CONCLUSION

Rajendra Prasad emerged to lead the Congress at a juncture when the Congress organization had been crippled by the severe repression during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Rajendra Prasad had by that time won the unflinching confidence and trust of Gandhiji for his abilities. Gandhiji thought that the Presidentship of the Congress could be safely entrusted to Rajendra Prasad. He had emerged as not only the tallest leader in Congress but also had creditably engaged in relief work after the devastating earthquake of Bihar in 1934.  

As President of the Congress he not only ardently advocated and propagated the Gandhian path but also conceptualized new methods and techniques of broadening and strengthening the mass base of the Congress. His works, such as raising of funds for supporting the families of the detenus still inside jails, undertaking an all India tour as a President of the Congress, relief work in the aftermath of the Quetta earth-quake and the Jubilee Celebrations of the Congress, were, undoubtedly innovative mass contact programmes, subtly conceived to broaden the mass base of the Congress. All these steps helped bring Congress back from a crippled state to an organization ready to take up new roles and responsibilities.

He never believed in the efficacy of the methods of the Constitutionalists or the Socialists and hence he tended to reject their perspectives, and continued to hold his faith in the non-violent anti-imperialist struggle as advocated by Gandhiji. He also did not believe in ideas like communal and separate electorates and subsequent development of

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1 S. M. Wasi, President Prasad: A Biography, Calcutta, 1962, p.79.
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communalism acquiring fascist syndromes upset him greatly. He met and had prolonged negotiations with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, President of the Muslim League, during his tenure as Congress President, and sought to resolve the tangle of communal electorates, which to him was the major cause of communalism in the society. He had agreed that the Muslims would receive the same number of seats as the Communal Award had given them. In fact their talks had started with this agreement as the basis. Rajendra Prasad was convinced that there were no other options more reasonable than this in order to counter the growing phenomenon of communalism. Not surprisingly he had no hesitation in accepting this as a solution. But because of a stiff opposition from the Hindu communalists, especially from Bengal and the Punjab, it could not be carried through. This, however, did not mean that by any stretch of imagination he was sympathetic or tolerant towards the Hindu communalists.

In the 1930s, Socialism as an ideology entered the political milieu in India in a big way. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, along with others, had emerged as its strongest proponents. Rajendra Prasad was not a great sympathizer of Socialism except for making a common cause against British imperialism. He certainly did not believe in Marxist doctrine of revolutionary dictatorship. Conditioned by Gandhi, he hated violence even if he did not in theory reject it, and stood for democratic and peaceful methods and not for merely constitutional means. Nehru's sympathy for Socialism was not hidden from Rajendra Prasad, who on his part, acknowledged it quite frankly and gracefully. The

Socialist Party had already come into existence and Nehru, though not a formal member of it, had views very similar to theirs.

He however was aware of the Socialistic urges sweeping the country. It represented, in his opinion, a double urge, "an urge for freedom from political subjugation" from colonial rule as well as an urge for re-ordering the social life "in such a way as to bring about a more just and humane distribution of goods of the earth among all." Therefore, he felt that there was no basic difference between him and many Congress leaders on one hand and Nehru, Subhas and the Socialists on the other regarding the end of the struggle, i.e. freedom from colonialism. This shared normative horizon was sufficient enough not to cause any split within the Congress.

There were differences regarding acceptance of office under the new Reform Act of 1935 in which he played a crucial role in leading the Congress. Although the Congress in 1934 at Bombay had rejected the reforms as such, it had taken no decision on how exactly the rejection was to be expressed. Rajendra Prasad was very clear in this regard. After all the reforms were not going to be abrogated or withdrawn, he had argued, just because the Congress rejected them. The vital question was whether or not the Congress should take part in the elections to be held according to the new constitution and whether or not it should boycott them completely as it did in 1920. On the other hand, supposing it took part in the elections, and secured a majority in a province, should it form a ministry or should it create a deadlock and make the working of the Constitution impossible? The Congress Working Committee decided in favour of contesting the

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elections but did not commit itself at that stage to any decision about office acceptance before the elections were over.

