

## Xi Jinping, The New Mao Inscrutable China

**By Srikanth Kondapalli**

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The 20th Communist Party Congress in China signalled a total centralisation of powers in the person of Xi Jinping, demolishing informal political processes in the party while retaining specific Xi-nurtured factions and sectarian networks, tearing away from established party-state norms, movement towards decoupling from the US, and keeping China's sights firmly on preparations to seize regional and global power. Xi secured a third term, and perhaps tenure for life. There is a new narrative of Chinese assertiveness and resolve.

Four specific outcomes are visible from the party congress. First, the resurrection of centralised authority. Under previous presidents since Deng Xiaoping, "collective leadership" had provided stability to the decision-making process in China. Xi has driven the party to return to the principle of "core" leadership, with himself embodying that core. This has been enforced through changes in the constitution of the Chinese Communist Party.

For instance, the constitution has been amended to include "two establishes" -- to establish Xi as the "core" of the leadership of the CCP and his "thought" as having the "guiding" role for the rank and file; and "two safeguards" -- that of safeguarding the "core" status of Xi and that of his centralised authority. These amendments are binding on the CCP's 96 million cadre across the country.

Xi needed this figment of constitutional legitimacy to establish his iron hand, to overcome the decadeslong party dynamics of intensive shadowboxing between various factions. Hu Jintao and his Communist Youth League were jettisoned visibly and symbolically, although it may still be hard to wipe out established factions or their political influence in the party.

A second, and more substantial, way in which factional politics was sought to be obliterated was in the composition of the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee. Defying the predictions of China analysts, the world over, it was the most surprising outcome of the 20th CCP. We will never know what actually transpired at the congress, partly due to the opaque political system of China but also because there is no Chinese Julian Assange or Edward Snowden around. However, the visual image of Hu Jintao's dissatisfaction with the list of members in the hands of Xi Jinping, and the efforts of Li Zhanshu and Wang Huning to prevent Hu from taking a look at the list at the final session of the congress point to political friction emerging soon.

Nevertheless, the current Politburo and its Standing Committee are packed with Xi loyalists, mainly those belonging to Fujian, Zhejiang and Shanghai, where he worked as party secretary in the 1990s and 2000s, or from his home province, Shaanxi. They belong to "new Zhijiang Army", "Shanghai Gang" and other factions.

A third outcome that has both domestic and external implications is the excessive focus on national security at the 20th CCP, compared to the Deng Xiaoping-era obsession with “economics at the centre”. Xi declared that China will “pursue a holistic approach to national security and promote national security in all areas and stages of the work of the party and the country.” In its obsession to build a “fortified China,” the party congress resolved to make national security “the foundation for national rejuvenation.” Strikingly, there was no mention of the Jiang Zemin-Hu Jintao era “peace and development” in the work report. With this, we should expect a national security state to come to the fore in China, one that seeks solutions not in diplomacy or moderate policies but in coercive postures, if not outright military onslaught.

A fourth potential outcome is the acceleration of decoupling from the United States, with its implications for globalisation and the rest of the world, including India. Though Xi made these intentions known through the 14th Five Year Plan, Made in China 2025, and other schemes to restructure China’s economy to become less dependent on exports and run on domestic consumption, the signal from the 20th CCP is one of heightened paranoia and jingoism, alluding to “external attempts to blackmail, contain, blockade, and exert maximum pressure on China”.

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## **Part Public Relations, Part Apologia: Implications Of The New US National Security Strategy**

**By Dr. Gautam Sen**

Author taught international political economy at the London School of Economics for over two decades.

*It maintains the tone of 'good versus evil' but how realistic is the new US National Security Strategy on key issues like energy security after the Ukraine war, nuclear non-proliferation, and arms sales?*

The US National Security Strategy (USNSS) document, like its counterparts elsewhere, is basically a public relations exercise and apologia for sundry dimensions of US foreign policy goals and action. In fact, it is almost biblical in its self-righteous messianic tone. It contains nothing that is not already known, but the undertone of its posture to legitimate US foreign policy and action might have carried more conviction had the presentation been more nuanced and less strident. But it is, presumably, intended for domestic consumption and a parochial US is unconcerned with the reaction to it of pesky foreigners.

