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Drone Warfare Lessons – Part 4

By Brig Hemant Mahajan, YSM

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Public Acceptance and Perception:

Counter-drone systems sometimes encounter false positives, mistakenly flagging harmless objects as hostile drones. Conversely, false negatives occur when these systems fail to detect actual drones. Such errors can result in inefficiencies, resource wastage, and potential security vulnerabilities. Overcoming these obstacles demands a comprehensive approach, incorporating technological enhancements alongside policy formulation, intergovernmental collaboration, and public involvement. Cooperation among governments, defense entities, industry players, and regulatory agencies is vital for navigating the intricate and ever-changing realm of counter-drone technology.

As counter-drone technology progresses, so do the strategies and countermeasures employed by drone operators. Adversaries may devise new tactics to outsmart or deceive counter-drone systems, such as employing stealth coatings, frequency modulation, or encryption techniques. This perpetual cat-and-mouse game underscores the need for continual innovation and adaptation in both counter-drone technology and operational tactics.

As the use of drones becomes more prevalent, the development of counter-drone technology has become a priority for India. Counter-drone systems aim to detect, track, and neutralize hostile drones, mitigating potential threats. These systems can include radar, radio frequency sensors, electro-optical sensors, and jamming devices, among others. The development of effective counter-drone technology is crucial to protect military assets, critical infrastructure, and civilian populations. Counter-drone technologies are being utilized to detect, track, and neutralize hostile drones.

Counter-drone technologies are as under:

Radio Frequency (RF) Detection Systems:

RF detection systems use specialized sensors to detect the radio frequency emissions from drones. These systems analyse the RF signals to identify the presence of drones and determine their location. They can be used to detect both the control signals between the drone and its operator and the drone's onboard communication systems.

Radar Systems:

Radar-based counter-drone systems employ radar technology to detect and track drones. They work by emitting radio waves and analysing the reflected signals to identify and locate drones. Radar systems can detect drones at longer ranges and in various weather conditions, making them effective in detecting drones even in low visibility situations.

Electro-Optical and Infrared (EO/IR) Systems:

EO/IR systems utilize cameras and sensors that detect the visual and thermal signatures of drones. These systems can provide real-time imagery and video feed, allowing operators to identify and track drones visually. EO/IR systems are particularly useful for identifying small drones that may not be easily detected by other means.

Acoustic Sensors:

Acoustic sensors are designed to detect the distinct noise signatures produced by drones. These sensors can detect the acoustic emissions of drone rotors or propulsion systems. By analysing the audio signals, acoustic sensors can identify the presence and location of drones.

GPS Spoofing and Jamming:

GPS spoofing and jamming techniques can disrupt the navigation and control systems of drones. By emitting signals that interfere with the drone's GPS receiver, these systems can force the drone to lose its GPS lock or receive false location information, causing it to lose its way or go into failsafe mode.

Directed Energy Weapons:

Directed energy weapons, such as high-powered lasers or microwave systems, can be used to neutralize drones. These systems aim high-energy beams at the drone to disable or damage its electronic components, including sensors, communication systems, or propulsion systems. Directed energy weapons can provide a non-kinetic means of neutralizing drones without using explosives or projectiles.

The effectiveness of counter-drone technology can vary depending on factors such as the capabilities of the drones being countered, the counter-drone system used, and the operational environment. The development and deployment of counter-drone technology are ongoing, and new systems and techniques continue to be developed to address evolving drone threats.

India tries to ramp up border drone defense after Hamas attack on Israel

India is setting up a surveillance system with drones across its borders to wade off surprise attacks like the one from Hamas in Israel. The military is looking to have the system up and running across some parts of the border as early as May. The move to monitor the borders all the time comes as tensions with China and Pakistan persist. While the war in Ukraine has made government re-evaluate its preparedness for war and priorities on the battlefield, the surprise Hamas attack has pushed the nation to implement some of the suggested measures quickly.

It might take 6-12 months to have the system cover the entire stretch of borders and could cost \$500 million annually.