Along with other members of the Working Committee, Rajendra Prasad was not in favour of an immediate decision on this matter. Nehru had ideas contrary to what Rajendra Prasad and other members of the Congress Working Committee held. However, these differences of opinions did not lead to a situation like 1920s when the Swaraj Party and the No-changers separated. In the Working Committee though the majority consisted of the so-called rightist members, the differences did not relate to the fundamentals of the Congress and as such there was no basis for the two sections moving away from each other.

Along with his role in maintaining Congress unity, he also tried to bring persuasion and consensus as a major decision making process, a hallmark of the Congress politics till this day. As a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board he witnessed the corruption during the nomination of the candidates and later group rivalries in favour of different candidates over the leadership of the legislature party. Opposed to groupism and sectarianism, Rajendra Prasad, with limitless patience and knack of arriving at a consensus, brought a sense of common purpose among the leadership particularly in Bihar. This was abundantly evident when he broached a compromise settlement of the agrarian dispute in Bihar.\(^4\) His approach however, was related to his acute understanding of the nature of the colonial state, which would have used any division within the Indian ranks to aggravate the already divisive communal and other politics. He had the

satisfaction that, because of his sagacious approach, the work on the agrarian legislation had almost been completed by November 1939 when the Congress Ministry resigned in Bihar. Similarly, his efforts at looking into the complex and intricate labour issue at Kanpur were very systematic and sympathetic. 5

He also tried to mediate and resolve the Congress crisis in 1939-40 in a bid to maintain party unity. In the event of Subhas Bose’s resignation over the his dispute with Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, in order to arrive at a rapprochement, discussed the matter with Jayaprakash Narayan and the Socialists, as he was against any rupture within the Congress. He was so keen on an amicable settlement and continuance of Subhas Chandra Bose as the President of the Congress that he even suggested postponement of the proposed AICC meeting at Calcutta so that an agreement could have been worked out in the mean time between Subhas Bose and Gandhiji. But the differences were unbridgeable, and though extremely unwilling, Rajendra Prasad had to wear the mantle of Congress President again after Subhas Chandra Bose’s resignation, for the second time since 1934 and very interestingly this time also, it was at the behest of Gandhiji.

On the question of India’s attitude to war, Rajendra Prasad, as the Congress President, made two representations, once along with Jawaharlal Nehru and the second time with Gandhiji and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, to Lord Linlithgow. He insisted that the Government had made the serious mistake of declaring India a belligerent in the war without consultations with the Indians and argued that since the popular ministries were in offices in eleven provinces, the Government should have ascertained their views in this

regard. He was highly dissatisfied at the Viceroy’s response. He thought that even if the declaration of future independence was not present, immediate transfer of certain rights were absolutely necessary to enable the Indian people to extend willing help to Britain in the war efforts. Rajendra Prasad described it as “disappointing but not all surprising”. He said, “There is no room left for anyone to doubt that British policy remains what it has always been and that all talk about democracy and resistance to aggression is not meant to apply to India.” The Working Committee, subsequently on 23 October, rejected the Viceroy’s offer and decided not to support the War. It also called upon the Congress ministries to resign as a protest. Rajendra Prasad was more or less right in thinking that if the Congress ministries had stuck to the office they would have been compelled to do things repugnant to the principles and ideologies of the Congress.

