CHAPTER-VI

PATTABHI’S ROLE IN THE STATES PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT
The merger and integration of the Princely States in the Indian Union has been described as "the World's biggest bloodless revolution." The merger was facilitated by the hard work of the people in these Princely States. The Movement in these States, called the States' People's Movement, was led by the All India States' People's Conference. Differences in approach between the Congress and the All India States, People's Conference were got over 'thanks to the enthusiastic support given by leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Azad and Pattabhi Sitaramayya.' Pattabhi's election in July 1936 as the President of the All India States, People's Conference marked the turning point in the history of the States' People's Movement. For the first time, the attitude of the subjects of Indian States was defined when Pattabhi became the President of the Conference. An attempt to evaluate Pattabhi's contribution to the success of the movement is made in the pages that follow.

Before an attempt of a study of the States' People's Movement is made, it is necessary to make a brief reference to the composition and nature of the Indian States.

Historical conditions coupled with accidents were responsible for India's division during the British rule, into British India provinces and Indian States. This division, however unnatural, resulted in the States being isolated from India as a whole. Politically there were, as the Butler Committee Report said, two Indians. The conditions of the People in the Indian States 'under an outmoded administrative structure' were miserable as 'even the elementary functions of a government were not provided.' The States, as Jawaharlal Nehru said, were 'more reactionary and incompetent than almost any place or country.'

The British Government was not oblivious of the conditions obtaining in the Indian States. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 investigated, for the first time, the relations between the States and Paramount Power. The rulers of these States were under an obligation to the Paramount...
Power because the farmer’s existence depended on the latter’s willingness. The British Government did not like political stir in British India to affect the people of these States. The passage of “The Indian States Act” in 1922 confirmed this view. The Act said that anyone who excited ‘disaffection towards the Princess’ would be punished. Any revolt by the people of the States would therefore be crushed by the Princes and the Paramount Power. The British Government was bound to protect the ruler against external attack or internal revolt.

These States, about six hundred in number, varied in size, population and income. The State of Hyderabad, for instance, had a population of fourteen millions and an annual revenue of eight and half crores of rupees. In contrast, the State of Bilbari, “a tiny speck too small for the map,” had a population of twenty seven souls and an annual revenue of eighty rupees. There was, however, little diversity in living conditions in most of these States. The atmosphere, according to the Butler Committee Report, was medieval.  

The Congress Party at its open session at Nagpur in 1920 appealed to all the Prince of Indian States to take immediate steps to establish full responsible government in their States. When the British Government forced the Maharaja of Nabha to abdicate in 1923, the Congress voiced its concern and criticized the Government’s Policy “as being unjust and unconstitutional and establishing a very dangerous precedent for Indian States.” The origins of an organized movement lay in August 1923, under Kelkar’s President ship was to establish an All India States’ Organization to bring about the reforms and to agitate for representative institutions in the States. The following year Kelkar organized a meeting of the ‘subjects of the Indian States’. This meeting of the ‘subjects of the Indians States.’ This meeting synchronized with the Congress session. Presiding over the meeting, Kelkar pointed out that the grievance of the States’ People that the Congress was not taking interest in their affairs was a legitimate grievance. Two resolutions were passed at the meeting—one making an appeal to the princes to establish popular representative institutions in the States and the other was an appeal to
the Congress 'to give proper lead to the people in the Indian State in their endeavors to obtain responsible government.'

In 1927, the Indian States' People's Conference was formed aiming at "responsible government for the people of the Indian States through representative institutions under the aegis of the rulers." On 17-12-1927, the first session of the All India State's People Conference was held at Bombay under the President ship of a South Indian Liberal and an eminent Andhra, Sir Mocherla Ramachandra Rao. More than 1,500 delegates attended this first session of the A.I.S.P.C. The birth of this organization was largely due to the efforts of N.C. Kelkar and A.V. Patwardhan. The A.I.S.P.C claimed that it was to the State's People what the Indian National Congress was to the people of British Indian Provinces. The role of the A.I.S.P.C. was to influence the governments of the States to initiate administrative reforms by the 'force of the collective public opinion of the States.'

Meanwhile, in December 1927, the Butler Committee, also known as the Indian States Committee, was appointed "to inquire into the relationship between the States and the Paramount Power." The members on the Committee were Sir Harcourt Butler, Sydney Peel and W.S. Holdworth. The Committee visited India in January 1928 and the A.I.S.P.C. Submitted a memorandum to it. The Report of the Committee was submitted to the British Parliament on 16-4-1929.

When the question of paramountcy was raised in the Twenties, the British Government made it clear that the sovereignty of the British Crown was supreme and no ruler of an Indian State could claim to negotiate with British Government on an equal footing. Its supremacy rested 'not only upon treaties and engagements,' but existed 'independently of them.' This was also the view of the Butler Committee, which stated that none of the States had ever had international status. The Committee asserted that 'paramountcy must remain paramount,' and held that the Princely States "should not be transferred without their agreement to a relationship with the new government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature."
The Nehru Committee Report of 1928, which welcomed the idea of a federation of Indian States and British India Provinces, provided the former agreed to it, was strongly critical of the Butler Committee Report. Liberals and leaders of the States’ People were also strongly critical of the Butler Committee report. It was pointed out that the Committee’s Report sought to perpetuate autocracy and the ‘mischievous’ recommendations meant to divide India into two parts with a view to help imperialism. The Nehru Committee Report, however, did not go beyond extending its sympathy to the States’ People. The Congress resolution professed sympathy to The States’ People but promised nothing substantially encouraging to them. Public opinion, both in India and the United Kingdom, was not highly favorable to the movement of the States’ People for full responsible government in the States.