Yet, this is not a consensual USNSS perspective since former President Donald Trump, who enjoys considerable popular support, disagrees with crucial aspects its worldview, especially pertaining the war in the Ukraine which seems to obsess authors of the USNSS. Prominent former Democrat Tulsi Gabbard has also denounced the foreign policymakers of the ruling Democrats as ‘an elitist cabal of warmongers driving us towards WWII’.

Far from being a strategy that appeals to most Americans and enjoying preponderant political support, key aspects of USNSS, the inclination to intervene abroad, for instance, are effectively the statement of purpose of the US military-industrial complex, which seems to have captured the Hillary Clinton-Joe Biden Democrats. Some sentimental sops on the good life for the hoi polloi, domestic and foreign, have been thrown in to obscure the real purport of the USNSS.

### **Doctrine of 'liberal hegemony'**

The US National Security Strategy begins with a ringing reaffirmation of an ideological validation of US foreign policy strategy and goals, what is described in polite company as the doctrine of liberal hegemony. This strategy has already been decried by leading Chicago

international relations scholar John Mearsheimer and others as unrealistic and a failure because the world cannot be remade in the image of the US. The entire document continually portrays routine power struggles as an historic conflict between good, which is liberal democracy and evil, coercive autocracies. It is an echo of an influential progenitor of US foreign policy, Theodor Roosevelt, the early twentieth century 26th President of the US, who had adapted a version of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny to argue in favour of an imperialist US foreign policy, an ambition of primacy and through the use of military force; significantly, this scholarly strategic thinker politician recalled his formative experience as personal combat in the genocidal Indian wars.

Of course, both the document that supposedly affirms the doctrine of supposed liberal hegemony and its critics are being rather economical with the truth since the US has neither sought to promote democracy and prosperity abroad or veered from what it judges to be in its limited national interest. The claim of the legitimacy of democracy at home to pursue the foreign policies enumerated in the USNSS can also be contested since, at the very least, the US is deeply divided at home about the direction their country should take. At worst, the US is an oligarchy that pays scant attention to the aspirations of most of its citizens, as a major Princeton study has recently concluded.

There is a shopping list of issues highlighted in the strategy document that includes cooperation with allies on shared goals like mitigating climate change, ensuring food security and combating terrorism and dealing with the Covid pandemic. Somewhat ominously from an Indian perspective the US simultaneously seeks to uphold the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity though they might conflict in reality. It speaks glowingly of upholding human rights abroad and pursuing equality at home, but the first is an unconvincing deceit, the second an aspiration at best, with the US replete with persistent racially motivated killings of black citizens and uncontrolled gun violence against the innocent.

The strategy grandly announces that the domestic sphere and foreign engagement are interdependent but exhibiting sudden awareness of this obvious reality is suggestive of unfathomable ignorance since their symbiosis has long been recognised. However, it lists prevailing US economic weaknesses, including national infrastructure and the need to maintain or achieve primacy in a host of economic and technological sectors, from microelectronics and advanced computing to biotechnologies through public investment.

### **Ambitious programmes, but where are the funds?**

The wish list also includes the aspiration to fund public investment in everything from clean drinking water and improved health care to climate change and promoting STEM education. The vast projected amounts to be spent to implement these goals make no mention of the unsustainable level of the current US debt to GDP ratio. Oddly, a specific mention of artificial intelligence, with its momentous potential, in which China is stealing a march, is missing.

There is a summary in the USNSS of a whole array of international and regional agreements on commerce and security intended to advance the interests of US and its partners across the world. US intentions are apparently benign, but so remote are the prospects of overcoming enormous challenges to achieve them that only a sense of a religious fervour remains reading the plans and international agreements.

The rest of the strategy document is a one-sided rehearsal of a litany of US complaints about the failings of other countries, which virtually no one will find persuasive, with the US's own foreign policy miscalculations defended with barely concealed indignation.

There is detailed outline of the contours of a defence policy that promises a lethal military strategy on land, sea, air and space, to deter adversaries though, once again, questions loom large about their funding by a US deeply in debt. The Integrated Defense Strategy also proposes intervention to pre-empt rivals from trying to take advantage by engaging in the subterfuge of

keeping their hostile actions just below the threshold of actual combat. There is a recognizable hint reiterating a policy of interventionism and potential regime change that have become commonplace in recent times. The National Defense Strategy emphatically prioritises the goal of a Defense Industrial Base for the US and its allies though it is unclear how the implied greater self-sufficiency in weapons production abroad will impact the very lucrative export of US armaments.

