Daily Editorial Analysis 10 February 2026

February 10, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com

The Next Big Commodity is the Mineable Self

Context

- In contemporary capitalism, markets increasingly rely not only on **material resources** but on a new, inexhaustible commodity: the human self.
- **Modern economic systems** extract value from identity, emotions, and lived experiences.
- Through digital networks and media infrastructures, individuals themselves become economic inputs.
- Personal narratives, everyday interactions, and expressions of identity circulate as exchangeable goods within a global economy.
- The **digital environment** allows human life to be continuously recorded, interpreted, and monetised, turning personality into a productive resource.

From Labour to Identity: A New Stage of Capitalist Extraction

- Classical industrial **capitalism** generated **surplus value** from human labour. In the current stage, extraction moves beyond labour into social existence itself.
- The new target is **sociality**, relationships, behaviour, and emotional expression.

- Friendships, families, preferences, and habits are tracked through **profiling**, creating datasets valuable to corporations and institutions.
- The erosion of **privacy**, **intimacy**, and **trust** follows, as daily life becomes observable and commercially useful.
- The process resembles **extraction**, where identity functions as raw material. The **commodification** of experience transforms communication into marketable information.
- Every interaction, online purchase, conversation, or political expression, becomes part of a continuous system of **data collection.**
- Human identity is no longer only personal; it is economically productive. The self becomes infinitely renewable, constantly generating information and therefore profit.

The Global Story Economy: Where Local and Global Converge

- The market thrives on stories. A worldwide demand exists for narratives rooted in specific places yet relatable everywhere.
- Folklore, migration journeys, conflict, and everyday struggles circulate internationally. The boundary between **global** and **local** dissolves as a single recorded event can travel across continents within seconds.
- News media, independent creators, and ordinary witnesses act as **media networks** feeding a shared narrative system.
- A local incident becomes globally meaningful once framed within larger social themes such as migration, violence, or cultural conflict. Locality no longer refers simply to physical proximity but to narrative relevance.
- Communities imagine themselves through international attention, while global audiences interpret distant experiences through familiar narrative patterns.
- This convergence transforms identity into content. Individuals, cities, and organisations participate in a continuous exchange of narratives. The story economy reorganises geography into a networked cultural marketplace.

Streaming Platforms and the Democratisation of the Self

- The rise of **streaming** services accelerates this transformation. Internet-based platforms distribute entertainment without traditional studios or broadcasting structures.
- Their success depends on relatable characters and ordinary experiences. The appearance of everyday people in entertainment suggests **democratisation**, where anyone may be visible.
- Yet visibility becomes economic participation.
- The modern **individual** increasingly exists as an **algorithmic** profile composed of behaviour patterns and measurable traits.
- Credit ratings, consumption histories, and recommendation systems construct a digital personality. Identity becomes fragmented and quantifiable rather than unified and stable.
- The **selfie** symbolises this shift.
- The image promises equality before the camera but simultaneously converts appearance into shareable currency. Personal representation is no longer private expression alone; it functions as cultural capital within platform economies.

Artificial Intelligence and the Expansion of Personhood

- The emergence of **AI** intensifies the instability of identity. Chatbots and virtual assistants simulate empathy, conversation, and emotional response. Machines now perform aspects of personality once considered uniquely human.
- By reproducing **emotion**, digital systems compete in communication, companionship, and decision-making.
- This development blurs distinctions between authentic and constructed identity. If emotional expression can be generated computationally, personhood becomes performative rather than inherent.
- Human identity becomes one version among many communicative agents in a shared environment.

The Chain of Storytelling and the Culture of Visibility

- A cultural logic governs the system: everyone has a story, and every story deserves an audience. Social platforms enable constant **storytelling**, encouraging users to narrate achievements, trauma, failure, or redemption.
- The pursuit of **virality** drives participation, as visibility promises recognition and economic opportunity.
- Influencers, content creators, and public figures cultivate audiences through regular self-disclosure.
- Platforms reward attention, converting narratives into advertising revenue and social influence.
- Individuals willingly share experiences for validation and opportunity, participating in their own economic incorporation.
- This produces a cycle in which identity requires performance. The desire for recognition sustains continuous self-presentation.
- The **audience** becomes essential to personal meaning, while attention functions as currency. Human life transforms into an ongoing broadcast within a market for visibility.

Conclusion

- The **modern economy increasingly relies on identity** and self-presentation rather than material production, turning personal experience, emotion, communication, and data into valuable resources.
- Through digital representation and the circulation of narratives, everyday private life is integrated into economic systems that extract value from how people live, express, and connect.
- This creates a paradox: **individuals enjoy unprecedented opportunities for participation and expression**, yet their visibility also places the self itself, constantly observed and commercially used, at the centre of a global marketplace as a renewable commodity.

The Next Big Commodity is the Mineable Self FAQs

Q1. What is the new commodity discussed in the essay?

Ans. The new commodity is the human self, including identity, emotions, relationships, and personal experiences.

Q2. How does modern capitalism extract value from individuals?

Ans. Modern capitalism extracts value by collecting data from social interactions, behaviour patterns, and personal narratives.

Q3. Why are streaming platforms important in this transformation?

Ans. Streaming platforms popularise ordinary lives and convert personal stories into marketable entertainment content.

Q4. How does artificial intelligence affect the idea of identity?

Ans. Artificial intelligence imitates emotional expression, making identity appear performative rather than uniquely human.

Q5. What role does social media play in the market of selves?

Ans. Social media encourages constant self-presentation and turns visibility and audience attention into economic value.