It was with a view to obtain sympathy in the United Kingdom for their struggle that a deputation consisting of M. Ram Chandra Rao, G.R. Abhyankar, P.L. Chudgar and A.D. Seth went to the United Kingdom in October 1928. Their mission was “to create opinion in England on the problem of the Indian States.” The deputationsists charged the princes with spending 67% of their revenues on personal pleasures. They said that the Princes had as their object the dismemberment of the Indian States from British India. It was therefore the responsibility of the British Crown to see that this misrule was removed. Not with-standing the fact that the Princes had misrepresented facts in England, the deputationsists did good work and evoked sympathy from several quarters particularly the Labour Party. The deputationsists were aware that at home they needed the active support of the United Kingdom they were asked why the Congress which had been in existence then for over forty years did not take up their question in right earnest. When they replied that “for a long time the British Indian People did not like to intervene in the affairs of the Indian States,” they knew that the answer was unconvincing.

Another eminent Andhra became the President of the A.I.S.P.C.’s second session held in Bombay in May 1929. He was Sir C.Y. Chintamani. The A.I.S.P.C. looked to the Congress for guidance; but the Congress was keen on
keeping itself aloof of the States. Congress leaders like Rajendra Prasad were opposed to Congress involvement in the States and even the resolutions passed by the Congress between 1928 and 1935 seemed to have deliberately ignored the subject of the Indian States. When he became the Congress President in 1929, Nehru lashed at the Princes calling them 'the most curious relics of a bygone age.' He called them Princely States 'Britain's fifth column in India.' But Nehru also felt that the Congress could not go beyond that.

Under Ramananda Chatterjee's President ship the A.I.S.P.C. appealed in 1931 for Fundamental Rights and federal citizenship for the People of the States. At the Congress Working Committee meeting that year, a member moved that the Fundamental Rights were “applicable to all citizens, including States' subjects.” But at Gandhi’s ‘special request,’ it was withdrawn. Gandhi defending the Congress Policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Indian States, said that the States were ‘independent entities under the British law.’ He did not like ‘to destroy’ the status of the Princes who would become ‘trustees of their people.’ He hoped that Princes would change their attitude. “I believe,” said Gandhi, “in conversion of individuals and societies.” The policy of non-intervention was according to Gandhi ‘wise and sound.’ He remarked that ‘the agitation for democratic institutions should sprout from the soil itself and not be transplanted from outside.”

To many, the policy of non-intervention, advocated by Gandhi who was born in the State of Porbandar, looked strange. Indeed, Gandhi shaped the Congress attitude because, as Pattabhi said, he was ‘the none consultant on all States’ matters.’ This policy might have highlighted ‘certain facets of Gandhian strategy.’ But it disappointed the leaders of the A.I.S.P.C. and even irritated ‘the radicals within the Congress particularly the socialists.’ A.V.Patwardhan criticized Gandhi for being ‘evasive.’ The Working Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. meeting under Patwardhan’s President ship resolved that Gandhi’s view of the Constitutional and legal position of the States’ was incorrect. Patwardhan deplored the Congress leaders’ tendency ‘to put the question on the side-lines and to ignore it altogether.’ He said that the dealings of the Congress with the States’ People ‘ought to be open and
overboard.' In spite of the Working Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. passing resolutions seeking Congress interventation, the Congress stated in 1935 that it could exercise ‘moral and friendly influence upon the States.’

Even though the sympathy of the Congress leaders increased, there was no perceptible change in the Congress Policy. The Congress Working Committee in 1935, reiterating its faith in the old policy, said that the limitation of the congress was being forgotten. If Congress President Rajendra Prasad declared the stand unequivocally, Sardar Patel opposed the move for a change in the Congress Policy. Another Congress leader Bhulabhai Desai advised friendliness with the Princes and sought their co-operation. Obviously pricked by the States’ People’s demand for Congress support and the criticisms leveled against Gandhi and the Congress leaders by the radicals, Jawaharlal Nehru asked: “Do they (States’ People) want to be spoon-fed by others?...” The policy of the Congress is criticized. What does the Policy of the State’s people’s conference amount to? It seems to me very feeble and sometimes even reactionary. The to me very feeble and sometimes even reactionary. The Congress policy is not of unconcernedness towards the Congress policy is not of unconcernedness towards the States...” The ‘tug of war between the Congress and the A.I.S.P.C.’ was resolved, ten days later, when Pattabhi assumed the office of the President of the A.I.S.P.C.

Pattabhi’s interest in the affairs of the States’ People was aroused in early 1936 when he was invited by the Servants of the People’s Society, Lahore, to attend their anniversary celebrations. He not only felt that the cause of the States’ People was being ignored by the Congress but was determined to do his best to bring the Congress and the A.I.S.P.C. together. At its fifth session on 18th and 19th of July, 1936 at Karachi, Pattabhi was elected President of the A.I.S.P.C. Hitherto the Presidents of the A.I.S.P.C. Were moderates. For the first time ‘a staunch and prominent leader’ like Pattabhi was elected President of the A.I.S.P.C. Pattabhi’s important role was now “to try to make the organization follow the Congress.” His Presidential Address consisted of two parts—the first an attack on the Indian States and the role of the British in keeping India divided and the second a call to the Congress...
to guide the States' People's struggle. Referring to the latter, i.e., the role of the Congress, he declared that "it should be the equal concern of the Indian National Congress to see that the internal autonomy of the States and the Provinces is equally well-secured for the people of the respective areas.... The Congress is equally the Congress of the whole nation." "A Congressman like me," he said, "is apt to feel that it is only in the measure in which this Conference will follow in the footsteps of the Congress that it will attain success." He wanted equal opportunities to be given to the States along with the Provinces. The States, he pointed out, represented a third in area and over a fourth in population of the whole country. Suggesting that the Congress creed should be binding upon the States' People also, he remarked that the State's People should not ask for 'small mercies.' The movement of the State's People was not, he said, a Depressed Class mission asking for special favours on grounds of 'poverty,' or 'backwardness', or 'ineligibility', or 'incompetence.' Pattabhi envisaged a 'genuine Federation' in which the States and Provinces would join as equals.11

The immediate consequence that followed Pattabhi's bold declaration was that the feelings of the States' People were soothed. His advocacy of the cause of the States' People brought him personal unpopularity among his own colleagues in the Congress. He silenced the vociferous elements like the radicals who poured forth criticism on the Congress and its leaders. But the more significant effect was that his speech 'decided the creed of the movement.' The Karachi session was doubtless the turning point in the history of the movement. Pattabhi's speech pleading for unity between the A.I.S.P.C. and the Congress was hailed as 'a boon' to the freedom struggle. Praising Pattabhi's 'trenchant criticisms of the anomalous position of the States People in the Indian polity' the 'Bombay Chronicle' editorially commented that Pattabhi did not make any exaggeration. The Editorial said that there was 'force in the charge' which Pattabhi made with 'his wonted vigour.'