The 24/7 high-altitude long endurance drones will also act as a back-up to the traditional radar network along the borders, directly beaming images to local command centers. The drones deployed and the software backing them will be developed locally. The entire 14,000 miles (22,531 kilometers) that make up India's land borders and coastline will be under constant surveillance.

To be continued in next issue

How Iran Took Centre Stage in Palestinian Movement

By Vappala Balachandran

Author is Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat

According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), Washington DC, residents of the West Bank and Gaza are almost totally of Palestinian-Arab origin: 92 per cent West Bankers and 99 per cent Gazans are Sunni Muslims and the rest are Christians. These are 2002 figures. The PRB says that 2,14,000 Jewish settlers also live in these areas. The demographics might have changed due to the presence of large-scale ‘illegal’ Jewish settlers, as the US calls them, since February 2024, reversing former US President Trump’s policy.

However, the religious composition of the Palestinians remains almost the same, according to the CIA’s ‘World Fact Book’ (2024). The question is how Iran, with almost 95 per cent Shia population, assumed leadership of the Palestinian struggle against Israel.

The Iran-Israel relations were friendly in 1948, when Israel was born. A 2019 Brookings paper says that historically, Persian-Judaic interactions were friendly as Iran was the only country which did not join the Muslim-majority states in opposing its creation. Also, Iran fitted into Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s ‘Periphery Doctrine’, which aimed at “a political-security goal of countering Arab hostility through relations with alternative regional powers and potential allies,” according to Israeli author Yossi Alpher.

Ben-Gurion forged relationships with non-Arab countries, like Turkey and Iran, whose rulers, like Ismet Inonu and Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (The Shah), had pro-Western orientations. During the Arab-Israeli wars in 1967 and 1973, the Iran-Israel relations assumed strategic depth, with joint projects like Trans-Atlantic Oil, set up in Panama and Switzerland, and a secret Eilat-Ashkelon Oil Pipeline, at a time when Arab oil producers had imposed embargoes on Israel.

Apart from ‘Savak’-Mossad intelligence cooperation, a secret Israel-Iran project named ‘Project Flower’ on advanced missile systems was also reportedly going on, according to The New Arab of October 23, 2023, quoting The New York Times (April 1, 1986).

Around this time, Iranian leftist guerrillas led by the Tudeh Party, and ‘Fedaian guerrillas’, who were persecuted by Savak, joined the Palestinian pro-left Fatah movement’s camps in Jordan and Lebanon for training in guerrilla warfare. They also participated with al-Fatah during the armed combat with the Israeli army. However, this leftist revolution petered out.

On the other hand, religious groups led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini started agitating after the failure of Pahlavi’s ‘White Revolution’, which was meant to modernise the Iranian society. The Shah had to leave Iran on January 16, 1979, and Khomeini entered Iran on February 1 to lead a theocratic nation.

The first foreign leader to visit Iran was Yasser Arafat, al-Fatah leader, on February 17, 1979. Arafat, who had suffered a crushing defeat in 1970 while attempting to take over Jordan ('Black September'), was looking for a country to support him, although Lebanon had allowed him to operate from its soil. This was based on the November 2, 1969, Cairo agreement, supported by Egypt’s President Gamal Abdel Nasser, through which Lebanon permitted Arafat’s PLO to administer 16 official refugees’ camps under the United Nations Relief & Works Agency, where three lakh Palestinian refugees lived.

Gradually, these camps became the training ground of revolutionaries of all hues, including Iranian religious revolutionaries like the Liberation Movement of Iran, also called the Islamic modernists, Islamic-Marxist Mujahidin-e-Khalk and Islamist followers of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Iran specialists of that era say that the creation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) was a result of Arafat's suggestions through Lebanese PLO leader Anis Naccache, who had led the 1975 Vienna kidnapping of OPEC oil ministers through Carlos the Jackal.

Naccache worked with Jalaleddin Farsi, who was then close to Khomeini, to prevent a coup against the latter in the unsettled conditions in Iran. Naccache later recruited Imad Mugniyeh, who rose to become Hezbollah's top man and organised the Argentinian bombings in 1992 and 1994.

