ASSE’s New India Chapter

Rick Pollock, Jitu Patel, R. Bharadwaj, R. Karuppasamy and M. Vijay Kumar were all involved in the development and launch of ASSE’s new India Chapter.

In this interview, Rick Pollock, Jitu Patel, R. Bharadwaj, R. Karuppasamy and M. Vijay Kumar discuss why the chapter was created and how the chapter will meet its goals as well as the needs of its membership.

IPS: Please provide a brief description of your professional backgrounds and of your involvement with ASSE’s new India Chapter.

RP: As a safety professional, I specialize in manufacturing safety, adult education, safety performance improvement, educational technology and management systems. I am president of CLMI safety training and ASSE.

JP: I am an international senior consultant with more than 45 years’ SH&E experience with chemical and oil and gas corporations. I am a professional member of ASSE as well as a founding member and three times’ president of ASSE’s Middle East Chapter. I am also a founder of ASSE’s Philippines Chapter and a member of the International Practice Specialty’s advisory committee.

RB: I am a mechanical engineer by qualification. I hold a Diploma in Industrial Safety and a Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Management.

I have more than 5 years’ experience in health, safety and environmental functions with different industries, such as automobile ancillary manufacturing, hydrocarbon construction projects, etc. As an India Chapter officer, I will serve as treasurer cum assistant secretary.

MVK: I work as general manager, environmental health and safety, for Reliance Infrastructure Ltd. I have been involved in the safety aspects of industry since my first job in BHEL, where I was responsible for the creation and implementation of corporate quality and safety assurance procedures for projects in India. As a consultant, I have been further specialized in chemical process and handling safety and am presently involved with TMA Institute of Management Studies, where I have established a student chapter. My first interaction with Ashok Garlapati made me join ASSE in 2008.

IPS: Why was the India Chapter created? What needs will this new chapter meet?

RP: India has experienced rapid economic expansion and with this growth, it has recognized the importance of providing a safe workplace for employees and of protecting physical assets and the environment. Similar in many ways to the U.S. and the global economy, India has many large multinational corporations and is a major center for electronics and auto manufacturing, oil and gas production, shipping and distribution, textiles and synthetics production, and many other industries in demand.

India has numerous national safety regulations dating back to 1948. Though these regulations provide a solid foundation for safety and establish minimum requirements by which employers are expected to manage their businesses, India lacks a strong infrastructure for educating the SH&E
professionals necessary to ensure the needed level of safety.

As ASSE established the Middle East and Kuwait chapters, Indian safety professionals working in those countries primarily in the oil and gas industry became aware of ASSE and its educational opportunities and standards involvement. Based on this interest, ASSE reached out to our members and other safety professionals in India. Through ASSE’s new Ambassador Program, Jitu Patel and Ashok Garlapati met with Indian safety professionals to see if they were interested in forming a chapter or section. Interest was immediate, primarily due to the educational assistance ASSE can provide as India continues to develop its infrastructure and to grow as a global provider of quality products. Within 6 months of this initial outreach, the founders had drafted their petition, assembled the required number of members and were ready to establish the new India Chapter.

**JP**: India, a fast-growing economy with rapid growth in industrialization, required a global body like ASSE to pull together safety professionals and to work together toward developing a safer work environment.

The formation of the India Chapter advances the goal to increase awareness of safety around the world. It engages people to reduce the loss of life and property and to sustain the environment.

The India Chapter intends to bring together India’s growing population of SH&E professionals and hundreds of students currently enrolled in India’s SH&E university programs. The chapter will provide members of the safety community with opportunities to network, share best practices, develop professional knowledge and skills and advance the profession while protecting people, property and the environment. Affiliation and networking within ASSE will be beneficial to its members in India and around the world.

Over the years, the business market in India has been a destination for commercial endeavors and investments, and it has experienced high technological and economic growth. India’s economy is expected to grow at approximately 7% to 8% in 2012. With this growth comes greater SH&E need in the country’s many expanding industries, including oil and gas, automobile manufacturing and maintenance, electricity, nuclear energy, construction, information technology, medical and healthcare, agriculture and traffic safety. In particular, Indian SH&E professionals focus on areas, such as agriculture, with the nation now ranking second in worldwide farm output. India also has the world’s largest tractor industry. In addition, the existence of poor, undeveloped rural roads in many areas of India have brought transportation safety to the forefront of SH&E initiatives.

We have seen organizations improve their safety culture in measurable ways when all employees strive to create an injury-free workplace. The India Chapter’s presence will further provide advanced health and safety resources, standards and state-of-the-art technologies for Indian SH&E professionals and the corporate world.

Among India’s greatest occupational safety challenges is convincing corporate management about the value of a safe workplace and that safety translates into profitability. Management needs to introduce a greater culture of safety into business. We must convince management of how valuable safety is and of its key role in their success. I believe the establishment of the India Chapter further expands the Society’s mission to advance the profession and to enhance SH&E around the world.

