

ArtBeat TRPF

cultural foundation bulletin

Issue 5 | 2026 | November

Introductory Note

Greetings from **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation** (**TRPF**).

There are moments when art speaks louder than words, and there are moments when its silence becomes overwhelming. October 2026 has been one such month—a month of profound loss for India's artistic and cultural landscape, when it seemed, for a moment, that art itself stood still.

The passing of remarkable cultural personalities—**Nana Patekar**, **Peter Nagy**, music composer **Deva** (**Devanesan Chokkalingam**), and most recently, the distinguished modernist **Jogen Chowdhury**—has left an immense void across theatre, cinema, music and the visual arts. With **Jogen Chowdhury**'s departure on 25 October, India lost a master whose extraordinary language of line gave form to the deepest complexities of human existence. Their absence reminds us how fragile cultural memory can be, and how essential it is to preserve the creative legacies they leave behind.

Against this sombre backdrop, the November edition of **ArtBeat TRPF** becomes both an expression of remembrance and a celebration of artistic continuity.

We revisit **Rameshwar Prem**'s literary legacy through his association with the Central Translation Bureau and the enduring anti-war concerns of **Shastra-Santan**. We trace the fascinating journey of **Kalavilay**, where individual artistic identities converge in a spirit of collective creation.

Through our tributes to these departed cultural figures, we reflect upon the extraordinary contributions that have shaped India's creative consciousness.

Art does not end with the artist. It survives in memory, in documentation, in the works left behind, and in the conversations that future generations continue.

We invite you to turn these pages not merely to mourn what has been lost, but to celebrate what must never be forgotten.

Warm regards,

The Editorial Desk
TRPF

Preserving Memory. Encouraging Creativity. Connecting Generations.

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TRPF Reconnects Rameshwar Prem's Literary Legacy with the Central Translation Bureau

– Foundation Desk

In a significant gesture of literary remembrance and institutional recognition, **Smt. Usha Chaudhury**, Founder-Director of The **Rameshwar Prem Foundation** (**TRPF**), presented copies of **Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak** (रामेश्वर प्रेम के प्रचलित नाटक) to **Lt. Col. Ramnaresh Sharma**, Director, and **Dr. Mohan Bahuguna**, Assistant Director, **Central Translation Bureau** (**CTB**), at the Bureau's office in CGO



Ms.Usha Chaudhury, Co-founder of **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation**, presents a copy of **Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak** (रामेश्वर प्रेम के प्रचलित नाटक) to **Lt. Col. Ramnaresh Sharma** the Director of the **Central Translation Bureau**, CGO Complex, New Delhi, commemorating the playwright's long professional association with the institution.

Photograph Courtesy: **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation** (**TRPF**)

Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. The presentation symbolically renewed the connection between the literary legacy of distinguished Hindi playwright **Rameshwar Prem** and an institution that remained closely associated with his professional and intellectual life for several decades.

Rameshwar Prem joined the Central Translation Bureau in 1971, the year of its establishment under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. His association with the institution continued throughout a substantial part of his professional career, culminating in his retirement as Assistant Director. During these years, his engagement with language, literature and translation developed alongside an independent and influential creative practice in modern Hindi theatre. His administrative responsibilities and literary pursuits represented two complementary dimensions of an intellectual life dedicated to linguistic expression, cultural interpretation and dramatic literature.

Recognised for his contribution to contemporary Hindi dramaturgy, **Rameshwar Prem** developed a distinctive theatrical language that examined social contradictions, political structures, human relationships and existential concerns. His plays, including *Ajatghar*, *Charpai*, *Raja Nanga Hai*, *Antarang* and *Shastra Santan*, contributed to the evolving discourse of modern Indian theatre. Through their engagement with the complexities of individual and collective experience, these works attracted the attention of prominent theatre practitioners and directors, generating productions and critical discussions across different theatrical traditions.

The volume **Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak**, published by Setu Prakashan Samuh in 2026 and edited by **Rahul Chaudhury**, brings together a selection of the playwright's original Hindi dramatic writings. Beyond its literary significance, the publication constitutes an important contribution towards the preservation, accessibility and renewed critical examination of his theatrical legacy. It provides readers, theatre practitioners, students and researchers with an opportunity to revisit dramatic works that remain relevant to discussions of society, power, identity and human experience.

The presentation of the publication to **Lt. Col.**



Ms.Usha Chaudhury, Co-founder of **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation**, presents a copy of **Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak** (रामेश्वर प्रेम के प्रचलित नाटक) to **Dr. Mohan Bahuguna** the Assistant Director of the **Central Translation Bureau**, CGO Complex, New Delhi, commemorating the playwright's long professional association with the institution.

Photograph Courtesy: **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation** (**TRPF**)

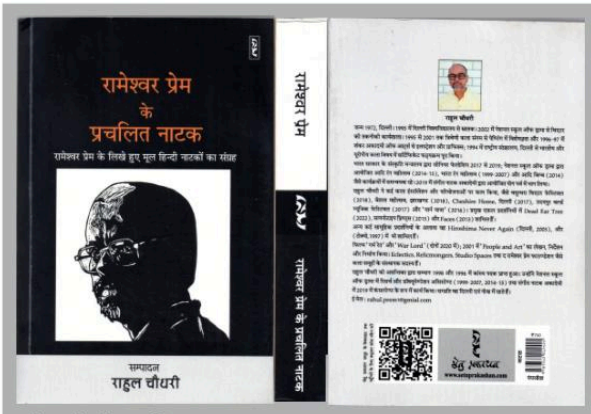
Ramnaresh Sharma and **Dr. Mohan Bahuguna** carries significance beyond a formal institutional exchange. It acknowledges the relationship between public institutions and the intellectual and creative achievements of individuals associated with them. The Central Translation Bureau formed an important part of **Rameshwar Prem**'s professional identity, while his dramatic writings extended beyond the institutional sphere to become part of India's broader literary and theatrical heritage.