The IRGC is Iran's leading fighting force now, numbering nearly two lakhs, with overseas responsibilities through the Quds Force. A Council on Foreign Relations paper, updated on April 17, 2024, says that it has regional allies in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon (Hezbollah), Palestinian territories (Hamas and Islamic Jihad), Syria and Yemen. The paper quotes a 2020 assessment by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies that "the IRGC has become the most powerful controller of all important economic sectors across Iran" for funding covert activities.

A December 2023 paper by the Combating Terrorism Centre (CTC) at US West Point Military Academy says that the IRGC does the crafting of its overseas activities through umbrella groups and joint operations centres. It enlists al-Fatah splinter groups and leftist and Islamist groups into a more loyal, militarily cohesive and politically responsive network under the IRGC control. The first experiment was in 1991, when it created the Ten Resistance Organisation at the Tehran-sponsored "World Conference in Support of the Islamic Revolution in Palestine".

In September 2023, Hamas and Palestinian Jihad started a joint operations room (JOR) in Beirut. Another joint operational centre of the Hezbollah and Hamas had been functioning since 2021. As per the CTC, this JOR utilises Lebanese Hezbollah as a coordinator between Iran, other Iranian proxies in Iraq, Syria and Yemen and Palestinian groups.

The CTC paper also quotes Yahya al-Sinwar, Hamas' Gaza lead military commander, proclaiming in November 2018 that the JOR would form the 'nucleus of the Army of Liberation'. Consequently, the JOR undertook joint operations by firing rockets at Israel in November 2018 and in 2019.

Surprisingly, the CTC also reproduces impressive propaganda papers circulated through JOR Telegram Channels communications, dated December 29, 2020, on the types of exercises, including launching rockets, simulating taking IDF hostage from a tank, raiding small structures, deploying an Iranian-made Misagh MANPADS and using Iranian-made AM 50 rifles. The paper refers to videos from the drill on simulated combat divers raiding coastal targets and JOR fighters interdicting mock Israeli sea-borne forces. It also quotes Joe Truzman writing in Long Wars Journal on December 27, 2020, about these exercises.

All these were found utilised by the Hamas during the October 7, 2023, attacks. What, then, was Israeli intelligence doing when such information was publicly available since 2020?

Read Complete article on website tribuneindia.com

Why India Needs a Unified National Police Force

By Dr G Shreekumar Menon

Author is a retired officer of the IRS and the former director-general of the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics.

Conflicts between police forces of Opposition-ruled states and Central enforcement agencies are being regularly reported, which does not augur well for the security of the country. It's time to consider the creation of a National Police with all-India jurisdiction.

Conflicts between police forces of Opposition-ruled states and Central enforcement agencies – namely, CBI, NIA, NCB, Customs, Enforcement Directorate, and Income Tax, are being regularly reported, which does not augur well for the security of the country. The latest case to grab headlines is the attack on NIA officers by an unruly crowd of miscreants in East Medinipur district in Bengal.

The NIA team, which was probing Bengal's Bhupatinagar blast case, in which three persons were killed in December 2022, had to confront an irate mob, which objected to their arresting two suspects. The windows of the NIA vehicle were smashed and two officials sustained injuries. Another similar incident that occurred on January 5, 2024, prompted the Calcutta High Court to transfer the probe into an attack on Enforcement Directorate officials at Sandeshkali from the West Bengal police to the CBI. The court also directed that the custody of TMC leader Shahabuddin Sheikh, who was arrested by the West Bengal police on February 29 in connection with the attack, be handed over to the central agency.

In May 2023, Income Tax officials faced a hostile reaction from alleged supporters of Tamil Nadu Minister for Electricity, Excise and Prohibition, V. Senthilbalaji on Friday, when they reached the premises of his brother, V. Ashok Kumar, and his acquaintances in Karur district to conduct searches. Some officials were allegedly manhandled and a vehicle was vandalised. Another ED official was arrested by Tamil Nadu police alleging corruption charges. Accusations and counter-accusations by Central law enforcement agencies and state police are on the rise in many states.