### **Problematic globalisation**

There is recognition that globalisation, which brought benefits, is also becoming problematic and the document pronounces a need for newer forms of international commercial engagement. It acknowledges the adverse impact of international trade and commerce on American workers. However, it does not explicitly identify the problematic theoretical underpinnings of historical conventional trade relations or the specific problems associated with global financial integration.

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## **Content of National Importance-MIB's New Mandate**

**By Udaya Kumar Varma**

Author is a former IAS Officer of 1976 batch of Madhya Pradesh Cadre. He retired in 2013 from the post of Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI.

Broadcasters' puzzled response to Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB's) latest mandate is eminently predictable. Who is government to dictate what should be the content? And who will define National Importance?

Although MIB is going to hold discussions on this issue with stakeholders, and then issue detailed guidelines, the voices of resentment and dissent are not likely to be muted even as the provision is not being downright rejected by the industry.

Very true to its nature, the industry's first objection is not on principles but on who would bear the cost of content creation? Some in the Industry ask if the government plans to bear the cost of creating content of national importance? The preoccupation of these concerns to the exclusion of others, only confirms the gaining impressions about India's TV industry and the prevailing paramountcy of commerce.

On the face of it, the unspoken fear of government interfering in matters of content creation is misplaced. Presenting programs of national importance is not being patriotic, as some may feel and argue. It is simply part of media's legitimate function that should transcend above criticism and censure. It is a fair responsibility to present positive and constructive.

### **The Mandate**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Guidelines for Uplinking and Downlinking of Television Channels in India, 2022, under which it has become mandatory for Television channels to telecast content in national and public interest.

Clause 35 of the guideline states "as airwaves/frequencies are public property and need to be used in the best interest of the society, a company/LLP having permission under these guidelines for uplinking a channel and its downlinking in India (other than foreign channels only downlinked in India) may undertake public service broadcasting for a minimum period of 30 minutes in a day on themes of national importance and of social relevance."

It further adds that the broadcasters must select one of the following eight topics for creating content on the issue of national importance.

These include (i) education and spread of literacy; (ii) agriculture and rural development; (iii) health and family welfare; (iv) science and technology; (v) welfare of women; (vi) welfare of the weaker sections of the society; (vii) protection of the environment and of cultural heritage; and (viii) national integration.

The sub-clause 2 of clause 35 also states "channels may, for the purpose, appropriately modulate their content to fulfil the obligation referred to in sub-para (1), except where it may not be feasible, such as in the case of sports channels". The guidelines further say that the central government may, from time to time, issue general advisory to the channels for the telecast of content in the national interest, and the channel shall comply with the same.

The guidelines are effective from November 9 and the channels will be given time to conceptualize and create the content and a detailed advisory on the same will be issued soon.

### **The Background**

The mandate has come following a recommendation of TRAI on the public service obligation of broadcasters. The recommendation was made some time ago in 2008. Presumably the reservation being raised on the mandate must have been raised even when TRAI were having the consultations and many of such objections were considered before the recommendation was made.

### **The Legality**

The legality of the mandate cannot be faulted. As the licensing authority for uplinking and downlinking of channels, the government is perfectly within her right to issue directives. The only caveat is that these directions cannot be violative of the constitutional rights on freedom of Expression. No one can argue that the mandate in question infringes any fundamental right in any manner.

And to argue that channels should not in any way be advised to place salience on topics of national importance is talking liberalism to an unreasonable degree.

### **Is It Restrictive?**

Legality aside, is it restrictive? It will be difficult to argue that these could be called restrictive in any case. It does not require the channels to follow a particular line. All that it says is that they must carry at least 30 minutes program containing contents of national importance. The subjects that could be considered of national importance have also been indicated. Nobody can quarrel with the subjects. And certainly, channels are free to enrich and enlarge these areas. Thoughtfully, MIB's list is not definitive but illustrative.