Until now Rajendra Prasad and the leadership, including Gandhiji, had been following a policy of refraining from any action that might have embarrassed the British Government. But its patience was now running out. Gandhiji felt that if this attitude persisted the Congress would become supine and die a slow death. The AICC in September 1940 resolved that it would not “submit to a policy which is a denial of India’s natural right to freedom, which suppresses the free expression of opinion and which would lead to the degradation of her people and their continued enslavement”. It requested Gandhiji “to guide the Congress in the action that should be taken” in the prevailing circumstances. Rajendra Prasad agreed with the decision of the AICC though he was convalescing at Sikar after his illness and had not been able to attend it. Gandhiji came out with a new kind of Satyagraha which was to be on an individual basis and offered by a few selected individuals in every locality. Gandhiji chose Vinoba Bhave, a
Congress worker of exceptional merit, to inaugurate the movement. Vinobha Bhave started the movement on 17 October at the village of Paunar, near Wardha, by delivering an anti-war speech and was arrested on October 21 and sentenced for three months imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru followed him and got arrested. Most of the members of the Working Committee and AICC and ex ministers of the provinces were imprisoned in the process. By the end of 1940 all prominent leaders of the Congress, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad, the then President of the Congress as well as scores of the Congressmen were inside jail. Since the situation was extraordinary, Gandhiji accepted the responsibilities of Congress President and desired Rajendra Prasad to stay with him to assist him in discharging his responsibilities and, therefore, Rajendra Prasad decided to stay mostly at Wardha along with Kripalani.

By May 1941 there were serious communal riots in Bihar. The frenzy of communalism had started taking its toll. Deeply shocked Rajendra Prasad visited there and tried his best to assuage the feelings of both communities. He told people that in a country like India, peopled by diverse communities, the way of non-violence was the only way to maintain peace and tranquility. He felt agonized over the Muslim League’s assertion of being the sole and only authoritative and representative organisation of the Muslims in India, and of Muslims constituting a separate ‘nation’. On the contrary, he retorted, that under Jinnah’s scheme, Jinnah and the Muslim League wanted to subject the Hindus and the non-Muslims to Muslim rule. He did not regard creation of Pakistan a solution of the communal problem as it did not touch the question with regard to Muslim minorities in the so-called Hindu India and Hindu minorities in the so-called Pakistan. He stated that “the problem will not cease to exist because Pakistan has been created any
Conclusion

more than it has ceased to exist because there are in existence today the independent Muslim States of Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey and the Arab States and the independent Hindu State of Nepal.

Meanwhile the Japanese advances had been looming large over the borders in the east and the coastal regions of eastern India, which the British, in Rajendra Prasad’s perception, were unable to tackle. This threat could have been effectively tackled by Indians themselves alone. But the British stubbornness in not allowing a responsible Government had rendered Indians helpless in this matter. The Japanese, whom he abhorred, had meanwhile invaded China and occupied a large part of its territory. To him, Japan was an imperialist power as good as the British themselves, which was anxious to build an empire in the same way as Britain was anxious to retain it. “We certainly did not want to release ourselves from the slavery under the British to go into the bondage under the Japanese”.

The failure of Cripps Mission on the other hand convinced him and the Congress leadership of the British insincerity on any future plans. The British, by not accepting the Congress demands, had outright rejected Indian’s offer of cooperation and therefore, “we had no alternative but to fight the Japanese in our own way” by instilling courage and confidence in the people. “Was it possible for the country to fight a new aggressor when it had failed to liquidate British imperialism or had been unwilling to do anything against it?” - was the question uppermost in Rajendra Prasad’s mind. Trapped in this kind of situation, he very appropriately thought that the best way to deal with the situation was to kindle the flame of freedom more vigorously in the minds of the masses. His thinking was validated later when in April 1942, the Allahabad session of the AICC took a very
strong position that the freedom of the country would not come through the intervention of or an invasion by Japan.

Rajendra Prasad travelled to different parts of Bihar to remove the confusion and fear among the people. In the course of this, he explained and pointed out that a struggle ahead was inevitable with the imperialist powers, both Great Britain and Japan. Instead of relying on Japan's help to secure independence, they should prepare themselves to ward off the menace of Japanese aggression. He also indicated to them about the possibility of an agitation, which would be some sort of Civil Disobedience, a non-violent struggle, but more forceful and intense than any previous ones.