In March 2021, the Kerala police registered a case against the ED officials for allegedly forcing Swapna Suresh, a key accused in the gold smuggling case, to give statements against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. According to the FIR, the ED officials who had questioned Swapna Suresh allegedly forced her to give 'false' statements against the chief minister in order to make fake evidence.

An outgoing Customs Commissioner even went to the extent of criticising the Kerala government, alleging that there were many attempts to intimidate and run him down during his tenure. "Though there were many pulls and pressures, I never allowed anyone to browbeat us. My reporting officer is not the CM or the state government. Investigation in the gold smuggling case is going in the right direction now," he said.

Denying reports that appeared in a section of the media that he was under tremendous pressure from the Centre, he said: "People who have no idea about central agencies are making such wild allegations. It is also weird to say that central agencies are being used to portray the state government in a bad light. We are bound by Customs rules and regulations."

This writer, while discussing the above incident with a retired Kerala cadre IPS officer, was told that the situation has deteriorated so much, due to rampant politicisation of the force, that personnel are identified and segregated as owing allegiance to which political party!

Another bone of contention is the withdrawal of general consent to the CBI, by many states namely, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Telangana and Mizoram. The CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act of 1946, which requires the investigative agency to obtain the consent of state governments before it can investigate a crime in a particular state. In other words, without the state government's express consent, the CBI cannot exercise its power within that state's borders, something that makes the investigative agency different from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which has jurisdiction all over India.

All the above kinds of conflicts, mistrust and growing animosity between state and central agencies do not augur well for the security of the nation. Many nations and NGOs are constantly plotting to destabilise the nation in every possible way.

If state governments start using the police to disrupt the functioning of Central enforcement agencies, then it is time to consider the creation of a National Police with all India jurisdiction, and all officers transferrable across India like the existing central services.

The citizens need to have a choice as to whether investigations need to be done by the state police or central police. Presently, criminal investigations, especially communal rioting, political murders and rapes (incidents like Sandeshkali in Bengal) which are investigated by state police, have come in for lots of criticism, due to investigatory lapses, whether by negligence or design. Aggrieved citizens have to now approach the courts even to get an FIR registered! Courts are routinely being implored with pleas seeking CBI investigation, fearing botched investigations, dilution of charges and non-inclusion of crucial witnesses. There needs to be a permanent mechanism, if necessary, by Constitutional amendment, to establish a National Police.

This writer has often emphasised and reiterated the need to create separate central jails, for housing offenders of central laws. As jails are fully controlled by the state governments, and offenders of central laws are also housed in the same jails, there is great scope for disrupting investigations and state police interfering in the investigatory processes, at any time, which can prove detrimental to the successful prosecution of the case.

Modi government 3.0 has to address the twin issues of the creation of a National Police, and a National Jails Authority, to permanently resolve the unnecessary frictions between Central enforcement agencies and state police.

Read complete article on website news18.com

Nothing ‘gentlemanly’ in Chinese Diplomacy

By Bhopinder Singh

The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry.

There is a huge amount of insincerity and gall involved in the Chinese complaint that the Philippines had torn up the bilateral ‘Gentleman’s Agreement,’ between Beijing and Manila. While the term ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’ has an implicit assumption of ‘trust’ as a fundamental tenet besting a relationship, which may otherwise not be legally binding — to even imagine that there has been any element of ‘trust’ between these two sparing countries, is to put oneself up to ridicule.

Much of the tensions in the countries around the South China Seas originates from an expansionist instinct in China that seeks to coerce, intimidate and dominate the region with creative, wholly unique and untenable concepts like the ‘nine dash line’ (called out by the International Court of Justice, Hague, as illegal). But it is not just the Philippines but also other regional countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei etc., that are up in arms over Chinese belligerence.

Recent events have seen optics like the Philippines charging China in the International Court of Justice, Hague (and winning the plea), dangerous military exercises to assert competitive territorial counterclaims, ramming and shooting with high-pressure water cannons at Filipino boats, disruption to freedom of navigation, denying access etc., hardly the backdrop to assume the word ‘trust’ between two constantly slug-fisting nations.