For **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation**, this initiative represents a continuing commitment to reconnecting cultural institutions with the literary histories of their former members. Through its programmes in publication, documentation, research and archival preservation, the Foundation seeks to encourage sustained scholarly engagement with **Rameshwar Prem**'s writings. Its **Digital Cultural Archive & Research Centre** (**DCARC**) further extends this commitment by documenting artistic contributions, institutional associations and cultural histories for future generations.

The presentation at the Central Translation Bureau thus stands as both an act of remembrance and an affirmation of the Foundation's larger cultural responsibility. By bringing **Rameshwar Prem**'s dramatic literature back into an institution closely associated with his working life, **TRPF** seeks to strengthen the relationship between institutional history and cultural memory, ensuring that significant literary contributions remain accessible within India's continuing intellectual and artistic discourse.

The initiative reflects **TRPF**'s guiding vision: connecting cultural memory with future creation.

ArtBeat TRPF



रामेश्वर प्रेम के प्रचलित नाटक
Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak

Author: **Rameshwar Prem** (1943–2023)
Editor: **Rahul Chaudhury**
Publisher: **Setu Prakashan Samuh** | 2026

Rameshwar Prem ke Prachalit Natak brings together significant dramatic writings by **Rameshwar Prem**, an influential voice in modern Hindi theatre. Exploring the complexities of human relationships, social contradictions, political authority and existential conflict, his plays reflect a distinctive dramaturgical vision that contributed to contemporary Indian theatrical discourse.

Edited by **Rahul Chaudhury**, the collection represents an important initiative in literary preservation, making Prem's dramatic legacy accessible to readers, theatre practitioners, students and researchers. The book's striking cover, featuring a monochromatic portrait of the playwright against a deep black background, reflects the intellectual intensity and enduring relevance of his work.

More than a compilation of plays, this publication serves as a valuable contribution to the documentation, appreciation and continuing study of modern Hindi dramatic literature.

Beyond the Signature: Kalavilay and the Art of Collective Creation

– Foundation Desk



These works are done during the first **Kalavilay** during 2022-23 and two months **Kalavilay Festival** was organized during that time under **Studio Spaces** all the videos can be viewed in the www.trpf.co.in under projects/studio spaces channel. Participating artists were ***Anjali Arun Bawase***, ***Archana Singh***, ***Divya Chandra***, ***Mariyappa***, ***Rahul Chaudhury***, ***Richa Bhartia***, ***Shailja Shah*** and ***Tarun Sharma***. The participating children under children workshop were ***Avika Kulkarni***, ***Akalpeet Shailesh Ukey***, ***Arayana Lokhande***, ***Gargi Lanjewar***, ***Kanak Gupta***, ***Krish Bombarde***, ***Paritosh Bombarde***, ***Ravija Mehraiani***, ***Siddharth Rangari*** and ***Vaidhavi Labiewar*** it was being coordinated by ***Anjali Bawase*** and ***Pratima Patil***.

An experimental artistic initiative that began with collective expression has evolved into an interdisciplinary platform exploring creativity, collaboration, documentation and cultural memory.

Artistic creation is conventionally associated with individual identity, distinctive techniques and personal expression. **Kalavilay**, however, emerged from a different proposition: what happens when artists from diverse disciplines work upon a common surface, allowing their individual artistic identities to gradually dissolve into a collective visual language? Conceived in 2021, during the period of reflection following the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative challenged conventional notions of artistic authorship by placing creative interaction above individual recognition.

The first **Kalavilay** programme commenced on 20 October 2022 and concluded on 21 December 2022, under Studio Spaces, an independent initiative dedicated to experimental artistic practices. Artists including ***Shalja Shah***, ***Richa Bhartia***, ***Tarun Sharma***, ***Archana Singh***, ***Anjali Bawase***, ***Mariyappa*** and ***Divya Chandra*** participated in its evolving journey. Working across different spaces in Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere, the initiative encouraged artists to negotiate, intervene and transform one another's creative expressions. Eight programmes were undertaken during this initiation phase, including a solo presentation by **Rahul Chaudhury** and two children's workshops, extending Kalavilay's engagement beyond collective painting into individual experimentation and art education.

An important milestone followed with **Kalavilay Festival 1**, presented through the **Studio Spaces YouTube** channel from 2 July to 27 August 2023, with programmes aired every weekend. The festival extended the initiative beyond physical artistic encounters, demonstrating how digital presentation could connect creative practices with wider audiences. Its encouraging reception also emphasized the growing importance of documenting artistic processes, where the evolution of an artwork becomes as significant as its completed form.

Following a period of inactivity lasting more than two years, **Kalavilay Project 2** commenced in November 2025, reviving the initiative with an expanded creative outlook. Since its revival, five programmes have been undertaken, exploring new possibilities in artistic experimentation, collaborative participation and education.



These works are done during the second **Kalavilay** started from November 2025. Participating artists are ***Anjali Arun Bawase***, ***Mariyappa***, ***Rahul Jain***, ***Rahul Chaudhury*** more artists are connecting to **TRPF**. The participating children under children workshop were ***Arti***, ***Aman Rajput***, ***Anuj***, ***Arush Parmar***, ***Deepika***, ***Miksha***, ***Dimple***, ***Gautam Parmar***, ***Harish***, ***Himanshu Rajput***, ***Jony***, ***Khushi***, ***Krish***, ***Mansi***, ***Minakshi***, ***Muskan***, ***Naitik Sharma***, ***Nidhi***, ***Nisha***, ***Prachi***, ***Rahul Riya***, ***Rohit Singh***, ***Saeina***, ***Sakshi***, ***Shreya***, ***Siddhi***, ***Siya***, ***Subham Kaushik***, ***Sushil Tamanna***, ***Taniya***, ***Tannu***, ***Tina*** and ***Yashu*** it was being coordinated by ***Mariyappa*** for **TRPF**.