Despite the fact that he could not go Bombay to attend the historic meeting of the AICC because of his indisposition, Rajendra Prasad did not remain idle. Anticipating the possible repercussions of the movement, he minutely chalked out contingency plans in the eventuality of his arrest. As told by Gandhiji, every Congressman had to look upon himself as a leader and, consistent with the principles of ahimsa, had to decide on his own plan of Satyagraha and carry it to its final consummation as this was to be the last phase of "our" freedom struggle. He had formulated it with the idea that if all the leaders were arrested, the people would act according to it.

With the passing of the Quit India resolution in Bombay, Rajendra Prasad who was convalescing at the Sadaqat Ashram at Patna, was arrested on 9th August itself. His arrest roused statewide protests, in which Patna became the centre of activity. People's anger and fury had crossed all the limits, which finally resulted in the famous Secretariat gate flag hoisting incident on 11 August 1942, just two days after his arrest, which marked a heroic sacrifice on the part of the students of Bihar. Subsequently the
movement spread like wild fire and received the undaunted response and participation of the masses. As the jail life was longest this time it was quite monotonous and distressful. To pass the time and also to help the prisoners, Rajendra Prasad would often draft petitions on behalf of the convicted prisoners which would bring to him some amount of comfort. He felt he was able to do something meaningful by providing some amount of relief to the sufferings of the people even during the period of his imprisonment. His mind, however, remained largely engrossed with the thoughts of furthering the struggle against the British. Until now scores of political prisoners never offered defense in the court, which was quite in conformity with the creed of the Congress movements. He did not consider the approach efficacious any more. "In the circumstances," he argued, "the best thing to do was to allow everyone to defend himself." This was a significant departure from the previously sanctioned policy of the Congress. Later Gandhiji also realized its efficacy, and directed that defence be offered in all cases. Rajendra Prasad felt highly "gratified" as Mahatma Gandhi's action had vindicated the fairness of his argument.

The period of monotony and seclusion in jail had rendered him free from hectic public life. He decided therefore, after getting used to it, to engage his mind in the work of reading and writing during this period of forced seclusion. He decided now to challenge the Muslim League's demand of Pakistan by writing a book on the matter and thereby expose the myth and propaganda associated with it. Refuting the two-nation theory in his book, he argued vividly and logically that a separate state of Pakistan as demanded by the League was not in conformity with the history of India witnessed over the centuries nor was it in the interests of the Muslims of India. After finishing 'India
Divided’ he also resumed the work on his autobiography, which he had already started in 1940 and wrote up to the period of the Ramgarh Congress, and the rest he completed at Pilani after his release. The leaders were released on 14 June 1945, purportedly for the ensuing Simla Conference in June and July 1945. Gandhiji, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru represented the Congress, while Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and some others represented the Muslim League. During the entire period of the Conference Rajendra Prasad and other members of the Working Committee stayed over in Simla to be available for guidance of its representatives as well as for consultations among themselves. The Wavell plan, as it was termed, was a non-starter due to the obdurate attitude of the League of being the sole representative of the Muslims and the bureaucracy’s support to such and other claims of the opponents of the Congress. (see Chapter Six). Though Rajendra Prasad’s position was very clear in ‘India Divided’ published around this time. He argued that even if it be assumed that the Musalmans were a separate nation, the solution of Hindu-Muslim problem in India should be sought in the formation of a multi-national state, in which a powerful political union guaranteed cultural autonomy to different national groups. To him the solution to this vexed problem, unlike that of Jinnah, did not lay in the creation of national states which would not only leave the problem of national minorities unresolved but would rather create more new problems. He was sure that Jinnah’s position was ridiculous. The Muslim League and Jinnah apart, he also thought that the British attitude was more responsible because it could easily succumb to the kinds of demands made by the League.

Amidst the twin scenario of a possibility of the British quitting India and an outbreak of a popular upsurge associated with it, the Congress decided to contest the elections
announced on 19 September 1945 by the British Prime Minister, Attlee. Rajendra Prasad wanted the Congress to contest only those seats which it thought it could win both in Muslim and non-Muslim constituencies. For him the participation of the Congress in the elections was only an extension of the Quit India call. Quit India had a broader connotation for him as it implied to mean finally quit Asia. He thought that “If India comes out of the British Empire, no other part of Asia can remain under any European power for any length of time”. The elections the Congress was going to fight was on the “issue of complete Independence and immediate transfer of power to Indians” and hence on the issue of Quit India.