As this Karachi conference under Pattabhi's President ship, the A.I.S.P.C. Rejected the proposals of the Government of India Act 1935. It was resolved "to obtain recognition of rights of States' People to equal representation with the people of British India on the Constituent Assembly,
when formed.' A resolution was also passed calling upon the Congress to end the policy of non-interference with the internal affairs of the States.\textsuperscript{12}

Pattabhi’s strategy was two-fold. First, he wanted to give a sense of direction to the States’ People’s Movement. Secondly, his idea was that the movement could succeed only when the machinery of the A.I.S.P.C. was geared up and when the agitation was properly organized. He realized that while it was easier to give direction to the movement, it was more difficult to arouse the opinion of the States’ People on a large scale. In his mission to awaken the people of the States, Pattabhi immediately undertook a whirlwind tour of several States. He was the only President in the history of the A.I.S.P.C. to have toured so many States. At some places the Princes were discourteous to Pattabhi. On the whole, the reception he had during his tours was very good. He toured in States where political speeches were prohibited. Everywhere he proclaimed that the Congress and the A.I.S.P.C. were one and the goal was common. His tour of Orissa was an example of the measure of success Pattabhi achieved in his mission within a short time. Pattabhi was elected President of the Orissa States’ People’s Conference and at its session in June 1937, resolutions were passed demanding rights for the States’ People and responsible self-government in all the States. It also demanded direct representation for the States’ People in the Central Legislature. Pattabhi gave a ‘stimulating’ address at this conference. The more important accomplishment was the appointment of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee with H.K. Mahatab as the Chairman. Pattabhi was responsible for the creation of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee which was “to investigate illegalities and acts of repression and to prepare a report thereon.” This Committee’s Report revealed the repression going on in the State of Orissa. Such investigations were made in some other States also. They had a chastening effect on the Government particularly the Political Department.

Strengthening the organization was also undertaken by Pattabhi. He realized that the only popular organization in the States was the Praja Mandal which ‘represented all interests and sections’ and which had ‘roots in the villages.’ He therefore tried to activate them. The Prajamandals, which were
soon integrated, broadened the base and enhanced the activities of the A.I.S.P.C. The Programme of the Prajamandals included 'demand for civil liberties, representative institutions, improvement of the conditions of the peasantry, abolition of forced labour and removal of State monopolies.'

The issuance of an appeal to all the States to fight the Federation proposed by the British Government was another significant step taken by Pattabhi in 1937. It also contained an appeal to the State’s People ‘to create a band of life workers devoted to our cause.’ He followed it up with an appeal to the States not only to reject the proposals of the British Government regarding the Federation but to get ready to work with the Provinces in order to achieve a perfect federal system. Responsible government alone would not solve the problem, he said. “The people of the States,” he declared, “have a double duty laid upon them, namely, the duty of asserting the popular voice in the internal affairs and also the duty of claiming their legitimate share in the federal structure.... We should stand or fall together.”

In his mission of bringing the A.I.S.P.C. and the Congress together, Pattabhi moved a resolution on the Indian States at the Congress session in March 1937. He moved that whenever the world ‘India’ occurred in the Congress Constitution, it should include Indian States as well and the words ‘Indian People’ should include the States’ People. It was evident that the top Congress leaders were not enthusiastic about the Congressmen taking active interest in the affairs of the States. Patel, in an obvious reference to Pattabhi, said that “neo-Congressmen and others were misusing the Congress name.” Pattabhi refuted the allegation regarding the ‘misuse’ of the Congress name. But he said that the Congress was taking greater interest in the affairs of the States. The fact, he observed, that the Congress was regularly discussing the affairs of the States was a proof of the growing interest.

For the States’ People’s Movement, the Congress success in the 1937 elections to the Provincial legislatures, was another shot in the arm. Enthused by the success of the Congress, the States’ People stepped up their agitation for civil liberties and responsible government. The progressive steps taken by the A.I.S.P.C. under Pattabhi’s leadership, forced the Congress to
change its position. As Hodson remarked, ‘the principle of impotent non-intervention’ was ‘getting transmuted into the practice of active involvement.’ “By his close study of the problem, vigilant watch of the day-to-day happenings in the States, by his wide publicity and wearisome tours in the States,” Pattabhi brought about a better understanding between the A.I.S.P.C. and the Congress it was then that Patel and other leaders stepped in.15

Meanwhile, political activity through the Congress intensified in the States after the historic Karachi session of the A.I.S.P.C. in July 1936. Meetings processes ions and arrests were the features of such political activity in many States like Mysore, Cochin, Travancore and Orissa. The members of the Orissa States’ People’s Conference were charged with preaching disaffection among the people and the Orissa Government banned agitators who did not belong to the State of Orissa. It was by implication a reference to Pattabhi, who got an enquiry conducted into the illegalities committed by the rulers in Orissa. The Nizam’s Government of Hyderabad State was more direct in its approach. It asked Pattabhi in June 1938 not to visit Hyderabad as it would lead to “the danger of breach of peace.” In Hyderabad State also, the movement gained ground. The States’ People’s Conference published, at the instance of Pattabhi a booklet called ‘A peep into Hyderabad’ revealing the maladministration of the State. Pattabhi made a vigorous plea for civil liberty and liberty of religious worship for the people of Hyderabad. Referring to the reforms proposed by the State of Hyderabad, Pattabhi said that they would be just ‘window-dressing.’ The year 1938 was described as a turning point in the history of freedom struggle in Hyderabad. Thanks to the ‘inspiration from the Congress, there provincial conferences working separately under the names of Andhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra, joined together and Hyderabad State Congress’ was born in that year.16