But the make-believe posturing and incredulously ‘cry wolf’ terms like ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’ are an age-old Chinese norm, whenever anyone has stood up to expose its bullying and relentless expansionism. The Chinese through their conduct have unilaterally made a mockery of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Chinese have further upped the ante by dredging up sand to create artificial landmass e.g., around the restive Spratly Islands. This is enough to station a Military base replete with fighter planes and missiles and even anchor its fleet of so-called “unsinkable aircraft carriers”. All this has been done with sheer impunity and disregard towards any neighbouring countries’ territorial claims, sense of security, or socioeconomic concerns. Duplicity and attempting to checkmate (by force or lure) any emerging force that could challenge the Chinese juggernaut is met with its patent falsehoods, sneaky ‘salami tactic’ encroachment, or even brazen show of force.

In the late 70s, the Chinese were more concerned about the Soviet Union, than with the United States of America. Beijing had counterintuitively started engaging with Washington DC to align it towards its side as it went about preparing to attack Vietnam. Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping on a trip to the United States had told US President Jimmy Carter, “The child is getting naughty, it is time he got spanked”.

Soon thereafter, China attacked Vietnam in a war that is recalled in Vietnam as Chien tranh chong bành truoing Trung Hoa (War against Chinese expansionism)! The physical-material superiority in favour of the Chinese PLA notwithstanding, most independent military historians acknowledge the bloody nose inflicted by the plucky, war-experienced and pugnacious Vietnamese forces that led to a rupture between China and Vietnam, that still lingers subliminally.

Even earlier in the 50’s, the Chinese laid the trap for Nehru’s complacency when Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai refused to contest Nehru’s rightful insistence on Aksai Chin by accepting that China had no claim on it. But Zhou would renege and contradict his earlier position by later claiming that Aksai Chin was already under the Chinese - they had surreptitiously built a road, while still playing naïve and ingenuous, all along.

Like all bilateral agreements that the Chinese are always willing to relegate to the bins, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was put to the same fate. In yet another act that would soon become a standard Chinese practice over the years, the Chinese cartographical interpretation was revised with newly usurped territories and claims.

This template of dubious expansionism led to the 1962 Indo-China War and ensured unsettled status in the region with the Chinese ‘updating’ their official maps with new territories and new names. That same principle has been applied to sovereign maritime issues in the South China Seas and the ongoing tussle with the Philippines has its roots in the history of China’s insatiable expansionism and unbridled ambition to assert its hegemony.

Propaganda in the highly controlled media of China has been elevated to a fine art. Filipino Defence Secretary was quick to rebut the same by clarifying that he was, “not aware of, nor is it a party to, any internal agreement with China” and that his department had, “not had any contact with any Chinese Government officials since last year”. The Chinese have been deft with wordsmithing in order to lay the blame for ongoing tensions in the Philippines by first invoking an alleged ‘promise’, which then became a ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’ and have most recently morphed into a ‘new model’ and finally ‘internal understanding’.

Gen Jonathan Malaya, of the Philippines National Security Council, put it bluntly, “The propaganda masters are clearly working overtime in Beijing to sow discord and division in our country”. But unfortunately for the Chinese, there are fewer takers for their position by the day and there never was, or is, anything ‘Gentlemanly’ about Chinese diplomacy, for decades.

Read complete article on website dailypioneer.com

What the Global Media Fails to Understand About India's Democracy

By Shashi Shekhar Vempati

Author is former CEO, Prasar Bharati

The Indian state has upheld the rule of law without compromising on constitutional values. Those who are spelling doom for democracy in India have unwittingly reduced themselves to agents of partisan politics.

Voting is now underway in the largest democratic exercise on the planet. To put the scale of the Indian electoral process into perspective it is important to recognise that the number of voters in India, at 969 million, is more than the combined voters across the United States, Indonesia, Russia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa and Mexico.