### **Who Bears the Cost?**

The argument that for programs of National Importance to be produced and broadcast, the cost should be incurred by the government is specious and shallow. Firstly, to say that the onus of broadcasting programs of National interest is entirely that of government is absurd. As responsible organ of the society and a nation, this duty and responsibility is shared by everyone including the media. Secondly, it also casts serious doubts on the creative capabilities of the content creators to think that they are incapable of producing programs that are interesting and entertaining. After all, so many channels are creating content that have no difficulty in attracting advertisers and are commercially viable.

Many broadcasters believe that any program that discusses government initiatives must be funded by government. This is symptomatic of a prejudiced and opinionated mindset. If criticism is the right of the media, highlighting the benefits to the people is as much their responsibility. And if the argument is to link the telecasting these programs with DAVP advertising, it needs to be rejected forthwith.

## **Proposed Consultation**

Apparently, MIB has merely implemented the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) recommendations that were issued in 2008. MIB believes that the public service obligation is a reasonable expectation from the broadcasters and the mandate is merely a nudge in this direction. It is neither onerous nor oppressive. And certainly not irresponsible. It has proposed to have discussion with the stakeholders and come out with detailed guidelines on this issue in a few weeks.

Certainly, many of the misgivings of the broadcasters will be addressed in these consultations. The experience of such consultations assures a reasonable outcome and a resolution and reconciliation on the points of divergence and dissent. However, an open mind and a spirit of give and take usually help achieve a win-win situation. Pending these consultations, rejecting the government directive will be neither proper nor prudent.

## **Rationalise Channel-Pricing**

One concern, however, deserves urgent attention of both TRAI and MIB- the need to rationalize the channel pricing, an issue that has been evading a satisfactory resolution since long. Broadcasters have long resented the restrictive regime of pricing the channels. They have often blamed the inflexibility and inadequacy of subscription revenue for many of the constraints plaguing content creation. TRAI and MIB though seized of the matter, may be well advised to consider a more market driven tariff structure and expedite resolving this long-standing issue.

## **Need to Introspect**

There is a certain legitimacy in the media considering itself as the watch-dog for society, the state, the people. Often, the role is performed with commitment and sincerity of purpose and the motivations are transparent. Only when these motivations begin being alloyed, even overtaken, for reasons other than public interest, the aberrations creep in with devastating effect. Media does not fancy being told how to conduct themselves because they are so used to dictating others. So, who watches this watch-dog? The voices of fairness and reason even within media, have begun to flag and discuss many such issues. These voices need to be strengthened from within.

Accepting public service obligation shall strengthen the credibility of media, increasingly, getting corroded by rank commercial concerns and considerations. Even if it were to be mere perceptions, they need to be addressed and dispelled.

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# **From One China To Greater China**

**By Lt Gen P.R. Shankar, Veteran**

Lt Gen P.R. Shankar PVSM, AVSM, VSM is a former director-general of artillery in the Indian Army. He is currently a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras and writes extensively on strategic and geopolitical affairs.

In a message posted on Twitter on Oct. 6, Chinese embassy in India spokesperson Wang Xiaojian urged New Delhi to adhere to the “one China” principle and stop all forms of official exchange with Taiwan. This needs to be put into the correct perspective.

The “one China” principle is a core issue the People’s Republic of China (PRC) uses to lay claim to Taiwan. By extension, this principle is used to give legitimacy to all areas it has usurped and all other territories it now lays claim to.

This corrosive principle underscores China’s hegemonistic ambitions and territorial expansionism.

However, the “one China” principle is based on false premises and a deceitful distortion of history. The PRC uses similar distorted logic to advance its claims in other areas.

In this context, one must go back to ancient Chinese history — which is staring at us from the Great Wall of China — to understand what the real “one China” is.

The Great Wall of China was built by various empires to prevent invasion by other states, secure China’s northern border and protect the Silk Road trade. However, there is no single wall.

The Great Wall, as we know it, is a series of walls built over centuries of Chinese history by emperors of different dynasties and for different purposes. The outer boundary of the Chinese nation is defined by the outermost part of the “great walls.” From this fundamental logic it is quite clear that there is only “one China” — the area encompassed by the Great Wall to the north and the coastline to the south.

The areas of Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan are well outside this area, based on historical evidence. As late as 1932, Tibet, Xinjiang, Manchuria, Mongolia and Taiwan were not part of China.