Source: **The Hindu**

A Chance for India to Polish the Kimberley Process

Context

- The global diamond trade symbolises wealth and prestige but has also been linked to violence and political instability.
- During the 1990s, armed groups financed civil wars through illegal sales of rough diamonds, commonly called **conflict diamonds.**
- To curb this problem, the international community established the **Kimberley Process**, a multilateral framework regulating the trade of rough diamonds.
- India's assumption of the **chairmanship** in 2026 marks a significant moment.
- Positioned at the centre of the international diamond value chain, India can guide reforms addressing ethical trade, accountability, and technological modernization while strengthening **global governance** mechanisms.

Origin and Evolution of the Kimberley Process

- **Emergence of the Initiative**
    - The initiative began in 2000 through dialogue among southern African nations to prevent the financing of wars through diamonds.
    - Negotiations among participating countries resulted in the **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme** in 2003.
    - The framework now includes 60 participants representing 86 countries and oversees about 99.8% of the world's rough diamond production.
    - It functions as an important international **regulatory** arrangement controlling trade in a single high-value commodity.

- **The Certification Mechanism**

    - The certification scheme requires each shipment of rough diamonds to carry a validated **certificate** confirming legitimate origin.
    - Trade is permitted only between compliant member states, and participants must share **statistical data** on production and exports.
    - This mechanism is intended to maintain **transparency** and prevent illegal trade networks.

India's Strategic Role in the Global Diamond Value Chain

- India is not a major producer but remains the largest global processor of diamonds.
- It imports nearly 40% of global rough diamonds and performs cutting and polishing mainly in Surat and Mumbai before exporting to the United States, China, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and Hong Kong.
- Countries such as Angola, Botswana, Russia, Canada, Congo, and Namibia dominate mining, yet India controls the value-addition stage.
- This central position provides strong **leverage** within the supply chain and enables India to influence international standards through **diplomacy** and trade practices.

Major Challenges Facing the Kimberley Process

- **Narrow Definition of Conflict Diamonds**

    - The existing definition focuses only on diamonds funding rebel groups against governments.
    - It excludes broader abuses including state violence, forced labour, human trafficking, environmental damage, and exploitation in **artisanal mining**.
    - Consequently, diamonds linked to **human rights** violations may still enter legitimate markets.

- **Decision-Making Constraints**

    - The Kimberley Process relies on **consensus**, allowing any participant to block action through **veto**
    - This weakens **enforcement** and limits the system's capacity to identify problematic sources.

- **Ineffective Sanctions**

    - The ban imposed on the Central African Republic in 2013 showed that embargoes alone can increase smuggling and instability.
    - Without economic assistance, communities dependent on mining face hardship, reducing the effectiveness of punitive measures.

Reform Opportunities Under India's Chairmanship

- **Institutional Reforms**

    - A technical working group could examine violence and risks beyond rebel insurgencies and gradually build agreement for redefining conflict diamonds.
    - Institutional improvements may include **independent audits**, public disclosure of detailed data, and strengthened engagement with **civil society**.

- **Technological Modernisation**

    - Digital innovation offers a major reform pathway. A **blockchain**-based system could provide tamper-proof, time-stamped shipment records.
    - Enhanced **digital certification** would reduce fraud, improve traceability, and modernize the global supply chain.

- **Capacity Building for Producer Countries**

    - Support for producing regions is essential. Establishing regional **capacity-building** hubs in central and eastern Africa could provide training, technical support, and **forensic**
    - Cooperative reforms would encourage compliance rather than punishment.

Developmental Focus, the African Dimension and India’s Global Leadership Role

- **Developmental Focus and the African Dimension**

    - Diamond mining supports livelihoods across Africa.
    - Aligning KP initiatives with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, including poverty reduction and decent work, can ensure revenues contribute to local health, education, and infrastructure.
    - Responsible trade would shift the framework from restriction toward **development**, **sustainability**, and inclusive economic growth.

- **India’s Global Leadership Role**

    - As a major voice of the **Global South**, India can balance the interests of producers, processors, and consumers.
    - By strengthening **accountability** and promoting **multilateralism**, India can transform the Kimberley Process into a more credible international institution and reinforce its reputation as a constructive global actor.

Conclusion

- The **Kimberley Process has reduced the circulation of conflict diamonds** but remains constrained by narrow definitions, political limitations, and weak developmental engagement.
- India’s leadership in 2026 presents a major opportunity to implement institutional reforms, technological modernisation, and cooperative partnerships with African producers.
- A **reformed framework** emphasising transparency, community welfare, and ethical trade can convert the diamond industry into a responsible global system while strengthening international cooperation and

sustainable economic progress.

A Chance for India to Polish the Kimberley Process FAQs

Q1. What is the Kimberley Process?

Ans. The Kimberley Process is an international regulatory framework that prevents the trade of conflict diamonds in global markets.

Q2. Why is India important to the global diamond trade?

Ans. India is the world's largest diamond cutting and polishing centre and processes a major share of global rough diamonds.

Q3. What is a key weakness of the Kimberley Process?

Ans. A major weakness is its narrow definition of conflict diamonds, which does not cover many human rights abuses.

Q4. How can technology improve the Kimberley Process?

Ans. Blockchain-based digital certification can create secure and transparent records for diamond shipments.

Q5. What broader goal can reforms achieve?

Ans. Reforms can promote responsible trade and support development in diamond-producing communities.

Source: **The Hindu**

Source: https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-10-february-2026/

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.