Continuous learning is not a choice for professionals today; it is a way of life.

Education is a process that goes on throughout one's lifetime. It includes both learning and unlearning. The term 'continuous learning' is derived from the ability of humans to learn from one situation and apply that to the next one. One may express this in a more formalised way as 'the need for imbibing a defined set of knowledge and skills through a formal educational system. But, in a rapidly changing techno-economic environment, or what one would like to call as a 'knowledge economy', one does not have the choice 'to stop formal learning'.

Desire-based job

Careers are no longer confined to national boundaries. There are opportunities today to switch from a 'need' based job to a 'desire' based job. The above factors make continuous learning exciting and fruitful. Even within organisations horizontal movement helps both the individual and the organisation, when the existing employee is qualified and fits into new roles.

The possibility of retaining existing employees and giving them appropriate roles are some of the benefits for organisations, when they participate in the continuous learning of employees.

Opportunities beyond workplace

The objective of learning is not restricted to employment. The benefits of learning after getting employed are diverse and include improved chances of growth within the organisation as much as creating newer opportunities outside. A large number of Open and Distance Learning providers have come up with highly innovative programmes to cater to the varying needs of learners. So have several others who have used the online mode to impart such learning, a lot of which is free and open. The Internet has revolutionised the way people learn. A case in point is 'Coursera' which till now has been able to reach out to a global learner base for many unique programmes. However, for most aspiring learners, the route to continuous learning is still the open and distance learning system or various other institutions which provide short certification programmes.

'Continuous learning' is assisted by the social media and social network which allows learning to take place on a sharing and collaborative basis. Even the cell phone has contributed to the process of continuous learning.

A workforce that is in possession of knowledge that is relevant and topical, is the need of the world of business that is changing at the speed of light.

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http://www.thehindu.com/features/education/careers/lifelong-learning/article5204403.ece

Beyond recognising a good story, having all round knowledge and looking for facts, today's journalists need to communicate their stories effectively using various mass media tools.

In the olden days, a newsroom conjured up an image of a fading, old building, with a fan crankily spinning overhead in a hall with stacks of paper scattered on the desk as the editorial staff struggled to meet the deadline. The look of the newsroom may have changed, but the enthusiasm that comes with doing an interesting story has not. This is what keeps journalists on the go.

"You have to be prepared for long hours and always being on the job. That isn't a bad thing, at all — it's very exciting when you're reporting a big, breaking news story. I never minded having to go into the newsroom suddenly on a day off when some major event occurred. It was a pleasure, and it was always me that phoned the editor, not the other way round," says Mark Austin, visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, Bangalore.

Defining a scribe

More often than not, a reporter is driven to cover issues which excite him, apart from the usual stories he is assigned to do on a day-to-day basis. "Curiosity is one of the defining traits of a good journalist, who is expected to take the initiative to find out more about the subject he/she is writing about," says YP Rajesh, Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*, New Delhi. VK Raghunathan, Associate Professor at Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, adds that a journalist must be able to gauge whether the information provided by the source is factual or not.

What are the other elements a journalist must have in mind when he sets out to do a story? David Baines, Senior Lecturer at New Castle University, U.K. says, "The ability to recognise a good story and narrate it in different forums is what characterises a good journalist."

A different approach renders a distinct viewpoint to a story. Ashok Malik, Delhi-based journalist and commentator, says, "A reporter is not a stenographer. He has to make an assessment, but this is different from giving an opinion. There is a thin line between the two — you have to be mindful of that — which is something that comes with the job."

Integrity of a journalist plays a crucial role in how a story is communicated to the masses. "Journalists have a strong role in influencing the culture of an organisation, especially addressing some of its approaches to doing stories, some of which may be ruining journalism. It won't happen unless individual journalists take a stand," says Professor Baines.