The establishment of **The Rameshwar Prem Foundation** (**TRPF**) in March 2026 provided **Kalavilay** with a broader institutional framework. With **Studio Spaces** becoming part of the Foundation's cultural vision, **Kalavilay** began transitioning into a continuing interdisciplinary programme encompassing artistic production, documentation, preservation and research. Through **TRPF**'s **Digital Cultural Archive & Research Centre** (**DCARC**), the documentation of creative processes, artistic interventions and cultural exchanges is envisaged as a valuable resource for future researchers, practitioners and audiences.

Looking ahead, **Kalavilay** seeks to extend its activities beyond visual art to include painting, sculpture, video art, film-making, literary recitation, storytelling, conversations, interviews and educational films. Collaborative experiments and solo presentations will coexist within this expanded framework. A dedicated digital channel is also proposed to consolidate its diverse activities and facilitate wider cultural participation.

Kalavilay's evolution reflects a significant shift from the creation of individual artworks towards an interdisciplinary understanding of artistic practice. Its central inquiry remains unchanged: can creative expression transcend individual authorship and acquire a collective identity? By brining artistic intervention, documentation and cultural memory into dialogue, **Kalavilay** proposes an alternative understanding of creativity—one in which the significance of an artwork lies not merely in the signature of its maker, but it shared experiences, negotiations and creative encounters that bring it into existence.

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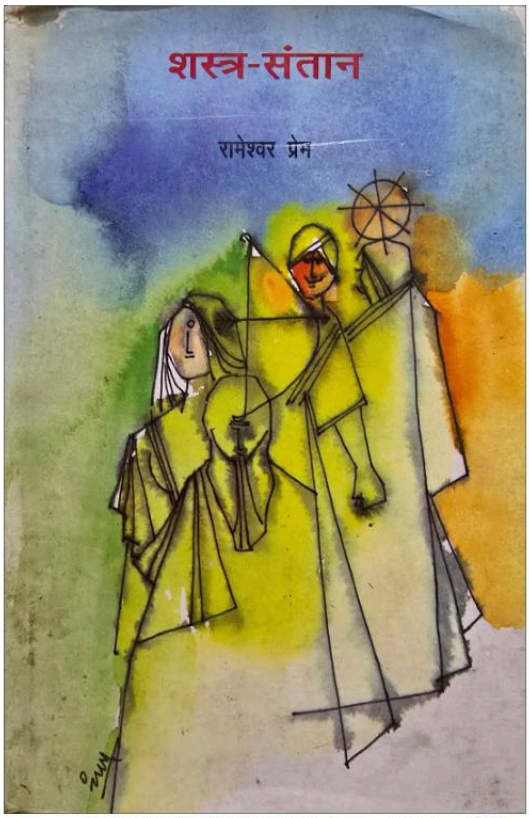
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The Night of Kurukshetra: War, Memory and the Crisis of Humanity

– Foundation Desk

Rameshwar Prem's **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) is an original Hindi anti-war play that reinterprets the Mahabharata to confront the political, ethical and existential contradictions of contemporary civilization. Developed during Prem's association with Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, where he served as playwright-in-residence in 1989-90 under a Ford Foundation-supported programme, the play received its first theatrical production under the direction of the distinguished theatre practitioner **B.V.Karanth** in 1990. This collaboration brought together Prem's philosophical understanding of mythology and Karanth's experimental approach to theatrical expression, establishing the work as a significant contribution of modern Hindi drama.

The intellectual and dramatic foundation of **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) is illuminated by a striking passage reproduced on the back cover of an early printed edition:



cover page **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1997

"कुरुक्षेत्र में दिन में ही रहो, बस! रात में वहाँ मत रहो। यदि तुम रात में वहाँ रहे तो दिन में जो देखोगे ठीक उसका उल्टा पाओगे।"

"Remain in Kurukshetra only during the day. Do not stay there at night. For if you remain there at night, you will discover the very opposite of what you witnessed in daylight."

The accompanying commentary associates this warning with the **Aranyaka Parva** of Mahabharata, while extending its significance beyond the ancient epic. It suggests that the contradictions of existence are so profound that what appears truthful at one moment may acquire an entirely different meaning in the next. The battlefield of Kurukshetra consequently becomes more than a geographical or mythological location; it emerges as a metaphor of historical consciousness, political deception and the instability of moral certainty.

Prem's own introductory reflections deepen this philosophical inquiry. Questioning the familiar proposition that was is a necessary evil, he challenges the distinction between necessary and unnecessary violence. For Prem, the tragedy of warfare lies not merely in physical destruction but in the gradual erosion of humanity itself. Individuals cease to recognise one another as human beings, while children become extension of political ambition and dynastic power. Imagined as arrows, bows and instruments of destruction, descendants are transformed into weapons. This disturbing transformation provides the central metaphor of **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान): a civilization that produces instruments of warfare instead of nurturing human life.

Rather than reconstructing the Mahabharata through a conventional chronological narrative, Prem examines its world through the devastated landscape of Kurukshetra. The play begins in the stillness of night, with the subdued voices of **Gandhari**, corpse-bearers, collectors of weapons and lamenting women. These voices gradually develop into an intense and unsettling musical composition in which grief, compassion and disturbing sounds, coexist. The back-cover commentary describes this progression as a theatrical experience that draws the audience inward, moves it to tears and ultimately confronts it with the painful terrain of truth.



Shastra Santan (2018), directed by **Ashok Sagar Bhagat**, presented by **Rang Sarthi** at Abhimanch Auditorium, National School of Drama, New Delhi.

Image Source: The Theatre Times, 28 May 2018. Originally published in The Hindu, Photographer not identified.



Kandada adaptation of **Shastra Santan**, translated by **Siddhalinga Pattanashetty** and directed by **Sripada Bhat**. Presented by Samudaya, Bengaluru, 2022.

Image source: Aakruti Kannada, 15 June 2022. Photographer not identified.