**RK**: The India Chapter’s core objective is to create awareness about safety management in all sectors in India and to train safety professionals to address safety challenges and solve them with comprehensive safety management systems with a regulatory and implementa- tion perspective. The chapter will cover safety training and technology certifications, safety management systems for human factors integration, hazard minimization, examination of workplace safety issues, research for practical metrics to measure safety issues and potential additional strategic safety routes necessary for safety.

**RB**: India by nature is expanding its scope of industrialization at a rapid pace due to the availability of adequate resources, including its workforce. With more collaboration
Safety awareness to all walks of life and types of organizations has made safety management a potential area of research. While considerable development has been done on the topics of safety management and safety culture/climate in developed countries, such work is not reported in India.

with global markets, there is a need to harness the learning of SH&E with the collective efforts of various professionals related to this domain.

**MVK:** India has diverse cultures and needs to promote safety culture at work and to develop a safe work environment. There is a need for more professionalism and training in many industries.

**IPS:** What are the India Chapter’s vision and goals (both short-term and long-term)?

**RP:** It was obvious from discussions with those involved that the chapter intends to grow, providing SH&E support throughout the country. Chapter leaders know that they first must establish a solid foundation of members held together by a strong organizational foundation. Like the beginning of any other new chapter or section, they will work to establish their way of serving members. Regular chapter technical meetings will be held, a chapter website will be created, new members will be recruited and the chapter will reach out to the community and region to offer its assistance in protecting people, property and the environment.

**JP:** Two goals are to have participation from major industries and to promote safety culture enhancement across industries and the Society at large.

Key goals to achieve during the first term include:

1) Stepping up our efforts to promote the chapter by reaching all SH&E professionals throughout India for increased and wider networking with a view to provide them help that could prove mutually beneficial.

2) Working to engage the younger generation in the Society by establishing as many student sections in cooperation with local universities and colleges with support from local industry and government sectors.

3) Encouraging stronger participation and greater support for chapter activities from the country’s major industries and contracting companies.

4) Endorsing and possibly partnering with various SH&E events, including safety campaigns organized by well-known professional societies, industries and government or educational organizations throughout India.

5) Conducting periodical technical meetings and professional developmental symposiums, seminars, workshops and conferences to share and exchange knowledge and ideas in the area of SH&E with chapter members and other interested professionals.

6) Establishing focused committees to help with the planning and execution of future activities and tasks.

**RB:** As a maiden venture, the India Chapter will focus on developing its overall establishment through professional contributions through a participatory approach from various safety professionals, which will facilitate enhancement in the safety profession.

**MVK:** To impart a more professional approach toward safety, conduct training and create a safety culture both in the long and short term.

**IPS:** What projects does the India Chapter plan to tackle first?

**JP:** The chapter would like to start planning for technical SH&E symposia and an ASSE India Professional Development Conference. It would also like to conduct CSP and ASP preparation workshops for Indian safety professionals and to support needy students in safety engineering.

**RK:** Globalization and economic reforms warrant Indian industries to adopt better safety management to stay competitive in international markets. A survey of Indian industries revealed that application of quality integrated safety management practices have enabled us to gain better control over accidents and injuries, to improve production and employee satisfaction and to thus strengthen the level of competitiveness. However, most do not follow standards and absence of SH&E professionals is also seen.

The following projects are critical to improve employee safety:

• A safety awareness campaign to target industries and engineering educational institutions across the country.

• Organizing regional-level student competitions and national-level safety modeling competitions with regional winners.

• Organizing short-term training for safety professionals region-wise, etc.

**RB:** The India Chapter had a good start with a prelaunch technical symposium as well as technical sessions during the chapter inauguration. The office now has various professionals with varying domain expertise as well as definite tasks to accomplish. Our prime objective will focus on knowledge-sharing and professional development in SH&E.

**MVK:** Creating awareness among industries to look for an exclusive professional body with a wider knowledge base as their partner in industrial safety and professional development.

**IPS:** Which industry sectors in India are in need of better safety,
health environmental (SH&E) practices and education, and how will the India Chapter work to fill these gaps?

**RP:** Many of the initial members are SH&E professionals in oil and gas, construction and project management, and manufacturing. All are in need of technical assistance through additional availability of safety professionals. However, as was stated during the ceremony, India is a country that lacks not only broad technical safety assistance, but the culture for safety among middle- and small-sized employers. Here is where ASSE members feel they can make a difference as they raise the level of safety practices among all organizations regardless of size. In talking with the founders, ASSE is represented well. These individuals are trained and experienced SH&E professionals. ASSE and the India Chapter are in good hands and off to a good start.

