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As Assam marks the first anniversary of his passing, the singer's poetry, music and extraordinary bond with the people invite us to reflect on grief, human values and the search for meaning.

One year has passed since the tragic and untimely death of Zubeen Garg, yet his absence continues to feel painfully immediate. For the people of Assam, this has been a year without a voice that had become inseparable from everyday life. We were accustomed to encountering him almost everywhere—in television programmes, on our mobile phones, through familiar songs playing in homes, vehicles and public spaces. His music was not simply something we listened to; it had become part of our daily routine, accompanying our celebrations, disappointments, journeys and private moments. Perhaps this is why the passage of a year has not made his absence any easier to accept. Time moves forward, but certain losses remain suspended in the present.

There are moments when the depth of this absence becomes particularly evident. When songs such as Xomoyu Jen Thomoki Roi begin to play, many listeners find themselves unable to listen to them in the same way as before. The melody remains, the words remain, and the recording continues to carry the familiar voice. Yet something essential seems to be missing. It is not merely the knowledge that the singer is no longer alive; it is the awareness that the person whose presence once gave the music its immediacy can no longer return to sing it. The experience is difficult to explain, but it captures the extraordinary emotional relationship between Zubeen Garg and his listeners. His music continues to reach us, even as his physical absence changes the way we receive it.

What makes Zubeen's legacy particularly compelling, however, is that it extends beyond his



achievements as a singer and composer. His poetry deserves greater attention as an expression of his search for meaning and purpose in human existence. Although he published only two collections of poems, they offer a glimpse into a reflective mind troubled by the contradictions of life, the fragility of relationships and the erosion of values. In these writings, Zubeen appears not merely as the beloved voice of Assam, but as an individual trying to understand the conditions that make human life painful, uncertain and, at times, deeply confusing.

One of his recurring concerns is the transformation of human relationships under the influence of consumerism and material aspirations. As society becomes increasingly preoccupied with possessions, status and outward success, the emotional foundations of relationships can weaken. People may live closer to one another physically while becoming increasingly distant in their inner lives. Zubeen's poetry raises an important question: when trust, compassion and genuine human connection are gradually lost, how can they be restored? This concern remains relevant in a world where material progress is often celebrated as an unquestioned measure of development, even when loneliness and emotional insecurity continue to persist.

The vision of life that emerges from his poems is often tragic. Human beings do not possess complete control over their circumstances, desires or destinies. Suffering can arrive without explanation, and the individual is frequently left struggling to understand why life unfolds as it does. In Uttar Nai ("No Answer"), Zubeen presents suffering as something dispersed throughout existence, making it difficult, if not impossible, to escape. The poem conveys a sense of life's fundamental irrationality: pain does not always follow a comprehensible pattern, and the questions that trouble human beings do not necessarily receive answers.

Yet this tragic vision should not be mistaken for a rejection of humanity. Zubeen's awareness



of suffering coexists with a deep affection for people. His recognition of pain does not extinguish his capacity to hope. Rather, the suffering he observes becomes one of the reasons he continues to write. His poetry retains the possibility of a better future, a more compassionate world in which human beings might recover the values that have been neglected. This tension between despair and hope is central to understanding the emotional depth of his work. He sees the darkness of existence, but does not surrender his belief in humanity.

In Romanthan ("Retrospection"), the search for meaning takes another turn. The poet reflects on the confusion surrounding human ideas of land, ideals, work and the direction of life. What people pursue and what they ultimately desire do not always correspond. Human aspirations can become contradictory, leaving individuals restless even when they appear to have achieved much. The poem captures this unsettling condition through the paradox of those who are alive wishing for death, while those approaching death desperately desire to continue living. Unfulfilled desires disturb the mind, interrupt sleep and leave people struggling to find peace within themselves.

These reflections invite comparison with the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard, the nineteenth-century Danish thinker widely regarded as a foundational figure in existentialism. Kierkegaard argued that the question of how to live cannot be resolved through detached reasoning or the accumulation of objective knowledge alone. Meaning requires personal engagement, commitment and choices that an individual takes responsibility for. His famous formulation, "subjectivity is truth," points towards the importance of lived experience and inward commitment in confronting the questions of existence.

Kierkegaard's discussion of the aesthetic life also offers a useful perspective on the restlessness evident in Zubeen's poetry. The aesthete seeks to escape boredom through



novelty, pleasure, romance and constantly changing experiences. But when life is organised entirely around external stimulation, it can lack the deeper commitments that provide continuity and direction. The pursuit of distraction may eventually lead to emptiness and despair. Zubeen's reflections on conflicting desires and unsettled human aspirations resonate with this philosophical concern. Both invite us to consider whether the constant pursuit of satisfaction can ever provide a lasting answer to the question of why we live.

This comparison is not to suggest that Zubeen's poems are a direct expression of Kierkegaard's philosophy. Rather, it helps illuminate a shared concern: the difficulty of finding purpose in a world where desires, circumstances and human relationships are often unstable. Zubeen approaches this question through the emotional and social realities of his own experience, while Kierkegaard develops it through philosophical inquiry. Their points of contact encourage us to take the singer's literary voice seriously, beyond the immense popularity of his music.

There is also a distinctive cultural dimension to Zubeen Garg's place in Assam. It is difficult to think of another Indian state where a singer has been embraced with such extraordinary intensity across generations and social backgrounds. His popularity was not confined to a particular age group or audience. He became a shared cultural presence, someone whose songs could connect people who otherwise had little in common. His voice travelled through households and communities, becoming part of the emotional vocabulary of Assamese life. This breadth of affection is unusual and deserves reflection not merely as a measure of celebrity, but as evidence of the profound place music can occupy in collective identity.

As Assam observes Zubeen Diwas on September 19, blood donation camps organised by the state government will offer a way to translate remembrance into an act of service. Such initiatives give public mourning a constructive dimension: honouring a beloved artist through



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an action that may help others. They also connect with the humane concerns visible in his poetry—the value of life, the vulnerability of individuals and the importance of compassion.

A year after his passing, Zubeen Garg remains present in ways that cannot be measured simply through recordings, tributes or public ceremonies. His songs continue to accompany us, while his poems ask us to confront questions that do not disappear with time: Why do people suffer? What gives life meaning? How can relationships survive the pressures of materialism? And what allows hope to endure despite uncertainty?

Perhaps the most fitting tribute is not to turn grief into a fixed ritual, but to keep listening, reading and reflecting. Zubeen's voice may no longer emerge in new songs, but the questions embedded in his poetry remain alive. In remembering him, we are also invited to examine our own lives, our relationships and the values we choose to preserve. That may be one way his search for meaning continues—with us, and within us.