Political consciousness during these two years 1936-38 rapidly grew in the States. The movement for civil liberties and responsible self-government spread to all States, big and small. The Prajamandals in some States succeeded in forcing the rulers to introduce ‘some sort of Constitutional Reforms’ in their respective States.
The Nava sari Convention of the A.I.S.P.C. held in February 1938 under Pattabhi's President ship was another tactical move made by Pattabhi. It was held earlier than the Haripura Congress session. The propose of the Nava sari Convention was "to take a fresh look at the problem" and to study the Congress Working Committee's resolution which said that Indian States should form their own political organizations. The Convention was yet another attempt to convert the Congress, which was caught in a mood of hesitation, to the side of the State's People. At this Convention, some State's People 'wanted to take the Congress to task for not giving the State's People their due.' But thanks to the sympathetic and tactful speech of Pattabhi, the draft resolution was couched in moderate language. Pattabhi appealed to the Princes to take their people into confidence and help their lot. He asked the State's People to develop self-reliance and not to depend on outsiders for money and men. He said that there could be no federation without the States. He reminded the dissatisfied elements of the A.I.S.P.C. that the Congress and the State's People must be closely linked. The draft resolution, which was prepared by Pattabhi, stated that 'Purna Swaraj' or complete independence which was the objective of the Congress, was for the whole of India including the States. It said that the Congress should accept that kind of federation in which the States would participate 'as free units enjoying the measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India.' Speaking on the resolution Pattabhi asked the Congress to change its attitude and help the people whole-heartedly. The British Government, he said, had no right to support a ruler who was denying to his own subjects the very rights that were established throughout British India. That was not the meaning of paramountcy, he remarked. It was at this Convention that Pattabhi's idea of starting an English journal bore fruit. The fortnightly 'States People' saw light soon. The Nava sari Convention left a deep impression on the States' People as well as the Congress. It was "a good exercise in political organization and formulation of public opinion." The greater triumph for Pattabhi lay in the fact that the resolution prepared by him at Nava sari 'was accepted by the Congress and moved as an official resolution,' at the crucial Haripura session of the Congress.
The years 1938 and 1939 were regarded as the most significant years in the history of the Indian States. An ‘amazing awakening’ took place among the State’s People from ‘Kashmir in the North to Travancore in the South and from Saurashtra in the west to Orissa in the East.’ After the Nava sari Convention, Pattabhi raised the question of Indian States at the Congress Working Committees should function under supervision of the Congress Working Committee was accepted by the Working Committee and later by the Congress session at Haripura. This stand, however, was not approved by some senior Congressmen.18

In his Presidential Address at the Congress session of Haripura, Subhas Bose hailed the ‘unprecedented awakening’ of the people of the Indian states. Bose pleaded for a revision of the Congress attitude towards the States. He even encouraged individual Congressmen taking part in the struggle of the Indian States. “Let us not forget they need our sympathy and help,” appealed Bose to the Congressmen. At the Subjects Committee meeting, here, Pattabhi vigorously pleaded for Congress supervision and delegation of greater powers to the committees in the States. At the general session of the Congress, Pattabhi stated that “for the first time a comradeship between the two organizations” (Congress and A.I.S.P.C.) was achieved. He said that the Congress should drive home the advantage and seek to establish a genuine federation. He asked the Congressmen not to let down the State’s People at this critical juncture. The Haripura session was a triumph for Pattabhi. Speaking after Pattabhi, Jairamdas Daulatraam said that it was the ‘miscalled Right Wing’ of the Congress that placed before the Congress this ‘revolutionary’ policy of involvement in Indian States.

The Congress realized that the time had come for it to make a change in its policy. The Congress policy now aimed at active participation in the struggle of the State’s People. It wanted to extend support to the Prajamandals. The Congress declared that it stood for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as in the rest of India and considered the States as integral parts of India. It accepted the A.I.S.P.C.’s stand that Purna
Swaraj or complete independence was the objective of the Congress for the whole of India including the Indian States. The Congress thus changed its policy. It also accepted the goal of the A.I.S.P.C. With regard to federation. Concurring with the A.I.S.P.C.'s view that in the proposed federation, the States and the Provinces should participate as free units enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom, the Congress said that it was its 'right and privilege to work for the attainment' of this objective. As Jawaharlal Nehru said, the Haripura resolution was a landmark in the evolution of Congress policy. This change in Congress strategy, as R.L. Handa observed, was brought about by the efforts of the State's People under Pattabhi's leadership.

The Congress Working Committee began to give positive support to the State's People after the Haripura session. It called for an increased identification with the State’s People in view of the 'awakening of the people of the Indian States in many parts of the Country.' It congratulated States like Mansa, Wala and Ramdurg for 'their brave and non-violent struggle.' In a mood of introspection it state that "the contrast between the unrest of today and the inertia of yesterday is striking."19

In late 1938, Gandhi came out openly in support of the new Congress stand. In January 1939, Gandhi said that "the movement for liberty within the States is entering a new stage." Gandhi declared that in view of the 'all-round awakening among the People of the States' the policy of non-intervention would mean cowardice. He approved of the Congress decision to give active support to the States' People. Explaining the reasons for his changed attitude, Gandhi said that conditions had changed in the States and his decision was dictated by the prevailing conditions. Patel like Gandhi was impressed by 'this astonishing awakening' among the people of the Indian States. Praising the A.I.S.P.C.'s 'good work' Nehru too realized that there was 'a mighty awakening among the People of the States.' Nehru felt that the States were coming rapidly into line with the rest of India and promised Congress intervention whenever necessary. Pattabhi succeeded within three years of his assumption of the office of the President of the A.I.S.P.C., in getting the approval of the Congress leadership for the policy of intervention in the struggle of the States' People.
Organizationally, too, the year 1938 saw the A.I.S.P.C. in better shape. The establishment of a larger number of Congress Committees strengthened the A.I.S.P.C. The purpose of the Committees was to "explore and expose the truth of all complaints and grievances, personal and impersonal and prepare the States for the meantime to strengthen the hands of the Central organization whose duty is to co-ordinate them all and construct a case against any Prince or State." The State's People were free to form primary and elective Congress Committees in accordance with the Congress Construction. Pattabhi divided the States into fourteen major groups. They were: (1) Kashmir, (2) Punjab, (3) Rajaputana, (4) Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand, (5) Gwalior, (6) Indore, (7) Gujarat, (8) Kathiawar, (9) Maharashtra (10) Mysore, Karnataka (11) Travancore, (12) Coachin, (13) Hyderabad and (14) Orissa. Each of these States was to have a State Congress Committee. The quota of these State's Congress Committees on the A.I.C.C. would be the same as that of British Indian Provinces. These Committees were to deal directly with the Congress Working Committee. Another important organizational reform effected at the instance of Pattabhi was the creation of Regional Councils to guide and control the Prajamandals. The establishment of Research Bureau and the creation of correspondence, information and publicity were also due to Pattabhi's initiative.

