

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF UNVEILING OF MAHATMA
GANDHI STATUE
Sofia, September 6, 2018**

1. It is an honour for me to unveil the statue of Mahatma Gandhi along with President Radev.
2. Today is a sacred day for the Bulgarian people. You are celebrating your National Unification Day. My good wishes to all of you on this occasion. I am, indeed, grateful to the people of Bulgaria for giving Mahatma Gandhi an eternal home in their beautiful country on this special day.
3. The statue conceived and erected by the eminent Bulgarian sculptor Ivan Rusev is a meaningful tribute to a man who dedicated his entire life to the service of humanity. In these times of strife, reckless violence and wanton destruction, his thoughts and values are ever more relevant.
4. This installation could not have been better timed. In less than a month's time, on 2nd

October, we are launching our worldwide celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birthday. I count on your support to make them a success in Bulgaria.

5. This is an emotional moment for me, as we pay homage to our Father of the Nation and to a global apostle of peace and non-violence. He turned the politically unimaginable into the politically inevitable.
6. His life was a moral force that influenced many. His struggle in South Africa inspired Nelson Mandela to wage his epic battle against apartheid and his doctrine of Satyagraha became the inspiration for the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King in the United States.
7. Mahatma Gandhi had a special connection with Bulgaria. The famous Bulgarian painter, Boris Georgiev, spent considerable time with Gandhiji in his ashram developing a close friendship.
8. On behalf of the Government and people of India and on my own behalf, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to making this wonderful initiative possible. I once again

convey my best wishes for the continued progress and prosperity of the Bulgarian people.

Thank you!