**JP:** Industry sectors in need of better SH&E practices and education include construction, transportation, metal and minerals, manufacturing, oil and gas, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

**RK:** Safety awareness to all walks of life and types of organizations has made safety management a potential area of research. While considerable development has been done on the topics of safety management and safety culture/climate in developed countries, such work is not reported in India. It is observed that industrial accidents, associated financial losses and compensation claims eat away at a considerable portion of the profit earned by organizations. This is common in Indian industries, such as construction, aviation, petrochemical, pharmaceuticals, shipping etc. Conducting workshops with key groups in various cities and organizing conference and technical symposiums will make a positive impact and will fill the gaps in Indian industries.

**RB:** Knowledge-sharing is the prime requisite to sustain effective SH&E implementation. Various SH&E competence-building programs in industries like construction, road safety, mining, chemical process, manufacturing, etc. are also needed.

**MVK:** Mostly small-scale industries and chemicals, minerals manufacturing, construction and all heavy industries.

**IPS:** In what ways will the India Chapter support ASSE’s global initiatives?

**RP:** Society Goal 5 states that “ASSE will foster and sustain a global community among SH&E professionals.” With the formation of the new India Chapter, ASSE will be better able to reach safety professionals in the region and to begin to offer educational opportunities that help new members grow professionally. Through the chapter formation and the education that will take place at regular meetings and other events, ASSE will be better able to sustain and grow this new community of members.

**JP:** It will share global goals and initiatives with members and will work out a plan to replicate them locally.

**RB:** We must maintain a database and give members executable action points.

**MVK:** To share the knowledge of working with diverse cultures and to bring professionalism to all areas of safety.

**IPS:** How will the India Chapter work to recruit new chapter members as well as new ASSE members?

**RP:** Through regular chapter meetings, outreach to other organizations, word of mouth to other safety professionals in the region, and by providing a high quality educational experience for all who become involved.

**JP:** The chapter will use its website, member contacts and safety newsletters to spread the word to industries and will make presentations to students and fellow SH&E professionals on why they should join ASSE.

**RK:** In India, apart from metropolitan cities, several industrial clustering cities also exist. A membership campaign can be initiated with safety professionals from local associations and forums at the state level in general and at the city level in particular. The India Chapter may organize short-term courses for such professionals. We may request that existing members introduce another three safety professionals per person in their area or industry.

**RB:** We will recruit new members through members’ networks, our website and during various programs.

**MVK:** Initially, by personal contacts and by developing student sections in all possible associates and institutions, then later by recognition of the India Chapter.

**IPS:** What were some highlights of the India Chapter’s inauguration?
ceremony held from March 3-4, 2012?

**RP:** This was a major event that projected a great sense of pride and accomplishment. The founding leaders planned a ceremony of significance beginning with the “lighting of the lamp,” providing light at the dawning of the new beginning. The lamp had five wicks and was surrounded by pink and yellow rose pedals. Next, those assembled took the National Anthem of India. With many dignitaries in attendance and new chapter officers, speeches by the chapter officers, including:

- R. Bharadwaj’s safety pledge and K.N. Sen’s welcome address.
- Lighting of the inaugural lamp.
- Installation ceremony of the chapter officers.
- Presentation of the ASSE-India Chapter charter.
- Rick Pollock’s formal inauguration of the India Chapter’s website.

**RB:** Important dignitaries and speakers graced the occasion, including:

- Jitu Patel, ASSE CoMRA Global Committee Member; Senior Board Advisor, ASSE Arizona Chapter; ASSE Fellow; Principal Senior Consultant, AcuTech
- M.R. Shanker, Executive Vice President, Hydrocarbon Construction and Pipelines, Larsen & Toubro Limited
- R.K. Elangovan, Director In-Charge (Safety), Regional Labor Institute, Chennai
- Rick Pollock, ASSE President
- Fred Fortman, ASSE Executive Director
- Michael Warren, Construction HSE Manager, Cairn India; ASSE member
- Ashok Garlapati, ASSE International Practice Specialty Administrator; Senior HSE Specialist (E&PD), Kuwait Oil Company, State of Kuwait

**MVK:** The presence of Rick Pollock, ASSE President, and Fred Fortman, ASSE Executive Director, who took time to interact with all delegates and taskforce members. Jitu Patel and Ashok Garlapati encouraged all taskforce members to stay on task. K.N. Sen and R. Karuppasamy provided excellent coordination.

**IPS:** How will the India Chapter work with ASSE’s other international chapters to achieve its mission and goals?

**RP:** It is ASSE’s mission to be a global association of SH&E professionals dedicated to the advancement of its members and the profession through education and advocacy. “The India Chapter will work closely with the Kuwait Chapter and Region 6 to establish a solid foundation.” From this base, the India Chapter will provide educational opportunities for our members and interested SH&E professionals throughout the region.” We will advocate for good safety practices everywhere and will grow the importance of safety professionals and the safety profession.

