

Rich tributes paid to legendary Assamese artist Purushottam Das



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The 106th birth anniversary of legendary Assamese musician Purushottam Das was recently observed in a glittering function organised by the Amguri Puberun Cultural Organisation of Sivasagar district and Sangeet Khanikor Purushottam Das Smriti Raksha Samiti, Guwahati, in collaboration with the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Govt of Assam, at the premises of Amguri Auniatia Hemchandra Dev Higher Secondary School. The function started off with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the principal of the school, Amarjyoti Borthakur, who delivered a brief speech. The state's eminent music director and composer Ramen Choudhury, who is an adviser of the Smriti Raksha Samiti, laid a wreath at the portrait of Purushottam Das.

After this, the adviser of Smriti Raksha Samiti—Ramen Choudhury, President Kumar Deepak Das, Executive President Abani Ranjan Pathak, Cultural Secretary Bipul Baruah, Cultural President Dimbeswar Das, Sangeet Khanikor Purushottam Das Smriti Raksha Samiti awardee for 2023 – Umananda Dowerah, editors Kripamoy Das and Kabin Das, treasurer Biswajit Ojah, Dhritishree Devi, Jogesh Kishor Phukan, Prashant Sharma among other guests were invited upon the stage by Indra Kamal Phukan, the President of Puberun Cultural Organisation, in addition to being felicitated by the members of the organisation. Kabin Das, one of the editors of the Samiti, explained the purpose of organising this event, which was presided over by Kumar Deepak Das, President of Smriti Raksha Samiti, former Rajya Sabha MP, and well-known singer.

Noted theatre artiste and director Prashant Sharma spoke about various aspects of Purushottam Das' life in his speech as the chief guest. Ramen Choudhury, who was a one-time colleague of Purushottam Das, recalled the rich legacy of Purushottam Das, in his key-note speech.

Executive President of Smriti Raksha Samiti, former Director of Guwahati Akashvani Kendra, one-time colleague of Purushottam Das, Abani Ranjan Pathak, retired music composer of Akashvani Guwahati Center and Cultural Secretary of Smriti Raksha Samiti Bipul Baruah, and lyricist, well-known singer and retired Deputy Director, Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Dimbeswar Das recounted their intimate moments with Purushottam Das, whose unique creations have enriched the cultural sphere of Assam.

The cultural evening got going with a chorus performance by a group of artistes from Amguri Nabin Library, based on a composition by Purushottam Das, followed by renditions of Purushottam Das' timeless creations by Bipul Baruah, Jibeswar Das, Pranati Baruah, Dhritishree Devi, Kabin Das, Kumar Deepak Das and Umananda Dowerah.

On the occasion, an audio-visual song composed by Purushottam Das, rendered by Kabin Das and Dhritishree Devi, was released by Jogesh Kishor Phukan, a noted writer and resident of Amguri.

The highlight of the evening, however, was the presentation of the Sangeet Khanikor Purushottam Das Smriti Raksha Samiti Award for the year 2023 to Umananda Dowerah, the renowned archivist of Assam's musical heritage. Dowerah's own museum – Umananda Gramophone Record Museum and Research Centre, located at his residence in Moran, houses more than 5000 records that include the original voices of Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Phani Sarma, Anandiram Das, and many other iconic figures of Assam, besides the original record of the first Assamese song "Phulu Phulile Jonaye Hahile", recorded in the voice of singer, composer and stage actor Prafulla Chandra Barooah in 1924, as well as Lakshminath Bezbaroa's "O Mur Apunar Desh". An accomplished music teacher and artiste, Dowerah has been painstakingly collecting old and rare records for several decades now, which are carefully documented and preserved in a scientifically protective environment. He also owns a number of gramophone record players of various shapes and forms. Dowerah was honoured by the Smriti Raksha Samiti members with a phulam gamosa, a cheleng chador, sarai, cash prize, memento and a certificate. It may be recalled that the Sangeet Khanikor Purushottam Das Smriti Raksha Samiti Award was previously presented to renowned music director Ramen Barua in 2021, and eminent musician Ramen Choudhury in 2022. On the occasion, Umananda Dowerah enthralled the audience by playing several old records that he had preserved on the hand-cranked gramophone player.

The function, anchored by actor and treasurer Biswajit Ojah, concluded with a speech by Kumar Deepak Das. The vote of thanks was offered by Kripamoy Das. **Rich tributes paid to legendary Assamese artist Purushottam Das**

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BY PRANTIK DEKA

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