Journalism programmes are offered in a number of universities around the world. Yet many journalists do not have a degree in this field. Earlier this year, Press Council of India chairman Markendey Katju commented that journalists should have professional degrees. So, what is the role of journalism schools and to what extent do they groom students? "Preparing someone to be able to be a broker of information does require a particular skill. Journalism programmes are useful in this regard. An institution should not limit itself to providing vocational skills, but also include within its ambit critical and analytical approaches to doing journalism, with an

understanding of how journalism and the media fit into society and their roles in society. Colleges should be able to give journalists an understanding of the industry that keeps pace with the changes in journalism," says Professor Baines.

Journalism today

Journalists' roles have evolved in the past half century, from writing stories on a typewriter to editing on a computer; and from jotting down everything on paper to having recording devices at their disposal. Recent years have seen the burgeoning of journals and newer platforms of mass communication.

In fact, with the onslaught of technology and other inventions associated with the Internet, getting acquainted with application development and other new media tools is necessitated.

This makes it all the more important for journalists to not only have all round knowledge, but to also update their skills in the face of changes in technology that have made sweeping changes to business models of newspapers. This is evidenced by the shutdown of print editions of some of the leading international journals, as well as the recent sale of *The Washington Post* to Amazon founder Jeffrey Bezos. Newsroom integration is another of the major consequences of these changes. In mid-2013, Network 18 said that they would set up an integrated newsroom, consisting of its leading broadcast and digital news outlets in the business media space.

Professor Austin says, "Data mining is one area that will expand hugely. It will be indispensable for all journalists to have digital skills. The Indian print media is taking baby steps in this direction. All the newspapers have websites, and most are optimised for handheld devices. The shift away from paper to online will accelerate, and journalists who have multimedia skills will have an advantage over those who gambled that print will be around for another decade or two."

Many different genres in journalism have been explored in recent decades. Malik says, "Today's journalists come from diverse backgrounds both in terms of intellectual disciplines as well as socio-economic backgrounds. Earlier, reportage was limited to government, politics and Parliament. There was hardly any coverage of development, environment and business, which are widely written about today."

Business news is given significant weightage in the leading dailies, which in addition to having a business segment in the main edition bring out a separate business newspaper.

Gaurav Choudhary, deputy chief of bureau, business, *Hindustan Times*, says, "In the coming years, journalists who have the ability to understand business and at the same time straddle the world of politics, government and Parliament will do better than those who only know politics."

Sifting news

Journalism is not confined to the print medium or political news reporting. It is open-ended — evident with the availability of a wide array of journals, journalism reviews, news websites,

coverage of specialised beats such as science, health and environment; and opportunities for freelancers, photo journalists and columnists who write on topics of their expertise.

What does a lay person choose to read/watch in this era of information explosion? Rajesh says, "Most news that appears in newspapers is already known to the reader because of easy access to television and the Internet. So, how do you add value and make the report or subject look different? Investigative journalism is what distinguishes a newspaper or television channel — when news has become a commodity. For instance, you could look at farmer deaths in Maharashtra. You can probe the issue to find out the cause by going to the village, see how other people are coping, what's being done to address the larger problem."

Nagpur-based journalist with *The Telegraph*, Jaideep Hardikar says that journalists should start slowly and work towards building a foundation. "It may take several years to understand your field. You should take out time to explore the country, interact with people — this will help you understand the social structure of society," he says.

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http://www.thehindu.com/features/education/careers/what-makes-a-journalist/article5204423.ece

Sneha Tanda team of UAS-Dharwad is educating farmers on best practices

One of special attractions at the Krishi Mela (agriculture fair) held at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad recently was the stall set up by Sneha Tanda, a team of undergraduate students of the university.

Various simple technologies helping the farmers to get rid of problems in their work were displayed at the stall. It was quite interesting to see the students explaining to the farmers the benefits of the technologies in pure colloquial language.

Sneha Tanda is an initiative by UAS-Dharwad to engage the students in transfer of technology. Its main objective is to collect data on the simple and cost-effective farm technologies developed by experts as well as progressive farmers and reach them to the larger farming community. "The team focuses on transfer of simple technologies not costing above Rs. 10,000 and which have already been successfully implemented by progressive farmers. Even the working models are explained to the farmers," said Kiran P. Dhareshwar, team member.