The journal of the A.I.S.P.C., called the 'States' People,' was launched on Gandhi's birthday, October 2 in the year 1938. The journal's popularity and steady rise were mainly due to Pattabhi's organizational and journalistic abilities. Founded originally as a monthly, it soon became a fortnightly. Thought Pattabhi tried to convert it into a Weekly in 1940, he could not succeed. He took over the editorship again in 1940 "at friends request." When Pattabhi was in jail in 1941, it became quite a task for the A.I.S.P.C. to run the journal as regularly and as carefully, as was being done earlier. When Pattabhi made a request from jail that K.B. Menon should take over the editorship of the 'States' People,' the latter wrote in reply that it would then be "a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous." "Who," wrote Menon to Pattabhi, "has your wealth of information, richness of experience and fluency of style?" Nehru also was very particular that the 'States' People' should
continue under Pattabhi's editorship. The journal was an effective vehicle of propaganda for the State's People. Later, it was resolved at a meeting of the A.I.S.P.C. Standing Committee that Pattabhi be requested to write the history of the States' People's Movement in two parts, i.e., from 1927-1936 and from 1936-1948. This, however, did not materialize.

Financially, too Pattabhi strove to achieve self-sufficiency for the A.I.S.P.C. He was of much help to the A.I.S.P.C.—particularly in 1941 when the organization ran out of funds. Under his leadership, the movement gained momentum because the organization was strengthened. There was unprecedented activity on the popular front too in a vast number of States. But a thorn in the flesh of the movement was the rivalry between the Prajamandals and the Congress Committees in the States. This problem engaged the attention of the leaders during the years that followed.

In order to secure for the A.I.S.P.C. an enhanced stature, Pattabhi desired that Nehru should take over the Presidentship of the A.I.S.P.C. Pattabhi, accordingly, requested Nehru to agree to become the President in 1939. When Nehru took over the Presidentship at the Ludhiana session of the A.I.S.P.C. in February 1939, "the battle was already half-won." Nehru commended the work of the A.I.S.P.C. which "has wisely decided to work in the closest co-operation with the Congress and under its guidance." He complimented the A.I.S.P.C. For its "good work in the past." A resolution welcoming the "great awakening among the people of the States all over India...." Was passed at the Ludhiana session under Nehru's chairmanship.

Pattabhi advocated territorial readjustment in the Indian States. He suggested that small States should be merged with the adjoining big States. If that was not possible, they could be merged with the neighboring British Indian territory. Pattabhi worked in this direction during the integration of the Indian States in the Indian Union. The Ludhiana session of the A.I.S.P.C. 'recognized the urgency of the problem' of the small States and 'recommended that all States with a population below 20 lakhs or an annual revenue of less than 50 lakhs of rupees should amalgamate with neighboring Provinces.'21 With
Nehru being the President of the A.I.S.P.C. there was now greater understanding between the Congress and the A.I.S.P.C. The latter pledged loyalty to the mother organization. Sheik Abdullah of Kashmir began to assist the A.I.S.P.C. Abdullah helped the A.I.S.P.C. in making some more organizational reforms. The Constitution of the A.I.S.P.C. was redrafted. The object of the A.I.S.P.C. was unequivocally declared. It was “the attainment of full responsible government by the people of the States as integral parts of free and federated India by all legitimate and peaceful means.”

In 1939, at a meeting of the A.I.S.P.C.’s Standing Committee attended by Gandhi a sub-committee consisting of Nehru, Pattabhi and others was appointed to bring about greater contact and co-operation between the Standing Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. and the Congress Working Committee. Nehru and Pattabhi were chosen to represent the standing Committee before the Congress Working Committee. The following year, the Congress Working Committee permitted the States’ delegates to be given representation in the Congress organization. In 1939, at the Tripuri session, the Congress adopted the resolution moved by Rajendra Prasad that in view of the awakening that had been taking place, there was to be a removal of the restraint which the Congress had been taking place, there was to be a removal of the restraint which the Congress had placed upon itself. This resolution, as Urmila Phadnis observed, ‘bridged the gulf between the Indian National Congress and the A.I.S.P.C.’ and led to a gradual identification of the latter with the former. At the Convention of the All India States’ Workers in July 1940, Pattabhi ‘impressed on the State’s People that the only way of getting independence was by determined organization.’ Emboldened by the Congress support the A.I.S.P.C. that year declared that the People of the state’s wave no Parties’ to the old treaties. They did not consider themselves bound by them.

As Vice-president of the A.I.S.P.C., Pattabhi continued to be very active in the affairs of the States. In fact, he shouldered the responsibility of the President several times between 1939 and 1948. Nehru’s imprisonment and other preoccupations prevented him from devoting much of his time for the work of the A.I.S.P.C. Later when Interim Government was formed, Nehru
was again unable to attend to much of the work. Thus Pattabhi’s association with the A.I.S.P.C. was active throughout. But when Pattabhi and Nehru were both in jail, the A.I.S.P.C.’s work was much hampered. The years of War were for the States’ People ‘years of incubation,’ according to Pattabhi. The States were preparing for their ‘great destiny.’ There was during this period better understanding between the State and the British India Provinces. The bigger States, in particular, came closer to British India ‘by participating in the deliberations and discussions of various councils and government department.’