In the elections, the Congress won fifty six seats in the Central Assembly, constituting ninety one percent of the general seats, and 930 seats in all the provinces. The Muslim League on the other hand won all the thirty seats in the Central Assembly and 427 out of 507 Muslim seats in the provinces. Rajendra Prasad viewed the outcomes with a deep sense of distress. The election results were a setback for his entire vision of the existence of a joint Hindustani culture, spanning over eight centuries, which was neither purely Hindu nor purely Muslim that distinguished any Indian, whether Hindu or Muslim from a European or American and from Japanese or Chinese. Nevertheless he maintained his hope that there would not be a divided independent India after the British had quit. Always a strong believer in communal harmony, which he thought had developed historically over centuries in India, he still visualized a united India and rejected the two nation theory. He again carried a campaign on this issue by writing numerous articles which were published in newspapers. He argued, in one such article published in The Hindustan Times on 4 February 1946 that “the personal nationalities of Hindus and Muslims may differ but that does not constitute them into separate states”. In the meantime, the Cabinet Plan came out to solve the issue of
independence. Rajendra Prasad thought that the entire plan was an attempt to please all the parties by conceding something to each. Although the Muslim League’s demand for Pakistan had been rejected as such, the authors of the Plan hoped that the three-tier Constitution, consisting of a Union centre, an intermediate authority representative of groups of contiguous provinces and finally, the provinces themselves, which permitted grouping of provinces and reduced the number of subjects with the Union to the barest minimum, would largely satisfy the Muslim demand of Pakistan. It made possible for the Muslims to secure the advantages of a Pakistan without incurring the dangers inherent in the division of India. It was no wonder he was not entirely satisfied with the plan, as he could foresee in it some inherent problems. The whole of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam had been placed in two groups likely to secede from the Centre, though parts of the Punjab and Bengal were Hindu majority areas and, in Assam the Muslims formed no more than one-third of the population.

It appears that Jinnah, who had never been happy about his commitment to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan took umbrage over Jawaharlal Nehru’s statement that “we are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided to go in to the Constituent Assembly”. It seems that it provided him with an excuse to withdraw the League’s acceptance of the Plan regarding both the interim government as well as the Constituent Assembly on 29 July 1946 and decide to go for Direct Action for the achievement of Pakistan. The League also, like the Congress, seems to have accepted the plan on its own interpretations so as to be in a better position to work for a full Pakistan. It was not surprising, therefore, that a day after the publication of the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the League withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Jinnah declared that the constitutional methods would now be discarded by the League and called for Direct Action to begin on 16 August.
1946. Consequently, the country witnessed its severest communal holocaust in Calcutta and elsewhere.