This interpretation reveals an important dimension of the play's dramatic architecture. Night is not simply the temporal settling of the action; it is the space in which the heroic narratives of war are questioned. What appears as duty, righteousness or victory in daylight becomes suffering, moral uncertainty and human devastation in darkness. Through this reversal, Prem exposes the contradictions concealed within established narratives of power and heroism.

The experience of **Kunti**, Gandhari and **Hidimba** further extend the play's critique of militarized society. Through these women, motherhood emerges as both a deeply personal experience and a political condition shaped by dynastic conflict. **Hidimba**'s anguish over the death of **Ghatotkacha** is particularly significant, exposing the human suffering concealed beneath the glorification of sacrifice and martial duty. Their grief challenges the patriarchal assumptions of the epic world, where the lives of descendants are repeatedly subordinated to political ambitions.

B.V. Karanth's accompanying director's note offers another important perspective on the play's theatrical construction. Identifying **Shastra-Santan** as an original anti-war drama, Karanth emphasizes that Prem does not merely rearrange mythological incidents. Instead, he reveals the social distortions, contradictions and ironies generated by warfare. Music, in Karanth's interpretation, functions not as decorative melody but through the organization of sound, rhythm and collective vocal expression. The resulting theatrical language challenges conventional distinctions between spoken dialogue, musical composition and dramatic movement.

The commentary on the printed edition similarly recognizes the work's unusual musical and poetic structure. Describing the play as a journey through the nights of Kurukshetra, it connects the blood-soaked past with the present and the future, brining to the surface complex human relationships and individual struggling of truth. Its concluding assessment is specially significant:

> "बहुविदित महाआख्यान के बहाने शस्त्र-संतान हिन्दी नाटक के इतिहास में समकालीन काव्य की भाषा के नाटकीय प्रक्षेपण का अप्रतिम उदाहरण है।"

The statement recognizes **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) as an exceptional example of theatrical projection of contemporary poetic language through a widely familiar epic narrative. It situates the play beyond conventional mythological adaptation, drawing attention to its synthesis of dramatic poetry, philosophical inquiry and experimental performance.

Ultimately, **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) is not simply a reinterpretation of an ancient conflict. It is a philosophical protest against the militarisation of human existence and the moral justifications through which societies perpetuate violence. Prem's aspiration, expressed in his introductory reflections, is for life to be preserved and allowed to flourish freely, rather than sacrificed to the ambitions of power.

Through the Mahabharata, **Rameshwar Prem** asks a question that remains profoundly contemporary: when children become instruments of warfare, when sacrifice is glorified and when violence is justified in the name of righteousness, what remains of humanity?

More than three decades after its first production, **Shastra-Santan** (शस्त्र-संतान) continues to invite reflection on war, political authority, collective memory and the possibility of restoring human compassion in a world increasingly shaped by conflict.

Nana Patekar: A Life Between stage, Screen and Social Conscience

– Foundation Desk

The passing of **Nana Patekar** on 8 October 2026, aged 75, marked the loss of an extraordinary performer whose artistic journey connected Marathi experimental theatre with Indian cinema. Born **Vishwanath Patekar** on 1 January 1951 in Murud-Janjira, Maharashtra, he developed a distinctive acting vocabulary characterised by psychological intensity, commanding dialogue delivery, expressive restraint and an exceptional understanding of human contradictions.

Financial hardship shaped his early life. Educated in Mumbai, he studied at the **Sir J. J. Institute of Applied Art**, supporting his family by painting cinema posters before working as a commercial artist and advertising visualiser. His artistic training informed his theatrical sensibility, which developed through **Avishkar**, founded by **Arvind** and **Sulbha Deshpande**, and Mumbai's influential **Chhabildas** experimental theatre movement.

His portrayal of *Babnya* in **Vijay Tendulkar**'s **Pahije Jatiche** (1976) marked an important beginning. Under **Vijaya Mehta**'s direction, he performed in **Hamidabaichi Kothi** and **Mahasagar**, while **Jaywant Dalvi**'s **Purush** became a defining theatrical achievement. Portraying *Gulabrao*, a powerful and morally disturbing politician, Patekar exposed patriarchal violence and political privilege through controlled silences, physical restraint and sudden emotional transformations. Featuring **Reema Lagoo**, the production achieved more than 1,600 performances, becoming a landmark of Marathi theatre.

Patekar entered cinema with **Muzaffar Ali**'s **Gaman** (1978), followed by **Ankush** (1986), **Mira Nair**'s **Salaam Bombay!** (1988) and **Vidhu Vinod Chopra**'s **Parinda** (1989), earning the National Film Award for Best Supporting Actor. His performances in **Krantiveer** (1994) and **Agni Sakshi** (1996) brought two further National Film Awards, for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor respectively. His directorial venture **Prahaar** (1991) explored military discipline, violence and social responsibility, while



Nana Patekar as **Ganpatrao Belwalkar**, an ageing theatre actor, in **Natsamrat** (2016), the acclaimed Marathi film directed by **Mahesh Manjrekar** and adapted from **Kusumagraj**'s celebrated play. The performance reflects Patekar's enduring connection with the Marathi theatrical tradition.

Courtesy: **Natsamrat** (2016)/YouTube, via Hindustan Times, 15 January 2016

Khamoshi: The Musical (1996), **Ab Tak Chhappan** (2004), **Apaharan** (2005) and **Welcome** (2007) demonstrated his remarkable versatility.

His portrayal of the ageing theatre actor *Ganpatrao Belwalkar* in **Mahesh Manjrekar**'s **Natsamrat** (2016), adapted from **V. V. Shirwadkar**'s celebrated play, symbolically reunited his cinematic accomplishments with his theatrical origins.