Pattabhi continued his tours of Indian States in 1941 and 1942, except for the period during which he was in jail. During his tour of Travancore, he deplored the arrests of leaders like Pattom Thanu Pillai and Ramachandran. There were occasions when Gandhi addressed the A.I.S.P.C. with Pattabhi in the Chair.

During the visit of the Cripps’ Mission in 1942, a deputation on behalf of the A.I.S.P.C. was arranged to meet Sir Stafford Cripps. On Nehru’s suggestion, Pattabhi was asked to represent the States. An interesting thirty-minute talk between Cripps and Pattabhi took place. Pattabhi complemented Cripps on his knowledge of the States in India. Cripps quipped that his daughters knew even better. Pattabhi during the conversation told Cripps that he was “not able to live up to his reputation.” The memorandum highlighted the political, social and economic problems of the people in the States. It stressed the need for merger of smaller States with the bigger States. Cripps replied: “I agree with Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya that independent existence for smaller States in future Federation is impossible and that it will be a matter of political convenience to join the smaller States with other Indian States or British Indian Provinces. When Britain concedes freedom to India, Paramountcy will disappear.” Cripps, said Pattabhi, had the resourcefulness of a lawyer. An incident that took place during the visit of the Cripps’s Mission was narrated by Pattabhi. On April 1, 1942, Cripps’s received a deputation of the Princes represented by the Jam Sahib of Jamnagar, the Maharaja of Bikaner and the Nawb of Bhopal. According to Pattabhi, the Princes wanted Cripps to sign the script of the conversation that took place. Cripps refused to sign it, saying: ‘.... The British are
quitting India, if you want anything, go to Gandhi, go to Jawaharlal, don’t bother me.” The princes asked him how they could go to Congress leaders when all along they were prohibited from meeting them. The Princes reported the matter to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow who cabled it to Churchill. Churchill asked for an immediate recall of the Cripps who left “India, himself disappointed and leaving the Indians highly disappointed.”

The contention of the Standing Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. was that the Cripps’s Mission ignored the wishes of the ninety million People of the States. The Mission, said the Standing Committee, had no right to admit the ‘right of the Rulers’ to come in the way of the States People’s freedom. The mission denied the State’s people the right of self-determination. As representative of the Standing Committee, Pattabhi asked the Cripps Mission what right the Princes had to nominate the State’s representatives to the proposed Constitution-making body. If the Princes were allowed nominate the representatives it would be to the advantage of the British government and the Princes. Such a situation, argued the Standing Committee, would clash with nationalistic aspirations. Cripps stated that in a vast majority of the Indian States representative institutions had not developed. Therefore, he said, the suggestion for representatives to be nominated was made. The Cripps proposals guaranteed protection to the princes. They were destined to fail because they “cut right across the nationalist conception of a single United India.” The A.I.S.P.C. took the opportunity to agitate more vigorously for the right of self-determination for the State’s People. It felt that the organization should be further strengthened to achieve the goal. This was evidenced by the fact that by 1945 there were eighty one State’s organizations, 578 elected delegates and a total of 644 delegates in the States. This State organization was strengthened by the many district and local organizations that had sprung up.

As Chairman of the Reorganization Committee, Pattabhi helped the A.I.S.P.C. In effecting further reorganization in 1945. Among the recommendations made by this Committee were that the Standing Committee should consist of 21 members and that the general Council’s members should be elected by the Regional Councils at the ratio of one representative for every one million
people. Pattabhi also headed the Committee appointed to reorganize the Central Office of the A.I.S.P.C.

In spite of increasing political activity in their States, most of the Princes failed to read the signs of the times. They hardly tried to take their people into confidence. The British Government, notwithstanding its eagerness to protect the Princes, admitted that economic conditions in the States showed little improvement.

Pattabhi suggested to the A.I.S.P.C. that the scheme of reforms demanded by the State’s People would have to be recast “so as to answer modern and progressive conditions of responsible government.” The standing Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. resolved in 1945 that any Constitution-Making body should have as its members from the States, representatives elected on a wide franchise. The A.I.S.P.C. meeting at Udaipur in 1945 declared that “Constitutional changes could only be acceptable if they were based on full responsible government in States as integral parts of free India.” The Udaipur session of the A.I.S.P.C. was an important session after the Ludhiana session of 1939.

The Cabinet Mission said in its memorandum of May 12, 1946 paramountcy would lapse. It stated that paramountcy ‘could neither be retained by the British, nor transferred to the new government.’ This was totally unacceptable to the Congress and the nationalists. Prof. Keith opined that the Stages’ People should get the rights of the people in the Provinces. “There is, in fact,” said Prof. Keith, “no answer to Mahatma Gandhi’s claim that the Princes are bound to follow the crown in its transfer of authority to the people.” B.R. Ambedkar argued that paramountcy would be inherited by independent India. He said that even “the British Parliament had no right to pass any law abrogating paramountcy…”

The India Annual Register commented that Pattabhi, was the first ‘to smell a rat in the British plan.’ Pattabhi said that if the Cabinet Mission plan were implemented, there would be not just one Pakistan but several ‘sthans,’ asserting their right to separate existence. He feared that it would
lead to Balkanisation. Later, moving a resolution on the Indian States at the Congress at the Congress session at Meerut in November 1946, Pattabhi said that he had seen a confidential document indicating a move to form a confederation of 562 Indian States in order to negotiate with the future Central Government. Pattabhi warned the Princes against such a move or merger without taking the consent of the people. He declared that the States’ People would not accept the negotiating committee unless their representatives were included in it. Pattabhi expressed satisfaction over the fact that the A.I.S.P.C. and the Congress were moving in the same direction. He piloted a resolution which the A.I.S.P.C. passed on the Cabinet Mission plan.