The size of the Indian electorate is more than the entire population of Europe. With more than 5.5 million electronic voting machines deployed across 1.05 million polling stations, Indian democracy puts to shame even the advanced West in its embrace of technology to make democracy work at the scale of a billion. With several thousand registered political parties and many more thousand candidates, elections in India are a testament to the resilience of democracy in the face of geographical diversity and socio-economic complexities.

The scale and complexity of democracy in India is poorly understood by much of the global media and many Western observers which results in patently absurd pronouncements on the health of Indian Democracy based on flawed assessments. Two illustrative examples should make this quite apparent.

In a recent comment noted geopolitical expert and the President of Eurasia Group, Ian Bremmer observed that in Mexico at least 22 mayoral candidates had been murdered since September 2023. One would think that murderous political violence of this nature that not only impacts outcomes in electoral democracy but results in a pervasive climate of fear, ought to have a bearing on the democratic ranking of Mexico. Incidentally, the famed V-Dem Index of Democracy ranks Mexico at 81, several notches above India which was ranked at 110.

Contradictions of this nature are not limited to the Democracy Index alone. The Press Freedom Index of RSF ranks Mexico well above India when in fact according to the Reuters Institute of Journalism, Oxford University, Mexico is the most dangerous country for journalists, recording more journalistic deaths in the line of duty than the war zones of Ukraine and Syria.

A commonly used phrase in much of the global commentary spelling doom on Indian democracy is “democratic backsliding”. It is puzzling how routinely and often mindlessly this phrase is applied in the context of India despite the country’s electoral system being as vibrant as ever before with both the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress party winning and losing state elections every election season. Another oft-repeated claim is about the “shrinking freedom of expression”, a claim that flies in the face of the diversity of opinion that is expressed every day across the spectrum of media, traditional and digital, apart from a noisy and raucous social media.

India’s independent institutions from the courts to the Election Commission have maintained a high degree of integrity that rises above the partisan rhetoric of everyday politics. A case in point is the recent Supreme Court ruling on electoral bonds that went against the government weeks before the elections were due. Similarly, the Election Commission has been even handed in its enforcement of the model code of conduct ahead of the elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also stumped his critics and media observers more than once with his outreach across the political spectrum.

Of particular note is the decision by the Modi government to confer the Bharat Ratna on former President, the late Pranab Mukherjee, who belonged to the Congress Party. Modi has set aside partisan considerations to bestow state honours on more than 15 politicians across parties and regions. This includes many current and former political rivals such as Sharad Pawar, Ghulam Nabi Azad and the late Chief Minister of West Bengal Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee apart from the late P A Sangma from Meghalaya and the iconic film personality Chiranjeevi.

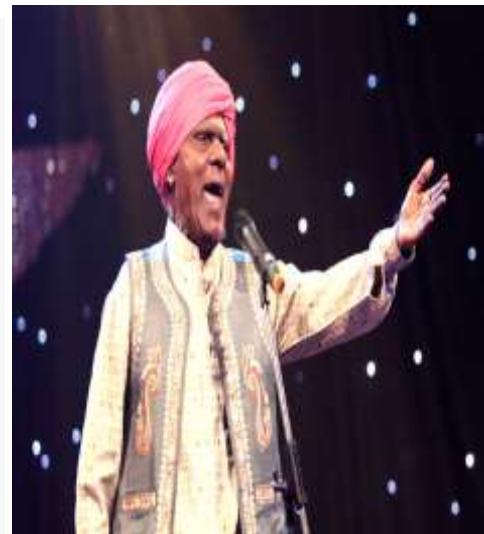
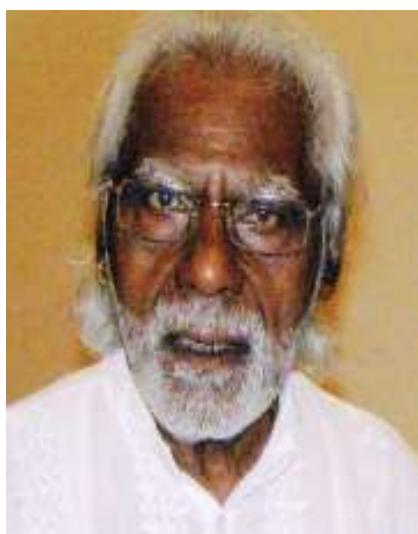
Most recently PM Modi has also honoured iconic stalwarts of diverse ideological persuasions with the Bharat Ratna like the late Charan Singh, P V Narasimha Rao and Karpoori Thakur, all of who had little in common politically either with the BJP or its parent organisation the Jan Sangh. In fact, under Modi's premiership, the widest pantheon of leaders and iconic personalities across political parties and ideological persuasions from every region of India have been recognised, celebrated and even given a prominent space in the newly built Museum of Prime Ministers.