It is a voluntary group of 25 students of the first year of Bachelor of Science (Agriculture) course. Each year a fresh team comprising first year students is formed. The junior members run the activities of the team and the seniors guide them in designing and implementing the activities. Team members are selected based on personal interest, capacity to understand and explain technologies and the ability to communicate in the local dialect with the farmers.

Mohan Yadravi and Vinayak K. said the team members collect information about the technologies through field work. They go to the progressive farmers who had developed and implemented the simple technologies and gather information about them.

Even the women members of Sneha Tanda said they have been immensely benefited. It helps them receive the much required field knowledge and exposure which is not available in classroom activities. Students involved in Sneha Tanda activities will have an edge over others in matters of practical knowledge and grassroot communication skill when they complete the course after four year, said Manasa Kulkarni, Gangubai, Shruti S. and Shweta, team members.
Alumni role

The team also welcomes participation of alumni in its activities. The postgraduate and Ph.D. students who had been Sneha Tanda members will continue their association with the team. They play a key role in guiding the team members in developing the models, improving the communication skills, editing write-ups and other such work.

For instance, Anand Yeligar assisted them in setting up stalls and improving the models developed by the team members. Similarly, the team also involves the alumni who have been into agricultural activities after studies. Shivan Gouda, who runs an agriclinic in Belgaum, conducted awareness programmes on setting up agriclinics.

Community Radio

The team also broadcasts various programmes disseminating knowledge and information benefiting the farmers through the UAS-Dharwad's Krishi community radio 90.4 MHz. Krishi community radio station was set up in 2007 with the primary objective of reaching the farmers to address the issue of transfer of technologies and solving their problems.

As Sneha Tanda's motto corroborates with the community radio's objectives, it has been incorporated into the radio's activities. One-hour programmes are aired on selected themes on different occasions.

Books and models

The team is also into book publication. Every year it publishes books in Kannada which contain information on cost-effective technologies helping the farmers. For instance, the book titled 'Krishi Chetana' published this year has information on 16 farm technologies. It is given to the farmers at subsidised prices with financial assistance from the university. The books are distributed mainly on the occasion of Krishi Mela to be held in every September. There is good demand from the farming community for this book. The team has also developed over 150 farm technology models which are popular among the farmers.

Decennial celebrations

Sneha Tanda has emerged as a trendsetter in involving agricultural science students in the process of transfer of technology. This model concept was started by the then students Ullas Kumar and late Ramesh Pawar in 2004. It is going to complete 10 years of fruitful service to the farming community and has emerged as a role model for others.

http://www.thehindu.com/features/education/college-and-university/technology-transfer-the-rural-way/article5204890.ece

What are your children learning from their toys? Toys and play are as important as food and rest for a child, Sudarshan Khanna, India's pioneer in traditional toy design.

If gadgets are all children consider as toys these days, we may be in for some serious trouble. Children have much to learn from toys, from the experience of playing with them, and a lack of good toys is giving rise to children who do not know how to deal with their surroundings. Some toys from North East India, made of bamboo, can be played only if the child is fragile and gentle — their purpose is for a child to learn to be gentle. "But today's toys push consumerism — it involves fast play and getting rid of them," says Sudarshan Khanna.

The founder-chairperson of Toys for Tomorrow, an international vision action forum, Khanna also says it is a myth that only technological toys are popular. "It is not true. Barbie is a sociological toy, but it's not more profound than the traditional dancing doll!"

Sudarshan Khanna and his daughter Surabhi Khanna, a toy designer in her own right, were recently in Bangalore at Kavade, the traditional games store, to conduct a workshop for children and adults in toy-making.

The real problem, says Khanna, is that children have not been given perspective. "They have only been given this mono-vision of mass-produced toys from China and elsewhere." Sudarshan is democratic, and does not dismiss anything that's new just because it is new. Neither is he all-embracing of all that is old, simply because it is our culture. "The question is 'Do people need heritage/old ideas in today's time? Have kids been given opportunities for both or have they been loaded in favour of one and loaded against another? If heritage is presented with perspective, and then you give them technology…" he trails of hoping the connect sinks in. "You need to redesign, upgrade, have new thematics. There's no denying digital media is powerful, and we should respect it. This with that is good. I'm not against hi-tech systems." He stresses again that knowledge we create today is the heritage of tomorrow. "You have to contemporise or modernise heritage. Unfortunately, our traditional craftsman is not trained for it; so the customer doesn't like what he makes."

