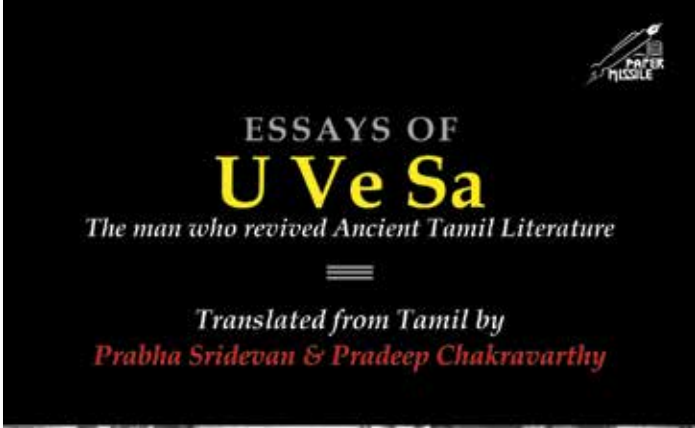


This present collection is published under the *translation initiative of the Tamil Nadu Textbook & Educational Services Corporation,*

Selected 30 essays from a wide spectrum of U. Ve. Sa's works who is known to the world as *Tamil Thatha* or the '*Grandfather of Tamil*'.

Includes oral tales, autobiographical sketches, histories of places, life-stories and the author's encounters with music and poetry.

Structurally compact and engrossing, the essays show U. Ve. Sa's unparalleled command over contemporary Tamil.



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Essays of U Ve Sa

The Man who revived
Ancient Tamil Literature

Prabha Sridevan & Pradeep Chakravarthy

Showcasing the fertility of ancient
Tamil literature

Tamil today is a language spoken by more than 80 million people across the world. It is also a classical language since it has a rich literature, at least 2000 years old—much older than most other languages.

Today, the 'classical' literature of Tamil Nadu, especially the Sangam poems, *Silapadikaram* and *Civaka Cintamani*, are well known and have been translated into English and other languages. The credit for rediscovering them, collating the multiple editions from palm leaf manuscripts, weeding out errors, reconstructing them and publishing them into books in the late 19th and early 20th centuries goes solely to U. Ve. Sa. If it weren't for him, this corpus of classical Tamil literature that has opened new doors to lovers of literature and students of history would have rotted with the palm leaves on which they were written. It was in this context that he is affectionately and reverentially remembered as the 'Grandfather of Tamil'.

His essays, lectures and speeches open a window into the life and times of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They are a treasure trove that reveal his persistence, commitment and dedication to Tamil.

This book, in translation, provides an insight into the mind of an inspirational scholar and a raconteur. The topics will be of interest to anyone with a connection to literature, culture and history, especially that of the Tamil country.

Prabha Sridevan began practicing law in 1983, and from 2000 to 2010, she was Judge of the Madras High Court. From 2011 to 2013, she was Chairman of the Intellectual Property Appellate Board. Now retired, Prabha Sridevan writes columns both in Tamil and English. The latter won the VOW award for the best translation (2019). She has translated other writers, like Seeta Ravi, Imayam, Meeran, Ravikumar, and S. Ramakrishnan. is her translation of the lectures of the Sage of Kanchi.

Pradeep Chakravarthy is currently pursuing a PhD on the Pandyan empire as gleaned from inscriptions. He started his career with his family business, the TVS, and then worked in Cognizant, Infosys and McKinsey. He now works on learning and development models based on Indian history and conducts heritage tours of Tamil Nadu. He has authored books on Temple Vahanas, Thanjavur, Kodaikanal, Ashok Leyland and this will be his eighth book.



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In his revival of Ancient Tamil Literature...

U.Ve. Sa writes that he was surprised that in all his deep study and teaching, he had not even heard of the texts that he mentioned—*Silappatikaram*, *Civaka Cintamani* and *Manimekalai*. U.Ve. Sa promised to read them if he could see a copy. The next Sunday, Mudaliar gave him a copy of a part of the *Civaka Cintamani* and narrated the curious way in which he stumbled upon it and how no Tamil scholar had ever gone beyond the puranic texts.

Starting with the first verse, U.Ve. Sa tells us the fascinating story of how he rediscovered this great Tamil Jain epic, and encountered the problems of missing verses, conflicting commentaries and above all, his own understanding of an entirely different faith. U.Ve. Sa was entranced by the love Mudaliar had for the epic and as more and more unfamiliar words popped up, U.Ve. Sa's persistence overtook him. Starting with visiting Jains in Kumbakonam, his thirst to read and thoroughly understand this Jain epic soon became an all-consuming passion. A Jain woman, Tharani Chettiar, calls him a bhavya jeevan or a person ready for benediction and this seems to be an apt first step for U.Ve. Sa to have started his life-long journey to publish ancient Tamil works which made him immortal for lovers of Tamil today. As a Shaivite who had learnt of the Chola king being "in love with this heretical text", U.Ve. Sa now, as he became more and more engrossed in the text, began to savour the beauty and depth of meaning of this ancient Tamil composition.