flung across the chest in the *gajahasta* style, two others wield the noose and the shield, the fourth being broken. On the proper left is an image of Parvati; on the proper right is Vishnu playing the drum. The image is presently covered with stucco; this was possibly done during the Nayak period. We have an equally majestic sculpture of a female deity, in the northern central chamber (no. 12) holding an *akshamala* in the proper right and the lotus in the proper left arm. It could be a representation of the concept of the integration of Parvati and Lakshmi, but this requires to be examined further.

At present, not all the Chola paintings have been exposed, but those exposed so far are found—

- (i) on the north wall of chamber number 5,
- (ii) on the east wall and jamb of chamber number 7,
- (iii) on the east wall and jambs of chamber number 9,
- (iv) on the inner jamb facing north in chamber number 10,  
and
- (v) on the south face of chamber number 11.

#### *Chamber No. 5: Dakshinamurti*

The painting on the northern side of the chamber depicts a forest scene. Various animals such as lions, tigers, deer, bears, monkeys and reptiles like pythons are shown in their characteristic attitudes and postures. A deer scratching its back-turned face with its hind hoof, and a monkey perched on the top of a tree which is densely foliated enliven the scene. The trees are outlined in