Rajendra Prasad's reaction was one of exasperation: "This was perhaps the bloodiest carnage witnessed in India since the sacking of Delhi by Nadir Shah, although I am not sure that his armies could really have massacred so many people". Though the situation in the country had taken a serious turn because of the communal frenzy, efforts to form the interim Government continued. Wavell, because the Muslim League had rejected the Mission Plan on 29 July, called upon Nehru to form a representative Government in consultation with Jinnah, in order to deal with the situation in the country. As expected, Nehru could not secure the participation of the League and he finally, in consultation with the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress, submitted a list of 12 members to the Viceroy. The Viceroy accepted the list and the interim Government with Jawaharlal Nehru as Vice-President took office on 2 September 1946. Rajendra Prasad, as a member of the interim Government, had expectations that the ministry would function in a full-fledged manner and not merely as a stopgap arrangement till the League had joined it. He did not desire to join the Cabinet but had to bow before the wishes of the Congress Working Committee. As a minister of Food and Agriculture he was able to tide over the acute crisis of food to a large extent, so much so that not even a single person died of starvation. His experiences in handling the situation strengthened his conviction that an agricultural country like India should be self-sufficient in respect of food. He, therefore, in his brief span of tenure in the ministry, laid great emphasis on the achievement of self sufficiency in food production, which later on the Government of independent India continued.
While the Congress ministers of the interim Government had started functioning, observing the principle of collective responsibility, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, on the other hand was trying to persuade the Muslim League to join the Interim Government. Accordingly he inducted five nominees of the League in the interim Cabinet which finally proved to be the undoing of the interim Government. Rajendra Prasad had felt initially that in the course of the working of the interim Government the Congress and the League would somehow come together, and that it might lead to a final understanding. The Congress-League Government did not start off well and was characterized by the League’s perpetual opposition to the Congress. Immediately on joining the cabinet, the Leaguers said that they had not made any commitment to withdraw their rejection of the May 16 plan and that they did not subscribe to the principle of joint responsibility. They also turned down Jawaharlal Nehru’s invitation to join daily meetings of the Cabinet to discuss all important problems and take decisions jointly. On his part, Wavell also encouraged the Leaguers in their obstructive attitude by referring every major issue to the two sides for opinion rather than insisting on the government functioning as a team. On the other hand the League’s joining of the interim government had failed to ease the communal riots in the country. The Muslim League as yet had also not announced its position on the Constituent Assembly, which was scheduled to meet in December.

Meanwhile, in London also an opinion favourable to the League had built up. Attlee invited the representatives of the Congress, the League and the Sikhs to a London Conference held on 5 December 1946 and made changes in the May 16 plan, on the plea of further clarifications, despite the fact that "the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy had assured the Congress leaders that there would be no further change in that plan. Rajendra
Prasad, beyond all doubts, was convinced that the British Government's position was partisan to the Muslim League as it pressed the Congress to abandon its position and accept an unfavourable interpretation of the plan so that the League could be brought into the Constituent Assembly.

Despite the partisan role of the British Government in the name of bringing the League in to the Constituent Assembly, the League members abstained from the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly however met as scheduled on 9 December 1946 and elected Rajendra Prasad as its permanent President on 11 December.

Rajendra Prasad, who was flabbergasted at the role of the British Government remained undeterred in his resolve and in the Constituent Assembly reiterated the Congress interpretation of the Constituent Assembly. He declared reminding the members that "the Assembly is self-governing, self-determining, independent body with the proceedings of which no outside authority can interfere, and the decisions of which no one else outside it can upset or alter or modify". Later in a statement refuting the allegations of some British statesmen like Churchill and Simon that the Constituent Assembly represented a "body of Hindus" or was a meeting of "caste Hindus" he boldly declared on 20 January 1947 in the Constituent Assembly, that it was a complete sham and travesty of facts. As has been pointed out earlier, the partition of the country along communal lines was an alien notion in his mind and he still believed that League members would join the Constituent Assembly. To help this materialize, he ensured that the Constituent Assembly avoided taking controversial decisions so that the League could have made up its mind favourably to join the Assembly. But contrary to his expectations, the Muslim League not only
declined to reconsider its decision but it also asked the British Government to dissolve the Constituent Assembly.

When Lord Mountbatten was sworn as the new Viceroy of India on 24 March 1947, the Indian political situation was characterized by stalemate and uncertainty coupled with threatening symptoms of a general collapse. The Congress Working Committee had reconciled itself to the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Jawaharlal, Patel and Rajendra Prasad seem to have come to the conclusion that that there was no alternative to at least temporary secession. Even a very loose union seemed out of the question. By April, Rajendra Prasad had was saying that there was nothing wrong in every community getting its share of power and privileges in independent India but it should not be done at the cost of other communities. The creation of Pakistan was not a solution anyway. But the prospect of a civil war threatening the communal harmony was growing more and more. He could not ignore this possibility and in order to avoid this, most unwillingly, on 10 April 1947, he gave his consent to Mountbatten for the partition plan. Subsequently he warned the members of the Constituent Assembly on 28 April that, as the Union might not comprise all the provinces in view of a division of some provinces, they might have to draw up a Constitution based on such a division. Gandhiji, who had until now nurtured the dream of a united India also finally agreed that if the Muslim League were completely intransigent, partition might have to come.