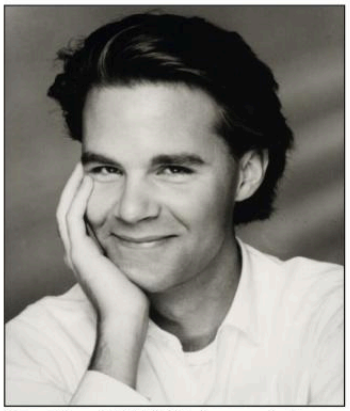
Beyond performance, Patekar co-founded the **NAAM Foundation** with **Makarand Anaspure** in September 2015, supporting drought-affected farmers, water conservation and rural development in Maharashtra. Honoured with the **Padma Shri** in 2013, his commitment extended beyond artistic achievement to the concerns of ordinary people.

Nana Patekar's enduring legacy lies in transforming acting into an exploration of human vulnerability, moral conflict and social contradictions. From Maharashtra's experimental stages to nationally acclaimed cinema, his journey reaffirmed theatre's foundational importance in Indian screen acting.

The Rameshwar Prem Foundation remembers **Nana Patekar** as an uncompromising artist whose individuality, theatrical discipline and social consciousness profoundly enriched modern Indian culture.

Peter Nagy: A Life Devoted to Art, Ideas and the Freedom to Create

– Foundation Desk



Peter Nagy (1959-2026), photographed in 1986 during his early career in New York's experimental contemporary art scene.

Photograph: David Robbins, Peter Nagy, from the series Talent, 1986. Studio portrait produced by James J. Kriegsmann Studio. Gelatin silver print.

Some individuals contribute to art through their creations; others shape its history by recognising possibilities beyond established institutions. **Peter Nagy** belonged to both traditions. An artist, curator, writer and cultural entrepreneur, he challenged artistic conventions and created platforms for experimentation. His passing on 13 October 2026 marked the loss of an influential figure whose contribution extended beyond galleries and the commercial art market.

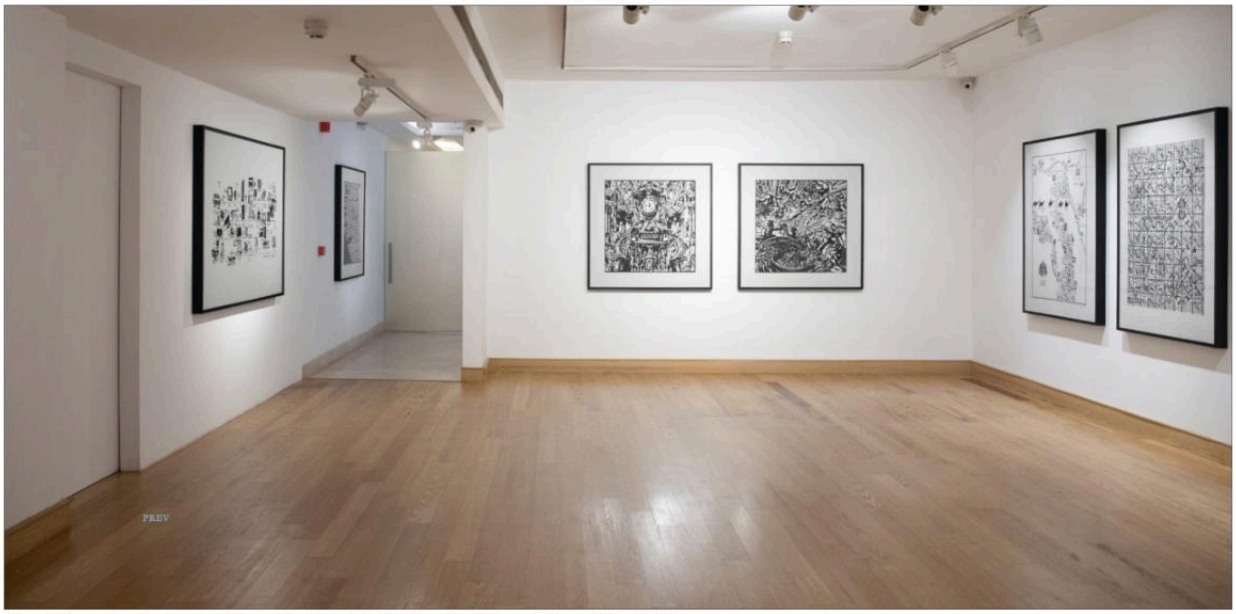
Born in 1959 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Nagy graduated in communication design from Parsons School of Design, New York, in 1981. Emerging from the experimental East Village artistic community, his conceptual practice explored consumer culture, image circulation and artistic value through photocopied images, commercial symbols, architectural diagrams and appropriated visual material, challenging distinctions between originality and reproduction. In 1982, with artist **Alan Belcher**, he established **Gallery Nature Morte** in Manhattan's East Village. Operating until 1988, it became an alternative platform for conceptual and emerging artistic practices. Nagy regarded galleries not merely as commercial spaces but as environments for experimentation and critical dialogue.

Relocating to India in 1992, he began organising exhibitions in unconventional Delhi spaces before re-establishing **Nature Morte** in New Delhi in 1997. The gallery subsequently became an influential platform for conceptual art, sculpture, installation, photography and interdisciplinary practices. His engagement with *Subodh Gupta*, *Bharti Kher*, *Jitish Kallat*, *Manisha Parekh*, *Dayanita Singh* and *Raqs Media Collective* helped expand international visibility and dialogue. Through exhibitions, collaborations and international art fairs, he encouraged exchanges across artistic disciplines, including design, architecture and textiles.

Unlike conventional art dealers, Nagy approached exhibition-making as an intellectual and creative undertaking. His continuing identity as an artist informed his commitment to experimentation, particularly practices considered unconventional or commercially uncertain. Through initiatives associated with the **Saat Saath Arts Foundation**, he supported artistic research, education and international cultural exchange. His curatorial involvement with the Sculpture Park at Madhavendra Palace, Nahargarh Fort, Jaipur, inaugurated in 2017, established a dialogue between contemporary sculpture, historical architecture and cultural memory.

Nagy continued his artistic practice alongside curatorial responsibilities. **Entertainment Erases History** (New York, 2020) and **America Invented Everything** (New Delhi, early 2026) revisited his investigations into consumer culture, mass-media imagery, appropriation and cultural narratives. These exhibitions reaffirmed the inseparable relationship between his artistic and curatorial identities.