What then, is a good toy? "A toy must bring out norms that are not communicated through talk — can you bring out compassion? Non-verbal communication? A child should be able to experience it. Most traditional toys have this quality," says Khanna. For a child, a toy is not 'pastime'. "But in case of hi-tech toys it's like junk food — they don't get much out of it," says this past president of the International Toy Research Association.

The purpose of experiential play is not pastime — which is the focus of toys today — but to imbibe a value system. "New-age toys are mostly irrelevant; the aspect of social norms is missing. For a child, play is as important as food and rest. But as a society we are completely ignoring it. And I emphasise, this is not the case in Scandinavian countries."

Educationists are now finding that the actual use of skills and manipulation, and the use of hands, is fundamental for a child's development. "Because of this inability to use motor skills, kids cannot connect with surroundings; we are disconnected with society," he emphasises.

Khanna has been associated with the National Institute of Design (NID) for over 35 years now, and has set up the post graduate programme in toy design and development. His next batch of students will be the 12 to graduate. The students who attend this course are diverse — engineers, artists, people from cities and small towns — who go back to work either with NGOs, or digital or board game companies. It's mostly the government that supports such a programme, not the toy-manufacturing industry, he points out.

"There was a proposal that government schools must allocate an amount for toys sourced from indigenous communities; then you're able to bring in knowledge about indigenous art and craft like Kondapalli and Chennapatna at the school level." Such programmes, of course, remain on paper. Teachers need to be made interested and confident to use simple materials to bring in creative and innovative activities, he says. "In European and Scandinavian countries there is a realisation that the fundamental way of education is experiential. In our society we still haven't reached there."

http://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/toying-with-ideas/article5207102.ece

Leadership

A vast scholarly literature spanning more than six decades exists on the subject of leadership. The characteristics of effective leaders have been pored over, cataloged and debated. Among them, one trait stands out as axiomatic: Effective leaders take responsibility for problems around them; they do not shift blame to others. As Winston Churchill put it, "The price of greatness is responsibility."

Indeed, studies show that taking responsibility is one of the key traits people expect from a leader. In one 2006 study, two researchers at the University of Kent in England conducted a laboratory experiment in which human subjects in a group were given money and a choice: They could either keep it all or contribute some portion to a "group fund" that would be doubled and divided equally between all participants. Some people cooperated for the good of all, while others did not.

In a second phase of the experiment, the participants were asked who would be the best leader for the group. Eighty percent of the time, they chose the person who had contributed the most to the fund in the first phase. When people can choose the people who will lead them, they prefer people who proactively take responsibility for group welfare.

http://www.latimes.com/opinion/commentary/la-oe-brooks-obama-leadership-20131004-16,0,6646621.story

The role of education in reducing poverty is widely recognised but our planners are yet to realise how the impoverished struggle with a learning process that is unresponsive to their needs

In a society where poverty is far more common than prosperity, one would expect the implications of poverty for education to be widely recognised. What we find, instead, is that poverty is seldom mentioned directly in policy documents on education. Policymakers feel more comfortable using euphemisms like "economically weaker sections," the "marginalised" or the "deprived" to refer to the poor. No wonder the impact of poverty on children's life at school and learning is understood rather vaguely not just by educational planners, but teachers too.

Incompatibility

The reason poverty must be treated as a factor of education arises from a basic incompatibility between the two. Education necessarily demands long-term horizons. Poverty, on the contrary, compels people to remain embedded in immediate or short-term concerns. India has now recognised eight years of compulsory education as a right of every child, but endemic poverty and social inequality are posing tough constraints in making this law a reality. Elementary education by itself means little; it can only serve as a foundation for further education over many years. The informal economy on which the poor survive forces them to live from day to day.