Mountbatten arrived with the firm decision of the British Government to Quit India at the earliest in view of its own considerations. Though Mountbatten’s instructions were to devise a unitary Government for British India based on the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946, he came to the conclusion that the Cabinet Mission framework had become untenable.
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He felt that stage for transfer of power must be set immediately, otherwise the situation would deteriorate leading to chaos and civil war. His perception of the Indian situation as grave and volatile, and consequent inability of the British to manage the situation gracefully any more, appears to be the reason why the British advanced their departure from India from the deadline of June 1948 to 15 August 1947.

Mountbatten, while on the one hand was busy meeting the Indian political leaders between 24 March and 6 May with a view to making the Cabinet Mission Plan acceptable, was also engaged along with his advisers in preparing the ‘Plan Balkan’, envisaging transfer of power to separate provinces or to confederations. Jawaharlal Nehru’s strong objection put an end to it. Mountbatten had to prepare a fresh plan in order to meet Nehru’s objection. One of his advisors V. P. Menon, who thought unity of India was as unrealizable, suggested the division of India into two states and the formation of two governments on the basis of Dominion Status. Mountbatten left for London on 18 May, accompanied by Menon, the author of the new plan, for consultations with the Prime Minister and the Indian Committee of the Cabinet.

Mountbatten returned to India, with the New Plan approved by the British Government, on 31 May and a chain of decisions unfolded. Rajendra Prasad, an alloyed opponent of the division of the country, saw partition as unnatural and incongruous. Even at this juncture, he retained the hope that after some time reunion might become possible as Pakistan discovered the utility of a union with India. But he was now sure that the present dispensation was correct in the given circumstances. The communal violence in the country had made even the most resolute opponent too to accept something so unnatural.
The Indian Independence Bill, which was rendered into an Act on 16 July 1947, envisaged the territorial division of India into two Dominions of India and Pakistan and fixed 15 August 1947 as date for transferring the power to the two. The two Dominions were to have their separate Governor Generals and Legislatures with full authority to make laws unhindered by the British Parliament. The two Constituent Assemblies were given the status of Parliaments for the respective Dominions. Rajendra Prasad, who was destined in his earlier role as the Congress President in 1934 to resurrect the Congress from its crippled state, was now to resurrect the philosophical and social vision of a whole nation to give itself a document which would enshrine the life of the National Movement – its values, vision, dreams and aspirations – into its pages. Rajendra Prasad, who symbolized the quintessential values of the struggle for freedom, its austerity, self-sacrifice, catholicity, toleration and efforts of creating unity of people, faith and visions, was appropriately located as the leader of the Constituent Assembly – an assembly of divergent views, ideologies, aspirations and above all visions. The role of individuals in history quite often though neglected, is not that negligible as the theoreticians of history quite often make it out to be. There are ideologies, there are values, and there are conjunctures, which go into making movements as well as individuals. Defining them by only their “self interest” or circumscribing their activities with their age old primordial and prescriptive identities as the Cambridge historians try and do, is to deny them any agency in shaping their own history and the larger history of humanity. Similarly, locating them within their class bounded ideological parameters, as many Marxist historians have tried to do, is to not allow their individuality and self-ability to transcend those class bounded life worlds.
In the personality of Rajendra Prasad we have seen how an individual could evolve, and play a role which is not necessarily defined by his individual caste, region, locality or even his class. He had the potential, and indeed could transcend all these. And it is here that the significance of the character of the Indian National Movement invites our attention. While the character of the individual can help in transcending any imposed primordial boundedness, the character of a movement too has the inherent space to help this transcendence. It is here that the importance of the study of a symbiotic relation of the Indian National Movement and Rajendra Prasad can be located.