Xinjiang, Manchuria and Mongolia were assimilated into China by the communists using various pretexts during a politically turbulent period in China which spans the Japanese occupation and the civil war up to the end of World War II. Tibet was invaded and annexed in 1956.

In the 17th century, Taiwan was a Dutch colony. After a brief period of independence, it was taken over by imperial China. It was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1952.

Japan ceded sovereignty over Taiwan as per the Treaty of San Francisco and Treaty of Taipei on April 28, 1952, to the Republic of China (ROC) — not to the PRC, governed at that point by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Ever since then, Taiwan has been an independent state. It has never been ruled by the CCP, even for a day.

In the mid-1970s, many governments did not recognize the PRC, while most governments recognized and dealt with the ROC. It was only when the US recognized the PRC in 1979 that the very idea and concept of the “one China” principle came into being.

China insists that Taiwan is an inalienable breakaway part of its territory, and wants to annex it, by force if necessary. This was one of the key themes at the CCP’s 20th National Congress. From all perspectives, the “one China” principle is a recent construct and is not based on historical evidence.

The “one China” principle is therefore premised on the false fact that Taiwan is part of the PRC, even though it has never been under its rule. Accepting this outlandish principle and its twisted logic means accepting the Chinese expansionist claims in other areas.

For instance, China twisted and manufactured history in the form of the “nine-dash line” to lay claim to the entire South China Sea. Ignoring Chinese intentions and not contesting its falsehoods emboldened the PRC to establish artificial islands in the South China Sea and control part of it.

From an Indian perspective, the twisted Chinese logic of “one China” resonates with other perfidious claims. In a 2003 agreement, India recognized Tibet as part of China. The agreement was based on the understanding that the boundary between India and China was to be settled generally along the McMahon Line, in itself based on the Himalayan crest line.

At the time of the signing of the agreement, Arunachal Pradesh was already one of the constitutional states of India, as it has been since 1987. There was no objection to this status when the agreement was signed in 2003.

However, after signing it, China started laying claim to the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh, saying it is part of South Tibet. Until then, the term “South Tibet” had never existed in any form. The invented term is now being given a coating of fictitious history to accord it legitimacy.

There is a stark similarity with this process and the one behind the idea of the “one China” principle.

In its latest gambit in 2020, China laid claim to the Sakteng sanctuary, which is 100km deep into Bhutan. This area is contiguous to the Tawang Tract. The Chinese have now started claiming it as part of South Tibet.

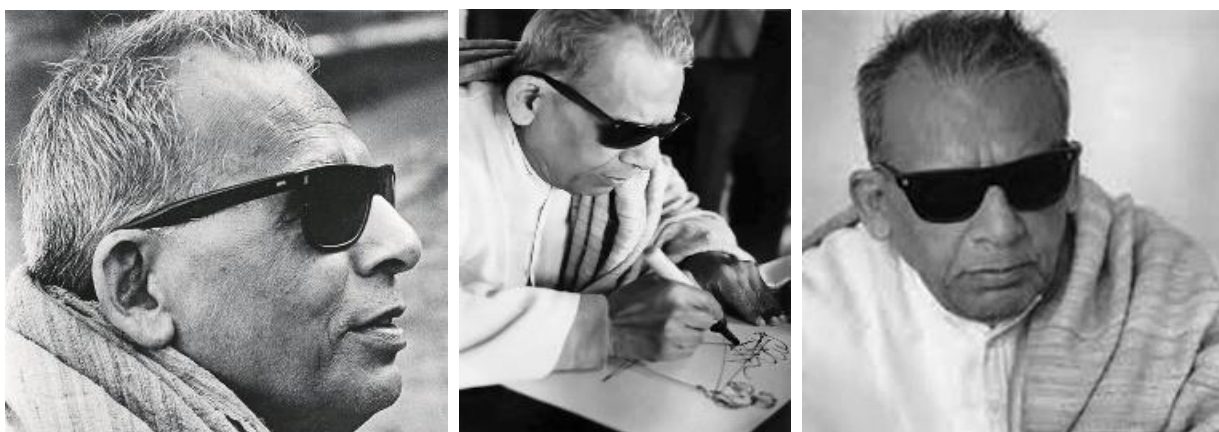
The Chinese have simultaneously revived Mao Zedong’s so-called “palm and five fingers” theory, which says that Xizang (Tibet) is China’s right hand’s palm, and its five fingers are Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal. As all of these five are either occupied by, or under the influence of India, it is China’s responsibility to “liberate” the five to be rejoined with Tibet.