They want to — but usually fail to — plan for the distant future in which their progeny might reap the fruits of education. The children belonging to poor families find it difficult to cope with the regularity that schools demand. This is because hunger, illness and insecurity interrupt their life at home all the time. Their parents have to use most of their energies in order to deal with everyday emergencies.

Life under poverty is unpredictable and prone to sudden losses and traumas. For the poor, there is no such thing as normalcy. Anything can happen anytime, and all you can do is to cope as you suffer. In big cities, municipal authorities can suddenly clear a street of food vendors or bulldoze an unauthorised colony. Next morning, when a child fails to be at school or looks subdued, the teacher shows no curiosity to find out what might have happened to the child's father or mother the previous afternoon. In rural areas, flood waters can drown hundreds of houses; yet the school is supposed to function and cover the prescribed syllabus! Dams or factories can mean displacement of whole villages. What will happen to children is the least important concern for those in charge of such operations. I once met children in Manibeli, a village that now lies at the bottom of the Sardar Sarovar dam. They had gone through the trauma of seeing their own school vanish under water.

Mid-day meals programme

Poverty also has a corrosive effect on children's health and mental capacities. Frequent illness, especially on account of stomach-related problems, is common among children who live in conditions characterised by poor sanitation. A recent study has shown how filthy surroundings, in which faecal material mixes with water and food, weaken the capacity to absorb nutrition. Limited resources to eat well and regularly result in a daily cycle of anxiety and low energy which translates into poor attention to the teacher's expectations. There cannot be better evidence of the relationship between hunger and education than the success of the mid-day meals programme. The fact that this minimalist scheme has actually improved enrolment and retention proves how major a role hunger and malnourishment play in pushing children to drop out of school. Certain State governments have recently administered a dose of deworming medicine, recognising the prevalence of parasites and the impact of this condition on children's nutritional status, energy and attention.

Vicious cycle

Poverty often leads to children's involvement in household work and outside activities that might augment the family's income, on top of their school work. The burden of responsibilities at home or outside directly influences the child's participation in school life and capacity to fulfil the teacher's expectations. Teachers of private schools where 25 per cent of the seats are now being given to the "economically weaker sections" (EWS) category seldom know with clarity what life at home means for children in this category. From looking after younger siblings to sweeping the floor and cooking, an EWS girl often shares major tasks her mother is supposed to accomplish on a daily basis. Whether children work at home or outside, their effort to juggle work-related responsibilities with classroom routines makes their life at school porous and thin. Absence from school or inability to focus makes a direct impact on performance. Once a child starts to lag behind others, he or she becomes a relevant object of stereotyping by classmates and teachers. A

vicious cycle sets in. Common stereotypes about the poor get invoked in the teacher's mind and the child's behaviour resonates and reinforces these stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes are rooted in caste-related beliefs or in religion. Of course, no principal or teacher would ever acknowledge being guided by these stereotypes.

Education alone cannot address poverty. However, it holds an important place among the numerous strategies that a welfare state must adopt to loosen the grip that chronic poverty has on its victims. A recent British study led by Anand Mani shows how poverty saps the energy of its victims. They often fail to keep up with the effort it takes to avail the state's benefits. The daily struggles and anxieties of life reinforce the cycle of ill-health and missed appointments. In India, the state's efforts are quite often mainly symbolic. The distribution of iron tablets or syrup to overcome chronic malnutrition among adolescent girls is a good instance. Had the famous mid-day meal been aimed at middle class children, it would have been priced more realistically. Greater flexibility to cope with price rise would have been permitted. Schemes for the poor are themselves so emaciated and stiff that they cannot be expected to make a significant difference in the lives of their beneficiaries.

Nor are strategies to combat poverty sufficiently contextualised or flexible. Rigidity and uniformity are said to be necessary to avoid corruption and misuse. Even a distinction as broad as rural and urban is overlooked when plans to address the educational problems of poor children are designed. Whether a school has drowned in a dam or been blasted by insurgents or it has been demolished because it was collapsing anyhow, the officials in charge make no distinction or find ways to compensate for the loss of classes. Children studying in government schools are deemed to be poor and, therefore, unimportant. I remember visiting a village in Haryana where the children told me that their best teacher had been transferred away two months ahead of the annual examination. All over the country, government school children cope with the absence of their teachers during elections. It is the children who subsidise the cost of democracy while their parents enthusiastically cast their vote, hoping that it will lead to improvement in their lives.