Moving the resolution on the Indian States, at the AICC in 1947, Pattabhi said that before the end of June 1947 the majority of the States would have to come in to the Constituent Assembly. He said that the claims of Hyderabad and Travancore to be independent would not be considered. He said that the people of Travancore would give a fitting reply to their Dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. Pattabhi challenged the Princes and the Dewans to hold referendum in their States. “We shall abide by their result,” he declared. Pattabhi along with Nehru and Patel was involved in severe clashes with C.P. Ramaswami Iyer during the States’ Committee meetings, over the question of States’ entry into the Constituent Assembly. Arguing that the final decision would rest with the States, Ramaswami Iyer, accused the Congress of being totalitarian. Pattabhi retorted that there was no democratic institution in Travancore of which Ramaswami Iyer was the Dewan. Pattabhi again appealed to the Princes to take their people into confidence. “Let us inaugurate a new era. It will be a fine gesture,” he said. He declared that Princes and Zamindars “cannot be made an additional caste of rulers in Free India.”

On December 21,1946 the Constituent Assembly set up the State’s Committee to negotiate with a similar body which the Chamber of Princes had appointed. The first meeting of this Committee met under Pattabhi’s Chairmanship on 5-2-1947. The State’s Committee held that its counterpart was constituted only in consultation with the Princes. Even the Chamber of Princes, said the Committee, did not represent all the Princes. In spite of such
pronouncements, the States Committee realized that what was important was that the States should join the Constituent Assembly. As Nehru said, the Princes had to be met half-way. A sub-committee consisting of members from both the negotiating committees was constituted. This sub-committee was entrusted with the task of laying out procedure for selecting the representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and Pattabhi represented State’s Committee while Sultan Ahmed and V.T. Krishnamachari represented the Committee appointed by the Chamber of Princes. This sub-committee’s proposal that fifty per cent of the State’s representatives should be elected and that efforts should be made to increase the elected quota, was accepted. Pattabhi said that if the Princes agreed to such an increase of the elected quota, it would be good for the Princes as well as their people. Nehru commended the 50:50 principle. It was also suggested that where suitable legislative machinery was not available in the State’s the Regional Councils and Prajamandals would help in the election of the representatives. The State’s Committee’s it could secure an arrangement on the method of distribution of the 93 seats in the Constituent Assembly allotted to the States. As Pattabhi said, ‘a new era of friendliness and friendship was inaugurated.’ The efforts of Pattabhi and N.Gopalaswamy Ayyangar in part particular helped the committee arrive at a solution.

Latter, a Congress sub-committee consisting of Pattabhi, Rajendra Prasad and Shankerrao Deo was appointed to determine the award regarding Privy Purses. The Committee made a formula known as the ‘Deccan States Formula,’ under which the rulers were to get Privy Purses at the rate of 15% on the first five lakhs of the average annual revenue; 10% on the next five lakhs and $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ on revenue above ten lakhs. It did not fix a ceiling; but it provided a minimum of Rs. 50,000/- per annum. These rates were accepted by eight of the Deccan State’s rulers and were subsequently approved Pattabhi congratulated Patel on having negotiated and settled ‘almost the minimum Privy Purse’ even though Purses. V.P. Menon remarked that the ‘Deccan States Formula’ erred on the liberal side. Pattabhi however, depended the privy Purse’s and said, that, they were not a burden on the administration. Nor were they high. He thought that they were just enough for the maintenance of the Princes. The Jagirdars said
Pattabhi, were the real burden. Once they were abolished the Privy Purses mattered little, he said. Patel and V.P. Menon were also sympathetic towards the Princes. The former felt that the Privy Purse was a small price paid for the ‘bloodless revolution which has affected the destinies of millions of our peoples.’ Both of them felt that the guarantees given in respect of Privy Purses should be fully implemented.29

As stated earlier, Nehru could not devote much time to the A.I.S.P.C. Owing to the formation of the Interim Government. Pattabhi was designated Working President of the A.I.S.P.C. In that capacity, Pattabhi carried on the work begun in 1936. In some States, the rulers curbed the activities of the A.I.S.P.C. in order to put down the agitation by the State’s people. Pattabhi warned such rulers that the pomp of royalty and the pride of person should make room for the sovereignty of the people. He said the rulers should give up all excuses and pretensions and transfer power to their people. Presiding over the Gwalior session of the A.I.S.P.C. in April 1947, Pattabhi resented the British Government’s attempts to ignore the people. The A.I.S.P.C. said that the British government should not treat the State’s People “as chattels to be disposed of without any reference to them.” Elsewhere, when asked what the people should do in the event of the Princes refusing to transfer power, Pattabhi said that the only solution was revolt by the State’s People. This, however, was not the solution really contemplated by Pattabhi. It was perhaps a casual utterance. In his letter to K.C. Reddy in February 1948, Pattabhi wrote: “expect where the Princes have been refractory and aggressive we have been trying to save ourselves the last minute fight.” The efforts Pattabhi made during his numerous tours around that time to bring about compromise and adjustment confirm the preceding statement of Pattabhi.

An event of some significance was the withdrawal of Pattabhi in favour of Sheikh Abdullah for the President ship of the A.I.S.P.C. in 1947. It has already been mentioned that Sheikh Abdullah’s interest in the A.I.S.P.C. Increased after Nehru became its President in 1939. Nehru wanted the sheikh to become the President in 1947. In support of the Sheikh, Nehru put forward two reasons—that the Sheikh was Vice-President before and that he ‘became the
symbol of freedom not only for the people of Kashmir but also for the people
of other States.' According to Pattabhi, Nehru sent a messenger to Pattabhi
with a request that the latter should withdraw his candidacy. But Pattabhi
expressed unwillingness to do so. Nehru, who did not exchange a word with
Pattabhi for over two years, drove to Pattabhi’s house and had a talk with him
for over forty-five minutes. Obviously, over whelmed by Nehru’s rare display of
warmth, Pattabhi agreed to step down. Pattabhi and his supporters withdrew
from the field making it unanimous for the Sheikh. Pattabhi, however,
cautioned Nehru against the Sheikh. Nehru proposed that Pattabhi should be the
Working President of the A.I.S.P.C. He went out of the way to compliment
Pattabhi. Nehru said that the A.I.S.P.C.’s growth ‘in intensity’ was largely due
to Pattabhi’s efforts and ability. Nehru praised Pattabhi’s ‘energy and
enthusiasm’ in carrying out the work for the betterment of 90 million people
in India. Pattabhi, according to Nehru, had become ‘even more than before a
strong pillar of the State’s People’s Organisation.’ As President of the
A.I.S.P.C., Pattabhi had in general, harmonious relations was that Nehru. A
reason for such smooth relations was that Pattabhi reserved “the questions
relating to Kashmir and Hyderabad to his (Nehru’s) exclusive advice.”