The concepts of “one China,” the “nine-dash line,” “South Tibet” and “Mao’s five fingers” are all part of China’s territorial expansionist design, which is being furthered and implemented incrementally. There seems to be a “Greater China” principle at play. It is high time that India and the rest of the world recognize that accepting the “one China” principle means yielding to China’s larger plan.

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**Nation is Indebted to:**  
**Binod Behari Mukherjee**  
**(7 February 1904 – 11 November 1980)**  
**The semi-blind world-famous artist**



He was an Indian artist from West Bengal state. Mukherjee was one of the pioneers of Indian modern art. He was one of the earliest artists in modern India to take up to murals as a mode of artistic expression. All his murals depict a subtle understanding of environmental through pioneering architectural nuances.

Binod Behari Mukherjee was born in Behala, Kolkata. although his ancestral village is in Garalgachha in Hooghly District. He taught at Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan. He made his early learning from Sanskrit Collegiate School.



Mukherjee was born with a severe eye problem. Despite being myopic in one eye and blind in the other, he continued to paint and do murals even after he lost his eyesight completely following an unsuccessful eye cataract operation in 1956. In 1919, he took admission in Kala Bhavana, the art faculty of Visva-Bharati University. He was a student of Indian artist Nandalal Bose, and a friend and close associate of Ramkinkar Baij, a sculptor. In 1925, he joined Kala Bhava Bijn as a member of the teaching faculty. He inspired many brilliant students over the years, notable among them are painter Jahar Dasgupta, Ramananda Bandopadhyay, K.G. Subramanyan, Beohar Rammanohar Sinha, sculptor & printmaker Somnath Hore, designer Riten Majumdar and filmmaker Satyajit Ray. In 1949, he left Kala Bhavan and joined as a curator at the Nepal Government Museum in Kathmandu. From 1951 to 1952, he taught at the Banasthali Vidyapith in Rajasthan. In 1952, he along with his wife Leela, started an art training school in Mussoorie. In 1958, he returned to Kala Bhavan, and later became its principal. In 1979, a collection of his Bengali writings, Chitrakar was published.

In Oxford Art Online, R. Si'va Kumar claims, "His major work is the monumental 1947 mural at the Hindi Bhavan, Sha'ntiniketan, based on the lives of medieval Indian saints and painted without cartoons. With its conceptual breadth and synthesis of elements from Giotto and Tawaraya Sotatsu, as well as from the art of such ancient Indian sites as Ajanta and Mamallapuram, it is among the greatest achievements in contemporary Indian painting."

His style was a complex fusion of idioms absorbed from Western modern art and the spirituality of oriental traditions (both Indian and Far Eastern). Some of his works show a marked influence of Far-Eastern traditions, namely calligraphy and traditional wash techniques of China and Japan. He took lessons in calligraphy from travelling artists from Japan. During 1937-38 he spent a few months in Japan with artists such as Arai Kampō. Similarly, he also learnt from the Indian miniature paintings in the frescoes of Mughal and Rajput periods. Idioms of Western modern art also bore heavily upon his style, as he is often seen to blend Cubist techniques (such as multi-perspective and faceting of planes) to solve problems of space. He painted grand murals inside the Visva-Bharati campus. In 1948 he went to become director of National Museum of Kathmandu, in Nepal. In the later years he went to Doon valley, where he started an art school but had to discontinue due to the financial shortage.

In 1972 Mukherjee's former student at Santiniketan, filmmaker Satyajit Ray, made a documentary film on him titled "The Inner Eye". The film is an intimate investigation of Mukherjee's creative persona and how he copes with his blindness being a visual artist.[3].

In 1974, he received the Padma Vibhushan award. He was conferred with the Deshikottama by the Visva Bharati University in 1977. He received the Rabindra Puraskar in 1980.

When Binod Behari became totally blind, he always used to say 'Blindness is a new feeling, a new experience, a new state of being. Probably the great artist could overcome even blindness through his art.

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