

Daily Editorial Analysis 21 February 2026

February 21, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Gen Z and the Dynamics of Democratic Engagement

Context

- Across the world, democratic systems are experiencing **democratic backsliding**, weakening institutions, and growing **authoritarianism**.
- Many citizens appeared resigned to unresponsive governance, yet a new political actor has emerged: **Generation Z** (1997–2012).
- Recent protests in **Bangladesh (2024)** and **Nepal (2025)**, organised around **corruption, transparency, and accountability**, demonstrate that political participation has not disappeared but is transforming.
- Unlike earlier protest waves such as the **Arab Spring** or **Occupy Wall Street**, which generated visibility without lasting institutional change, contemporary youth mobilisation requires understanding beyond traditional frameworks of parties, leadership, and ideology.

Generational Change and Political Imagination

- Each generation reshapes social values and ethical practices.

- Older traditions persist as an absent presence within new forms, yet unfamiliar expressions often appear superficial to earlier generations. Political participation is therefore not declining but changing in form.
- Gen Z was frequently considered **politically disengaged**, absorbed in technology and detached from public life.
- However, organised youth protests reveal a different reality. Democracy rests not only on **constitutional frameworks** and institutions but also on everyday moral behaviour and collective emotions.
- Gen Z's politics operates primarily within everyday experience rather than formal structures, making it less visible yet socially influential.

The Worldview of Gen Z

- Gen Z embodies a blend of **radical individualism** and relative tolerance, showing less overt **prejudice** and cynicism.
- Its guiding principle resembles: **personal is political**, while politics itself is not treated as a personal ideological commitment.
- This generation prefers lived conduct over doctrine. Acting as exemplars rather than emissaries, it demonstrates values through behaviour instead of advocacy.
- It resists preaching and avoids preaching to others, making sustained collective mobilisation difficult.
- Young people react strongly to visible **hierarchies** and discrimination but often lack a systemic analysis of **structural inequality**.
- Comfort with the virtual world shapes political participation. Digital platforms allow expression without intense face-to-face interaction.
- Consequently, protests are typically leaderless, ideologically loose, and **episodic protests** rather than long-term movements.

Changing Forms of Protest

- Comparison with the **farmers' movement (2020-24)** clarifies the shift.
- The farmers-maintained leadership, organisation, and sustained demands for years. In contrast, Gen Z mobilisations appear suddenly and dissolve quickly, yet leave a lasting symbolic impact.
- This pattern reflects a **combination of confidence and insecurity**. Gen Z grew up in an environment of social democratisation, encouraging self-expression and **self-introspection**, but also faces shrinking economic opportunities and employment instability.
- Their political engagement is therefore assertive yet fragmented.
- Mental health awareness further shapes behaviour. Openness to **mental health, therapy**, and emotional vulnerability contrasts with earlier generational restraint.
- Experiences of **mental despair**, workplace **toxicity**, and **anomie** produce intense but short-lived political participation. Emotional precarity contributes to fleeting involvement in democratic processes.

Identity, Consumption, and Nationalism

- Gen Z links identity formation with **consumption patterns**. Markets, **technology**, and **education** shape self-representation and weaken traditional ascriptive identities such as **caste** and religion.

- Digital access and information serve as sources of dignity, sometimes more meaningful than inherited status.
- Possessing advanced technology, symbolised by the **iPhone**, becomes an imagined social equaliser.
- This produces a generation that is more **secularised** yet inward-looking, prioritising **personal choices**.
- However, rapid digital exposure can also foster **hyper-nationalism**.
- Unlike earlier cultural chauvinism, this nationalism emphasises future potential and developmental achievement, pride in **space missions**, technological innovation, and global visibility despite persistent inequality.

Conclusion

- Generation Z is transforming democratic participation rather than abandoning it.
- Although its activism may appear inconsistent compared to traditional movements, it **reflects deeper changes** in democratic culture.
- This generation's contradictions, individualistic yet socially aware, confident yet anxious, globalised yet nationalist, make its **influence unpredictable**.
- Established expectations of activism may not be met, but new forms of engagement are emerging.
- Gen Z therefore **represents not the decline of democracy** but its adaptation to a digitally connected and uncertain social world.

Gen Z and the Dynamics of Democratic Engagement FAQs

Q1. What is meant by democratic backsliding?

Ans. Democratic backsliding refers to the weakening of democratic institutions, erosion of accountability, and the rise of authoritarian governance.

Q2. Why is Generation Z considered politically different from previous generations?

Ans. Generation Z engages in politics through personal experiences and digital platforms rather than through formal ideologies and long-term organisations.

Q3. How do Gen Z protests differ from traditional protest movements?

Ans. Gen Z protests are usually leaderless, short-lived, and issue-based, while traditional movements tend to be organised, sustained, and guided by clear leadership.

Q4. What role does technology play in shaping Gen Z's political behaviour?

Ans. Technology allows Gen Z to express opinions, mobilise support, and participate in political discussions primarily through virtual platforms.

Q5. How does economic insecurity affect Gen Z's democratic participation?

Ans. Economic insecurity creates anxiety and precarity, leading Gen Z to participate intensely but briefly in political activities.

