'Thenisai Thendral' composer Deva (75) passes away – laid to rest with State honours and 72-gun salute in Ranipet district

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News

Composer Deva (Devanesan Chokkalingam, 75), hailed as 'Thenisai Thendral' and the 'King of Gaana', died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Chennai on Saturday, 17 Oct 2026. CM C. Joseph Vijay paid homage at his T. Nagar residence, consoled his son Srikanth Deva and announced full State honours. On 18 Oct he was laid to rest on his family farmland in Sakkaramallur near Arcot, Ranipet district, with a 72-gun salute. Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan and others paid tribute.

Key facts

Death	17 Oct 2026, Chennai – cardiac arrest; age 75
Real name	Devanesan Chokkalingam; born 20 Nov 1950
Funeral	18 Oct – Sakkaramallur near Arcot, Ranipet district; 72-gun salute
Debut	'Maattukara Mannaru' (1986); 400+ films in 4 languages
Key films	Annamalai, Baashha, Arunachalam, Aasai, Kadhal Kottai, Vaalee, Kushi, Avvai Shanmugi
Awards	TN State Film Award – 'Vaigasi Poranthachu' (1990), Aasai, Kushi; Filmfare (Kannada) – 'Amrutha Varshini'

Background

- Gaana – an urban folk music form born among the working people of North Chennai, sung at funerals and festivals. Deva brought it into mainstream film music, earning the title 'Father/King of Gaana'.
- Bridging the Ilaiyaraaja and A.R. Rahman eras, he gave hits for Rajinikanth ('Annamalai', 'Baashha'), Kamal Haasan, Vijay and Ajith. His 100th film was 'Veluchami' (1995).
- State honours: granting a full State funeral is the State government's decision – it includes draping the body in the national flag, a police guard and a gun salute.
- TN arts awards: 'Kalaimamani' is given by the Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Nataka Manram. Nationally – Sangeet Natak Akademi (New Delhi); cinema's highest honour is the Dadasaheb Phalke Award (I&B Ministry).

Tamil Nadu link: Deva was a Chennai composer who took North Chennai's Gaana music to the world. The Tamil Nadu government gave him the Best Music Director award three times. He was laid to rest with State honours in Ranipet district.

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