Nature Morte's expansion into Mumbai in 2024 and the opening of its Gulmohar Park premises in New



Peter Nagy, *America Invented Everything*, 2026. Exhibition view **Nature Morte**, New Delhi
Courtesy: Nature Morte

Delhi in August 2026 demonstrated his continuing institutional commitment. His two-part curatorial project, **The Evolution of the Soothsayer**, bringing together artists across generations and disciplines, became one of his final undertakings despite declining health.

Nagy's contribution must be understood within India's established traditions of modernism and artistic experimentation. He neither introduced contemporary art to India nor independently shaped its development. His achievement lay in recognising emerging possibilities, strengthening curatorial infrastructures and connecting artists across geographical and institutional boundaries.



Pushpamala N., believed to be Intrigue, **The Game of Chess** (2012), from photographic series **Avega-The Passion**. The artist participated in **The Evolution of Soothsayer: Part One**, curated by **Peter Nagy** at **Nature Morte**, New Delhi, August-October, 2026

Courtesy: © Pushpamala N. Courtesy of the artist and Nature Morte, New Delhi, Photographer's credit to be confirmed

His career also reflected the tension between artistic independence and commercial recognition. Operating within the gallery market, he nevertheless sustained opportunities for experimental practices that challenged prevailing expectations. His insistence that **Nature Morte** remain open following his death expressed his belief that exhibitions belonged fundamentally to artists and audiences, beyond the individuals establishing institutions.

Peter Nagy's journey from New York's experimental artistic community to India's contemporary art landscape embodied a lifelong engagement with artistic freedom, critical inquiry and cultural exchange. His enduring contribution lies not simply in exhibitions or institutional achievements but in fostering the intellectual and creative conditions necessary for artistic expression to flourish.

Peter Nagy (1959–2026) leaves behind a legacy extending beyond **Nature Morte** into the broader history of contemporary artistic thought. The continuation of his experimental spirit remains his most meaningful tribute.

Deva:
The Melody of the Streets, the Voice of a Generation

– Foundation Desk



Devanesan Chokkalingam (1950-2026), popularly known as **Deva**. Photographed during the K.J.Yesudas 50 concert press meet, 13 January 2015

Courtesy: Silverscreen Media Inc./Wikimedia Commons. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

The passing of **Devanesan Chokkalingam** (20 November 1950-17 October affectionately known as **Deva**, marks the departure of one of Tamil cinema's most influential musical voices. Celebrated as **Thenisal Thendral**, meaning the Breeze of Sweet traditional melodies, regional folk expressions and the vibrant rhythms of Chennai's streets. His extraordinary career, encompassing compositions for more the 400 films across Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam cinema, represents a significant chapter in the cultural history of Indian film music.

Born in Mylapore, Madras, **Deva** grew up in a modest household where music was both a fascination and an aspiration. His father, a postal department employee and amateur table players, initially discouraged a professional career in music. Undeterred, **Deva** pursued musical training under **Dhanraj Master** and **J.B.Krishna**, developing an understanding of Western musical structures and Indian classical traditions. His early engagements with musical troupes, stage performances and television programmes provided the practical foundations of his compositional language. These experiences gradually shaped his ability to bridge different musical traditions while remaining attentive to the cultural sensibilities of ordinary listeners.

Entering the film industry during the late 1980s, **Deva** achieved wider recognition with *Vaikasi Poranthachu* (1990). His subsequent compositions of *Annamalai* (1992), *Baashaa* (1995), *Aasai* (1995), *Kadhai Kottai* (1996), *Arunachalam* (1997), *Vaalee* (1999) and *Kushi* (2000) established him a distinctive presence in South Indian cinema. His musical associated with **Rajnikanth** was particularly significant: the celebrated introductory theme developed of **Annamalai** became an enduring sonic emblem of the actor's screen identity. Equally important were his romantic compositions, which helped articular the emotional worlds of a new generations of cinematic protagonists.

Perhaps **Deva**'s most enduring cultural contribution was his popularization of **Gaana**, a rhythm, expressive musical tradition rooted in Chennai's working-class neighbourhoods. Drawing upon colloquial Tamil, everyday experiences and collective urban identities, **Gaana** existed largely outside the conventions of mainstream film composition. **Deva** recognized its vitality and incorporated its musical character into widely circulated cinematic soundtracks. In doing so, he expanded the expressive possibilities of popular film music and provided greater visibility to a tradition closely associated with the social and cultural life of the city. His achievement demonstrates how regional artistic expressions can enter mass culture while retaining their distinctive local identity.

Deva's artistic significance extended beyond commercial success. Working during an exceptionally innovative period alongside composers such as **Ilaiyaraaja** and **A.R.Rahman**, he cultivated a recognizable musical language characterized by melodic accessibility, rhythmic immediacy and emotional directness. His versatility allowed him to move between devotional compositions, romantic ballads, folk-based songs and dramatic background scores. His contributions were acknowledged through honours including the Tamil Nadu government's **Kalaimamani** distinction and State Film Awards. His musical legacy also continued through his son, composer **Srikanth Deva**, and the contributions of his brothers **Sabesh** and **Murali**.

Deva's influence was not confined to India. His compositions found devoted audiences among Tamil-speaking communities internationally, particularly in Malaysia and Singapore, where his concerts continued to attract enthusiastic listeners. As recently as March 2026, he performed a major concert in **Penang**, demonstrating the continued resonance of his music across generations. His enduring popularity illustrates the capacity of regional cinema and music to preserve cultural identity beyond geographical boundaries.

Deva died in Chennai on 17 October 2026, aged 75, leaving behind a musical inheritance that transcends the boundaries of cinema. His artistic journey reflects the relationship between popular culture and collective memory, particularly the transformation of everyday sounds into enduring cultural expressions. His compositions remain not merely songs associated with particular films but also auditory documents of changing social experiences, linguistic identities and popular aspirations. In remembering **Deva**, we recognize a composer who gave cinematic expression to the sounds of the streets and, through them, helped preserve the musical character of an era.