**JP:** The India Chapter will work with ASSE’s Middle East and Arizona Chapters, with my help, as well as with the other Region 6 chapters, including the Kuwait Chapter.

**RK:** The chapter will:

- Find participants and speakers for their conferences and symposiums.
- Prepare and send newsletters periodically to all members in this region.
- Share safety-related articles and materials (e-resources).
- Serve as a resource for workshops and training when any expert from the India Chapter visits other countries in Region 6.
- Develop member-exchange and student-exchange programs.

**RB:** In proper coordination, meetings and discussions through any of the latest electronic media.

**MVK:** To cooperate with other chapters in professional develop-
ment and to share knowledge and resources.

**IPS:** Does the India Chapter plan to establish a scholarship for SH&E students?

**RP:** Yes. In fact, initial pledges have been offered, and the requirements for establishing a Foundation in India are currently under review.

**JP:** Yes, the Foundation Chair has already been appointed, and so far two donors have pledged to support the Foundation.

**RK:** Attempting to do a safety management course in India posed a challenge. Identifying reputed institutions and using their faculty and infrastructure may be expensive for students who are bright but have poor financial support. So offering a scholarship will encourage SH&E students to choose a long-term career in safety without hurdles.

Suggested criteria include:

- Competition may be organized for prospective students.
- A national-level exam may be initiated to identify the optimal person. Indirectly, it will facilitate a massive advertisement for ASSE.
- Nominations from India Chapter officers may be encouraged.

**RB:** Yes, and this should be focused as long-term goal after initial stabilization.

**MVK:** The scholarship initiatives, big or small, will boost students’ participation and will ultimately result in the chapter’s success.

My personal vision and mission is to see the India Chapter be the most popular and most recognized professionally developed association in the region.

**Rick Pollock, CSP,** is an experienced safety professional specializing in manufacturing safety, adult education, safety performance improvement, educational technology and management systems. He is president of CLMI Safety Training and ASSE. In his role at CLMI, Pollock has produced more than 500 education courses used worldwide, managed numerous performance improvement projects and developed safety management software solutions.

His professional experience includes corporate director of SH&E at Medtronic, managing a staff of 50+ professionals worldwide addressing biomedical manufacturing exposures; corporate director of safety and risk for Clark Oil and Refining, with responsibilities for overall risk control and property protection for three refineries and 22 terminals; and other safety management positions in consumer goods, heavy manufacturing and insurance loss control. He holds a degree in Safety from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he received the Distinguished Alumni Award.

**Jitu Patel** is a senior health and safety consultant with 45+ years of SH&E experience in the chemical, oil and gas industries. For 21 years, he provided professional services to Aramco, an oil and gas-producing and processing corporation in Saudi Arabia.

Four global members participated in creating and delivering the webinar, during which they shared their experiences in creating ASSE chapters in Latin America, the Middle East, Egypt and India. Those four members were Rixio Medina, CSP; Anibal Franco, Safety Professionals and the Latino Workforce Chair; Yassin Darwish, Ph.D., CSP; and Ashok Garlapati, CSP, QEP, CMIOSH. We hope this platform will allow global best practice-sharing and will help create a sense of community and engagement in ASSE.

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Creating International Chapters

A SSE’s Membership staff recorded the webinar, “Best Practice: Creating ASSE International Chapters/Sections,” to connect established global chapter leaders and creators with ASSE global members who have expressed an interest in creating a global chapter or section in their country. The webinar is intended to explain the process of creating a chapter/section and to facilitate best practice-sharing among global members. It is to be used when more members are interested in this process.

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For 15 years, he provided technical training and conducted research in fire/explosions, health and environmental issues at a chemical manufacturing company for the safe processing, storage and distribution of products such as chlorine, bromine, halogenated hydrocarbons, anti-knock lead additives for gasoline, hydrogen, caustics and acids.

He has prepared many safety audit reports and has developed and conducted fire and safety seminars. He has also assisted in the development of safety engineering standards for Middle East countries. In addition, his work has been featured in several international publications, and he has presented at international conferences.

Patel is actively involved in ASSE’s Middle East and Arizona Chapters. He holds a B.S. in Chemistry and Physics and an M.Phil in energy and fuel science from Leeds University, U.K.

**R. Bharadwaj** is treasurer of ASSE’s India Chapter.

**R. Karuppasamy** is director of the Management Institute in India.

**M. Vijay Kumar** is general manager, environmental health and safety, for Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and secretary of ASSE’s India Chapter.

Global Chapters

| Middle East Chapter (Region 2) |
| Egypt Chapter (Region 5) |
| India Chapter (Region 6) |
| Kuwait Chapter (Region 6) |
| Nigeria Chapter (Region 7) |