For better training

Teachers can make a significant difference in the educational experience of poor children, but only if their training equips them with the awareness of what poverty means. Our training programmes are so wordy and wasteful, they make no effort to get into specific issues like poverty. A widespread belief in the ideology of social Darwinism prevents teachers from realising that children of the poor are like any other group of children, with individual differences of interest and motivation. According to this ideology, survival is the proof of being the fittest, hence only the exceptional child from a poor family is endowed by nature to succeed. Training courses don't engage with such attitudes and beliefs. Teachers who work in mixed classrooms don't expect all children to succeed in their own different ways. They focus on the few who look exceptional; the rest are believed to lack any potential. It is hardly surprising that the system of education makes so little impact on the majority of children from poorer backgrounds.

(The author Krishna Kumar is professor of education at Delhi University and a former NCERT director. This article is a shorter version of his silver jubilee lecture at the National Institute of Open Schooling.)

http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/where-knowledge-is-poor/article5227242.ece

In India's Politics, Jail Time Is a Badge of Honor

By ELLEN BARRY

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DALTENGANJ, India — When he decided to run for a parliamentary seat from this impoverished, and mainly low-caste constituency in northeast India, Kameshwar Baitha made no effort to sugarcoat his criminal record. Obediently, he cataloged the serious charges pending against him, all of which he says are false. There were 17 for murder, 22 for attempted murder, 6 for assault with a dangerous weapon, 5 for theft, 2 for extortion, and so on, a legacy from Mr. Baitha's previous career as a leader of the local Maoist insurgency. On top of that was the fact that he was in jail.

But this did not hurt him with voters here, noted his son, Babban Kumar, who hopes to follow his father into politics. With people in this area, who look to elected leaders as Robin Hood figures, it may have helped.

"You have to fight against something, how else can you get into politics?" Mr. Kumar said. "Without going to jail, you cannot be a big politician."

New impulses are rippling through Indian politics this year, as a growing, urbanized middle class demands that hundreds of tainted politicians be driven from the system.

In Delhi, crowds driven by Internet campaigns have rallied around an anticorruption platform, holding brooms to symbolize the coming cleansing. The Supreme Court, sensing the public mood, ruled in July that it was illegal for politicians who had been convicted of crimes to continue holding office by simply filing an appeal against their convictions. The ruling would disqualify politicians sentenced to more than two years in prison by a lower court. This change, which could uproot formidable political forces, was endorsed this month by the governing coalition's crown prince, Rahul Gandhi.

The effort will meet its greatest challenge in another India — the old one, where voting is still largely driven by caste. In the tribal region that Mr. Baitha represents, the vast majority of elected officials face criminal charges, most related to corruption, but many for violent crimes. Voters typically dismiss such charges as trumped-up, one more attempt by elites to crush the champions of the poor.

These are some of the things that allowed Mr. Baitha to discuss the subject comfortably in the red-velvet seating area of a government guesthouse, as a ceiling fan turned slowly overhead. He urged his guest to imagine if everyone convicted of a crime were barred from politics.

“The whole Parliament will be empty,” he said. “It will become a joke.”

A big test of the new measures’ effect will come in the case of Lalu Prasad, the longtime leader of the neighboring state of Bihar, who was disqualified from holding office and running in coming elections this month after being sentenced on corruption charges. The case against him had proceeded at a snail’s pace for 17 years, as Mr. Prasad had thumbed his nose at prosecutors.

A master of populist showmanship who came from a caste of cow herders, he transformed his court dates into political theater. He arrived for one session in the back of a bicycle rickshaw, surrounded by throngs of adoring supporters, and once left jail on the back of a small elephant.