Jogen Chowdhury: The Human Condition in the Language of Life

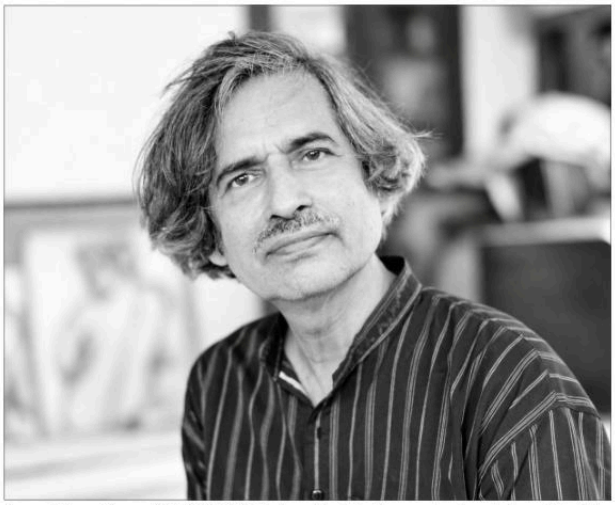
– Foundation Desk

The passing of **Jogen Chowdhury** on 25 October 2026, at the age of 87, marks the loss of one of the most distinctive artistic voices in post-Independence Indian art. Celebrated for his extraordinary command over line, psychologically charged figurative compositions and unmistakable visual vocabulary, Chowdhury transformed the representation of the human body into a profound exploration of vulnerability, desire, isolation and social contradiction. His artistic journey, extending over six decades, occupies a significant position in the development of Indian modernism.

Born on 16 February 1939 in Daharpara, Faridpur, in undivided Bengal, now Bangladesh, Chowdhury spent his early childhood in a culturally rich environment. His father was interested in painting and traditional artistic practices, while his mother's familiarity with alpana, the decorative floor-painting tradition of Bengal, provided an early encounter with the expressive possibilities of line and ornamentation. The Partition of India in 1947 disrupted this world, compelling his family to migrate to Calcutta. The experience of displacement, uncertainty and changing social relationships left a lasting impression upon his imagination and subsequently informed the emotional character of his art.

Chowdhury received his formal artistic education at the **Government College of Art and Craft**, Calcutta, between 1955 and 1960. His early training introduced him to academic drawing, painting and the established conventions of artistic representation. A French Government Scholarship subsequently enabled him to study at the **École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts** in Paris between 1965 and 1967, where he also attended **Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17**. His exposure to European modernism broadened his technical understanding, but rather than adopting an imported artistic vocabulary, he gradually developed an individual language deeply rooted in Indian visual traditions and personal experience.

The defining characteristic of Chowdhury's mature work was his remarkable treatment of line. Through intricate cross-hatching, rhythmic contours and delicate tonal variations, he created human figures that appeared simultaneously sensual and unsettling. His distinctive application of pen and ink, often combined with dry pastels and watercolour, produced textured surfaces suggesting the vulnerability of human flesh. The exaggerated anatomy, elongated limbs, distorted proportions and expressive gestures of his figures were never merely formal experiments. They became instruments for communicating psychological tension and emotional complexity.



Jogen Chowdhury (1939–2026), distinguished Indian modernist celebrated for his expressive figurative compositions, intricate cross-hatching and extraordinary mastery of line.

Source/Courtesy: DAG

Unlike conventional portraiture, which frequently seeks physical resemblance, Chowdhury's figures reveal the concealed dimensions of human existence. His men and women inhabit ambiguous spaces, often surrounded by darkness or isolated against unembellished backgrounds. Their postures communicate anxiety, introspection, desire and fatigue. The human body emerges not simply as an anatomical structure but as a site upon which personal memory, social experience and political circumstances leave their impressions.

His artistic sensibility drew from multiple sources, including the expressive fluidity of **Kalighat** painting, Bengali popular imagery, traditional decorative practices and modern European figurative art. Yet

Chowdhury avoided direct imitation. His visual language occupied an independent position between tradition and experimentation, transforming familiar forms into compositions charged with contemporary significance. Objects such as cushions, sofas, flowers and other elements of domestic life frequently acquired symbolic dimensions, establishing subtle relationships between the physical body and its surrounding environment.

Among his important works, **The Tiger in the Moonlit Night** (1978), preserved in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, demonstrates his ability to combine visual ambiguity with psychological and social commentary. Its unsettling imagery has invited interpretations involving vulnerability, sexuality, fear and the political anxieties associated with India's Emergency period. Other works, including **Man** in 1980, **Man on Sofa** and his numerous studies of couples and solitary figures, reveal an artist continuously examining the contradictions of human relationships.

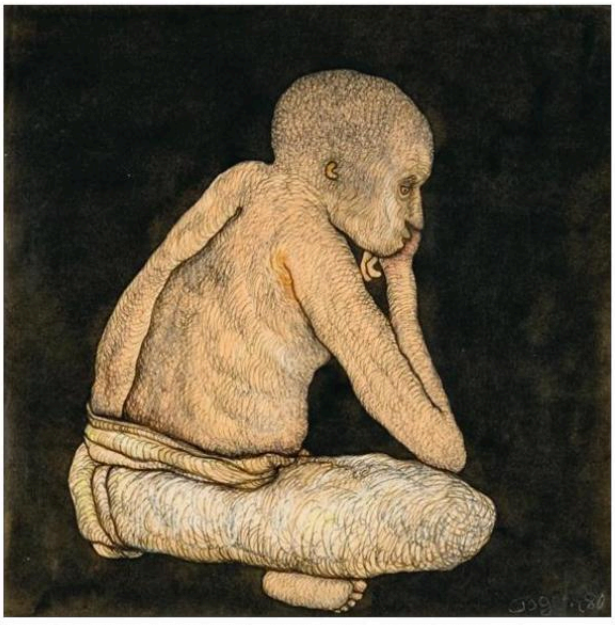
Chowdhury's professional engagement extended beyond his studio practice. Following his return from France, he worked as a textile designer before joining **Rashtrapati Bhavan** in New Delhi as **Keeper of Art** in 1972. His fifteen-year association with the institution exposed him to India's political and administrative environment, contributing to the emergence of satire and observations of power within his work. In 1987, he joined **Kala Bhavana** at **Visva-Bharati University**, Santiniketan, where his contribution as a teacher and mentor influenced successive generations of artists.