Source: **The Hindu**

'Bhasha' Matters in India's Multilingual Moment

Context

- India's vast linguistic diversity—over 1,300 mother tongues and 121 recognised languages—forms a core part of its national identity and educational strength.
- Languages shape how children learn and understand the world, carrying generations of accumulated knowledge.
- When a language disappears, more than words are lost; entire worldviews and knowledge systems vanish.
- Protecting languages is therefore both a cultural and educational priority, making mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) essential.
- This article highlights how India's linguistic diversity is central to educational equity and national identity, and explains why mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is essential for improving learning outcomes, strengthening inclusion, and preserving cultural knowledge.

Mother Tongue as the Foundation of Quality Education

- **International Mother Language Day and Youth Voices**
 - As International Mother Language Day (February 21) highlights multilingual education, the focus is clear: children thrive when their languages and identities are recognised in classrooms.
 - Valuing linguistic diversity turns schools into spaces of inclusive learning and mutual understanding.
- **UNESCO's Advocacy for Multilingual Teaching**
 - UNESCO has consistently promoted teaching in languages best understood by learners as a cornerstone of quality education.
 - Multilingual instruction strengthens comprehension, participation, and overall educational outcomes.

State of the Education Report 2025: Bhasha Matters

- **Focus on Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education**
 - The seventh edition of UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India (2025), titled *Bhasha Matters*, examines the status of Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE).
 - It combines global research, national evidence, and practical insights.
- **Key Findings and Policy Directions**
 - The report shows that MTB-MLE is both pedagogically effective and transformative.
 - It proposes 10 policy recommendations aimed at building an inclusive and equitable education system that views linguistic diversity as an asset.
- **What Is Working**
 - Successful practices highlighted include bilingual learning materials, improved teacher preparation, and innovative digital tools that expand multilingual resources for classrooms and communities.

Language as a Barrier to Learning

- **The Scale of the Challenge**
 - Globally, over 250 million learners lack access to education in a language they fully understand.

- In India, about 44% of children begin school in a language different from the medium of instruction, adding an extra burden to early learning.

- **Impact on Foundational Learning**

- When children must first decode an unfamiliar language, it weakens foundational literacy and numeracy.
- This can lead to cumulative learning gaps, reduced confidence, and higher dropout risks.

Policy Response in India

- The National Education Policy (2020) and the National Curriculum Frameworks (2022, 2023) place the child's home or mother tongue at the centre of early education to improve comprehension and learning outcomes.

- **Promising Practices Across States**

- **Odisha's Multilingual Education Model** – Odisha runs a multilingual programme covering 21 tribal languages in 17 districts, benefiting nearly 90,000 children.
- **Digital and AI-Driven Solutions** – Telangana uses DIKSHA-enabled multilingual resources. National initiatives such as PM eVIDYA, Adi Vaani, BHASHINI, and AI4Bharat leverage digital platforms and AI to create local-language content and support teachers.

- **Roadmap for Systemic Reform**

- **Policy and Teacher Development** – The Bhasha Matters report recommends clear state-level language policies, stronger multilingual teacher recruitment, and reforms in pre-service and in-service training.
- **Materials, Technology, and Community Participation** – It calls for quality multilingual materials, inclusive assessments, community engagement, responsible language technology investment, and sustainable financing.
- **National Mission for MTB-MLE** – A proposed National Mission for Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) aims to coordinate efforts across ministries, research bodies, civil society, and technology partners to scale successful pilots into nationwide reform.

Linguistic Diversity as a Strength

- **Driver of Equity and Social Cohesion**

- India's linguistic diversity is not an obstacle but a catalyst for equity, identity, and unity. Teaching children in languages they understand strengthens learning outcomes and supports inclusive development.

- **A Moment for Educational Transformation**

- With supportive policy frameworks and successful State-level initiatives, India stands poised for meaningful educational reform grounded in multilingual learning.

International Mother Language Day: A Renewed Call

- **Recognising Every Learner's Language** – Education systems must value each child's language to enhance academic success, affirm identity, and promote well-being and active participation in society.
- **Youth as Catalysts for Change** – When young voices are included, multilingual education evolves from policy to movement. India's multilingual future is being shaped by its youth, marking a pivotal national moment.

'Bhasha' Matters in India's Multilingual Moment FAQs

Q1. Why is linguistic diversity important for India's education system?

Ans. Linguistic diversity strengthens identity and inclusion. Teaching in familiar languages improves comprehension, preserves cultural knowledge, and promotes equitable participation in education and society.

Q2. What challenge do many Indian children face at school entry?

Ans. About 44% of children begin schooling in a language different from their home language, creating barriers to foundational literacy, numeracy, and overall academic confidence.

Q3. How does UNESCO view mother-tongue-based multilingual education?

Ans. UNESCO considers multilingual teaching in languages learners understand as a cornerstone of quality education, enhancing participation, comprehension, and long-term academic success.

Q4. What policy measures support MTB-MLE in India?

Ans. The National Education Policy 2020 and National Curriculum Frameworks emphasise mother tongue instruction, alongside state programmes, digital platforms, and proposed national coordination mechanisms.

Q5. What reforms does the Bhasha Matters report recommend?

Ans. The report calls for state-level language policies, improved teacher training, multilingual materials, community participation, responsible technology use, sustainable financing, and a National Mission for MTB-MLE.

Source: **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-21-february-2026/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.