As Patel was tackling the problem of integration, Pattabhi and
the A.I.S.P.C. were of much help to the newly-formed Indian Government. Patel
wanted that India’s hard-earned freedom should not ‘disappear through the
State’s door.’ It was India’s good fortune that Patel, the realist, as Lord
Mountbatten said, was in charge of the new States Department. Mountbatten
himself and V.P. Menon along with Patel constituted a tower of strength to
Indian during those crucial year’s. Almost of equal strength was the A.I.S.P.C.
During that time.

As V.P. Menon said, the ‘weakest link in the Princely chain
was the existence of a large number of small States.’ Ever since 1936, Pattabhi
worked for a solution to the problem of small States. As already mentioned, he
suggested a merger of the small States either in the big States, or the
neighboring British India Provinces. That was what he emphasized at the
Gwalior session of the A.I.S.P.C. In 1947. Formation of such unions as the
Deccan States Union, he said, could be ideal for the small States. To work for this cause, Pattabhi undertook several tours in small States and entered into correspondence with the leaders, rulers and the State’s Department. The case of Jind was an example in this regard. Jind was a small State in Eastern Punjab. While the Maharajah of Jind was waiting for Patel’s decision on Jind’s future, the State Congress there launched an agitation. Demonstrations were on the increase. Pattabhi went to Jind and addressed a meeting of 25,000 people. He succeeded in convincing the State Congress to give up the agitation. The Prime Minister of Jind, in turn, agreed to release all political leaders arrested earlier. He advised the Minister of States, Government of India to arrange a plebiscite in Jind. Accordingly, the opinion of the people was taken at a poll and Jind decided to join East Punjab. This act of Pattabhi evoked the administration of the leaders of Jind and of other small States also. Pattabhi and the A.I.S.P.C. were similarly helpful to the Maharajah of Bundi in selecting candidates for the Constituent Assembly. Pattabhi addressed over 50,000 people in Patiala in spite of the disturbances created by the ruler’s supporters there in February 1948. The representatives of Kalsia and Kishangarh in Rajasthan also expressed their ‘gratitude’ to Pattabhi for his ‘sound advice’ and assistance. Pattabhi and Pratap Singh Kairon were said to have been very helpful in solving the problems of the Punjab States. They were particularly helpful in trouble-shooting. Through their efforts, they assuaged the feelings of the agitating people in these States. Pattabhi also assisted in the merger of the Punjab Hills States into Himachal Pradesh. As Sheikh Abdullah, President of A.I.S.P.C. observed, a large number of small States were merged in the adjoining provinces or grouped together to form in the adjoining provinces or grouped together to form suitable administrative units. There was in the States ‘considerable advance towards freedom and consolidation.’ In the process of integration of the Princely States, 216 States were merged in Provinces in which they were situated or in neighbouring Provinces and 310 States were consolidated into six unions. Twenty one Punjab Hill States were grouped into Himachal Pradesh. Five States were made Chief Commissioner’s Provinces individually. Pattabhi headed the Committee appointed by the Constituent Assembly in July 1947 for the purpose of recommending constitutional changes in these five centrally administered areas.
The Committee's recommendations such as adoption of the Principle of responsible government in these States and appointment of Lieutenant-Governors were carried out by the Government of India.

Pattabhi also headed a sub-committee appointed by Standing Committee of the A.I.S.P.C. in 1948 'to deal with any urgent problem arising in the States and to offer full cooperation to the Government of India in the task of consolidating and establishing democracy in the States.' The A.I.S.P.C.'s goal was the establishment of responsible government in the States. Nehru said that there must be the same measure of democratic freedom in the States as in the rest of India. "You cannot," said Nehru, "yoke a bullock and a swift horse." This objective was uppermost in the mind of Pattabhi as he toured the States to arouse public opinion in favour of full responsible government. He issued appeals to the State's People to protect their organizations such as regional Councils and to work for the purpose of generating in their organizations 'that quiet strength and sustained confidence which are so necessary for them in their final struggle for emancipation from all autocracy and misrule.' Otherwise, he said, that it might not be possible for most of the States to survive the shock of Indian independence.' Pattabhi intensified his efforts after independence because of increasing feuds between the Congress Committees and Prajamandals. The unhelpful role of the Political Department of the Government of India was another reason for the A.I.S.P.C. intensifying its efforts to iron out differences between the two bodies.32

By the end of 1948, it was felt that the A.I.S.P.C. had no longer any necessity to function as a separate organization. An unaccomplished task of Pattabhi was that a building he had contemplated for the A.I.S.P.C. could not be acquired. He had planned to secure a building that would be "a symbol of unity of the people of the Provinces and the States on the one hand and of the Princes and the people on the other." He wanted it to grow into an institution "for training ministers and administrators and engage itself upon the task dear alike to the Princes and the people." He had once moved a resolution which was also passed by the Standing Committee, that the India League, London, be
requested to open an office and a bureau in London to assist and promote the objectives of the A.I.S.P.C. This also did not materialize. In the matter of publicity, however, Pattabhi was instrumental in the A.I.S.P.C. Successfully running a journal. He was also instrumental in creating the Central Publicity Department in the A.I.S.P.C.'s Central office at Delhi. This department was created ‘to publish and publicize useful material regarding happenings in the States.’

The All India State's People's Conference was a source of inestimable strength to Patel as he set himself to the task of integrating India. It was said that Patel could hardly have accomplished it but for the support he received from it. Under Pattabhi's leadership, the A.I.S.P.C. gained strength and stature. It worked "as a safety Valve at a time when there was despair and helplessness for the State's People...." It can be said that Pattabhi prepared the ground for Patel. The latter's political triumph was but the logical conclusion of a process set in motion by Pattabhi. It might seem ironical that Pattabhi played two different roles—that of the champion of division of India into linguistic provinces and also that of an integrationist. He found nothing conflicting or contradictory in these two roles.