The dance seemed to end with his sentencing. But last week, sitting inside the Birsa Munda jail in Ranchi, it seemed he was perfectly capable of managing his still-formidable political empire. Scores of aides and supporters were clustered outside the jail’s iron gate, bearing coconuts and handwritten letters. Prison guards let visitors in and out at regular intervals, as if they were operating a reception center. The Telegraph, Ranchi’s main English-language daily newspaper, reported that he had summoned a tailor to his cell.

When a local anticorruption activist filed a complaint, charging that the visits were a major violation of prison regulations, Mr. Prasad decided to keep a “low profile” by receiving visitors only after 3 p.m., the newspaper reported. His visitors all said the charges were false. “People in Delhi don’t want the poor people to rise,” said one of them, Kumar Lakshman, 28. “Lalu is causing the poor people to rise.”

Nationwide, the number of Indian officeholders facing criminal charges is extraordinary: 30 percent of winners in national and regional elections since 2008, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms, a research group based in New Delhi. The reasons are manifold; as India’s democratic system evolved, candidates depended heavily on thuggish “muscle men,” and later “money men,” to influence voters and sweep them into office. Corruption is widespread.

But it is also true that spending limits are so low that virtually any candidate bent on winning would have to be willing to break the law. The penalty for filing false charges is negligible. And India’s independence movement was founded on civil disobedience, so lawbreaking is enmeshed in the political culture.

t is not yet clear whether this will change now, said Neerja Chowdhury, a journalist and political commentator. Major parties may steer clear of candidates facing criminal charges, fearful of losing a seat in case of disqualification. But they may also consider the outpouring of popular support extended to Mr. Prasad or Jaganmohan Reddy, another regional leader facing corruption charges. “It is a strange paradox, there is huge sympathy for him, and by all accounts he is gaining ground,” Ms. Chowdhury said of Mr. Reddy. Corruption, she added, “is more of an urban middle-class issue rather than for groups who are in ascendance.”

A similar dynamic drove the improbable rise of Mr. Baitha, 60, a former revolutionary who received visitors in a snow-white tunic and pajamas, discreetly accepting a packet of chewing tobacco from an aide.

Mr. Baitha's region erupted in a peasant rebellion in the 1970s, as Maoist fighters clashed with private armies fielded by high-caste landlords. The authorities have identified Mr. Baitha as an expert in explosives who masterminded many attacks. He denies this, saying he served strictly as an ideological leader after his organization was banned by the Indian government in 1986 and never took up arms.

Mr. Baitha decided to enter politics after he was jailed pending trial in 2005. With time on his hands, he reread the writings of Mao and Lenin, considered the effects of economic growth and technology on Indian society and began to question the Maoists' confidence that an armed struggle would sweep away the government in New Delhi.

"It was a difficult period for me, but I decided," he said. "I changed my ideology."

He had such high name recognition in Jharkhand, he said, that he easily won the seat without leaving the jail to campaign. There was, however, the somewhat delicate matter of the criminal charges pending against him; of all 4,807 candidates elected since 2008, he had the longest record, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms. Voters made it clear, however, that the charges did not matter, and he said most of the cases were dropped after he was elected to Parliament.

People approached in Jharkhand's capital said the accusations were false, advanced by Mr. Baitha's political opponents. Others conceded that there was truth in the charges, but said it had in no way damaged Mr. Baitha's image. Santosh Kumar Dube, who holds a municipal office in Ranchi, said he believed that Mr. Baitha "fought with arms, and participated in some massacres" during his time as a Maoist. But he added: "All these charges against him were made in the process of fighting for poor people. People are not afraid of him."

For his part, Mr. Baitha admitted some anxiety about the changes in Indian politics, which he acknowledged could have prevented him from running in the first place. The new rigor over leaders' criminal convictions, he said, has put a powerful new weapon in the hands of political opposition and has called into question the judgment of voters, who are, he said, perfectly aware who they are voting into office.

"I have this concern, that my political career ends because of these charges," he said, but then he collected himself.

"I have full faith it will not happen to me," he said. "I have faith in the judicial system."

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/14/world/asia/in-indias-politics-jail-time-is-a-badge-of-honor.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20131014