In the face of this outreach across the political spectrum, it is strange that alarmist pronouncements on the so-called stifling of political opposition have been made. While the political level playing field in India remains as competitive as ever before, what we are witnessing is specific political parties and individual political leaders being held accountable for alleged acts of corruption and tax evasion.

Read complete article on website indianexpress.com

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India is Proud of: Shahir Vitthal Umap A Folk Singer, Shahir and Social Worker (15 July 1931 – 27 November 2010)



Vitthal Umap was a prominent Indian folk singer, shahir (distinguished), and social worker hailing from Maharashtra. His life and contributions left an indelible mark on Marathi culture and the legacy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Born in a Mumbai chawl in 1931, Umap faced the struggles of an artist seeking recognition for neglected folk genres in Maharashtra.

Undeterred, he embarked on a mission to keep these traditions alive. His powerful voice resonated through the streets, villages, and stages across the state.

Umap's repertoire included Koli geet (songs of the Koli fishermen community) and Bhim geet (songs dedicated to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar). His compositions were not just melodious; they carried profound social messages. To illustrate Ambedkar's philosophy and ideals, Umap penned two significant song-books: "Mazi Vani Bhimacharani" and "Mazi Aai Bhimai."

Umap's performances were electrifying. He didn't merely sing; he breathed life into the lyrics. Audiences were moved by his soulful renditions, which often touched upon themes of social justice, equality, and empowerment. His connection with the masses was palpable, and he used his art to spread awareness about Ambedkar's teachings.

Umap's talent transcended borders. He won the first prize at the International Folk Music and Art Festival in Cork, Ireland. His performances showcased the rich cultural heritage of Maharashtra to the world.

Umap's roles in Shyam Benegal's TV series "Bharat Ek Khoj" and Jabbar Patel's film "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar" garnered critical acclaim. His portrayal of historical figures resonated with viewers.

Beyond singing, Umap composed music for several films, serials, and dramas. His tunes added depth and emotion to visual storytelling.

Umap was a regular fixture in popular stage shows like "Khandobacha Lagin," "Gadhwacha Lagna," "Jambhool Akhyan," and "Me Marathi." His live performances were unforgettable experiences for the audience.

Despite his contributions, Umap faced challenges. He struggled for recognition and basic amenities. As is the experience of thousands of underprivileged people, Vitthal Umap's hardships were same, though he was a renowned folk singer. In a cultural program, he expressed frustration about making countless requests to the authorities for his basic need of a respectful small dwelling.

However, fate took a turn when Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, witnessing Umap's plight, vowed to get him a flat and he got a flat under artistes' quota. True to his word, within a fortnight, Umap received a house under the artistes' quota. It was a small victory for an artist who had dedicated his life to art and social causes.

Vitthal Umap's legacy lives on. His songs continue to inspire generations, and his commitment to social justice remains a beacon. As an Ambedkarite and Buddhist, he embodied the spirit of resilience, creativity, and compassion. His voice may have silenced, but his impact reverberates through the cultural fabric of Maharashtra.

He died while performing at a function in Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur on 27 November 2010. Umap, a follower of BR Ambedkar, collapsed while he was onstage at Nagpur's famous Dikshabhoomi

A true remembrance of a great Folk singer Vitthal Umap can be only when people celebrate the power of art, the strength of conviction, and the unwavering pursuit of justice.

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