

Preface

Generations in Transition, Spring 2026

Bhutan, today, is negotiating important – and exciting – change. While our spiritual masters remind us that change is happening by the moment, history gives us a time-related perspective which helps us plan our lives and shape our society. The 23rd issue of The Druk Journal (Spring, 2026) takes an in-depth look at the process of “Generations in Transition” to help understand the transformation of the country and society. We look at change from multiple perspectives: as individuals, families, communities, societies, and as a nation.

In the past, each generation dealt with their lives and situation as their parents aged and moved on. The inevitable impact of globalisation has defined a more complex understanding of society, and we now have adolescents, teenagers, baby boomers, Gen Z, millennials, professionals and technocrats, public servants, civil society, pensioners, and so on.

Bhutan’s current demography shows that about 47 percent of the population are 25 years and younger, and those between 10 to 24 years of age make up a third of the population (UNICEF). The population overall is also aging, with seven percent aged 65 years and older. The aging index stands at 32 elderly for every 100 children, and the old age dependency ratio is 10 percent (National Statistical Bureau). Many in retirement today represent a cohort of Bhutanese who served the country through the civil service, benefitted from education opportunities, and continue to be a resource for Bhutan’s current needs.

At the same time, the government describes the nine percent out-migration of largely young people — seeking education and job opportunities abroad — as an existential problem. Such trends call for policies to address all areas of growth and change. Bhutan has transitioned from being a Least Developed Country to a Middle Income Country, bringing its own set of challenges and opportunities. The nature of this change is multi-layered: the worlds of the so-called educated and uneducated, rural and urban populations, evolving cultures and lifestyles, mobile work habits, and internal and external migration.

An earlier Druk Journal article, “What makes you not a Bhutanese?” (Spring 2015, Vol. 1, No. 1), remains relevant and necessary as we try to understand ourselves and our country. Today, we might also ask: “Where is Bhutan, as a nation?”

In this context, the 15 articles in this issue offer insights into current and new trends as Bhutan navigates change, including the challenges that confront an ageing populace and the significance of out-migration. The articles are organised in three sections — “Societal Developments”, “The Diaspora”, and “Life Goes On” — with recommendations and reflections for policymakers, for the people of Bhutan, and for those involved in governance.

Contributors include journalists, academics, scholars, and social commentators. Their articles highlight how various sections of Bhutanese society are navigating Bhutan’s transformation with fresh perspectives and diverse voices.