His achievements received recognition nationally and internationally. He participated in important exhibitions across India, Europe, Asia and the Americas and received several distinctions, including recognition at the Havana Biennale in 1986 and the **Kalidas Samman** from the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 2001. His artistic contributions were further acknowledged through major retrospective exhibitions, notably Into the Half Light and Shadow Go I in 2023, which traced the evolution of his practice from 1955 to 2023.Beyond painting, Chowdhury remained actively involved in cultural organisation, education and public life. He served as a member of the Rajya Sabha from 2014 to 2020. His establishment of **Charubasona**, the **Jogen Chowdhury Centre for Arts** in Kolkata, in 2019 reflected his commitment to preserving artistic work and making cultural resources accessible to future generations. The institution stands as an important extension of his lifelong engagement with art, documentation and cultural memory.

Jogen Chowdhury's contribution to Indian art cannot be measured solely through exhibitions, awards or institutional recognition. His lasting achievement lies in demonstrating how drawing, often regarded as a preparatory artistic discipline, could become an autonomous and intellectually powerful form of expression. He transformed the simplest artistic element—the line—into a complex language capable of expressing the contradictions of contemporary existence.

His death closes an extraordinary chapter in Indian modern art, but his artistic vocabulary remains vital. Within the intricate networks of his cross-hatched figures survive the memories of displacement, the anxieties of modern life and the enduring complexity of human relationships. His work reminds us that artistic expression acquires its greatest significance when it moves beyond representation to reveal the deeper conditions of human experience.

Jogen Chowdhury leaves behind not merely an exceptional body of work, but a visual language through which the human condition continues to speak.



Jogen Chowdhury (1939–2026) — A solitary figure absorbed in contemplation, rendered through intricate cross-hatching and expressive anatomical distortion. The work reflects the artist's distinctive exploration of human vulnerability, introspection and psychological complexity.

The Rameshwar Prem Foudnation: Connecting Memory with Future Creation

– About the Foundation

The Rameshwar Prem Foundation (**TRPF**) is a Section 8 non-profit cultural organisation, formally incorporated on 17 March 2026, in New Delhi. Founded by **Usha Chaudhury** and **Rahul Chaudhury**, the Foundation emerged from a longstanding engagement with theatre, literature, visual arts and independent cultural initiatives. Established to preserve and extend the literary and theatrical legacy of playwright **Rameshwar Prem** (1943–2023), **TRPF** also seeks to encourage contemporary artistic practice, cultural research, education and public participation.

The Foundation's inception represents a continuation of earlier creative initiatives, including **Relicmongers** (2000) and **Studio Spaces** (2013–2015), which explored exhibitions, artistic collaborations and interdisciplinary dialogue. These experiences contributed to the development of an institutional vision connecting cultural heritage with contemporary creative expression.

Central to **TRPF**'s philosophy is the belief that cultural memory must remain active, accessible and relevant. Manuscripts, photographs, artworks, theatrical records, publications and personal collections are not merely historical objects; they constitute essential resources for research, interpretation and future creativity. Through its **Digital Cultural Archive and Research Centre** (**DCARC**), the Foundation seeks to develop systematic documentation, preservation and accessible cultural resources.

TRPF's activities encompass exhibitions, theatre productions, workshops, publications, educational initiatives, archival projects and collaborative programmes. Its developing national Artist Database aims to connect emerging and established artists, writers, performers, researchers and cultural practitioners, encouraging professional exchange and interdisciplinary opportunities.

Education and community participation remain integral to its objectives. By engaging schools, colleges, cultural institutions and independent practitioners, **TRPF** seeks to cultivate artistic awareness, critical inquiry and an informed appreciation of India's diverse cultural traditions.

As its programmes develop, the Foundation welcomes artists, researchers, educators, students, institutions and cultural enthusiasts to participate in its growing network. Registration provides opportunities to receive information about **ArtBeat TRPF** newsletters, exhibitions, workshops, theatre activities, archival initiatives, Artist Database developments and future collaborations.

The Rameshwar Prem Foundation envisions an inclusive cultural environment where memory inspires creativity, knowledge encourages dialogue and artistic expression continues across generations.

The Rameshwar Prem Foundation
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TRPF Digital Cultural Archive and Research Center



The Rameshwar Prem Foundation (TRPF) is building a Digital Cultural Archive & Research Center to document, connect and preserve the work and journeys of artists and cultural practitioners.

We invite: **Painters • Sculptors • Printmakers • Illustrators • Photographers • Installation Artists • Digital & Multimedia Artists • Performance Artists • Folk & Tribal Artists • Traditional Artists • Craft Practitioners & Artisans • Designers • Theatre Practitioners • Actors • Directors • Performers • Musicians • Singers • Dancers • Writers • Poets • Researchers • Cultural Workers** • and practitioners from every field of art and culture.

YOUR CREATIVE JOURNEY DESERVES TO BE RECORDED, DISCOVERED AND REMEMBERED.

Register your profile with the **TRPF** Cultural Database and become part of a growing digital network dedicated to documenting contemporary artistic and cultural practice.

SCAN THE QR CODE & REGISTER YOUR CULTURAL PROFILE

Create. Connect. Be Documented. Be Remembered.

TRPF—The Rameshwar Prem Foundation
Digital Cultural Archive & Research Center

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