Art & Culture · GS - I

Cultural heritage can serve as an instrument of soft power and diplomatic engagement even amid strained bilateral relations. Discuss with reference to India's historical and civilisational links with neighbouring countries.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 21/11/2026	GS - I	Art & Culture

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Cultural diplomacy, shared heritage, historical monuments, soft power, people-to-people contact, tourism, religious heritage, civilisational links, regional cooperation, preservation of cultural assets.

Model Answer

Introduction

Shared historical and cultural heritage can create channels of communication between societies even when political relations remain strained. India's monuments, traditions and religious sites provide opportunities for cultural diplomacy.

Role of Cultural Heritage in Diplomacy

1. **Soft power:** India's historical monuments, spiritual traditions and cultural diversity enhance its international image and civilisational outreach.
2. **People-to-people engagement:** Visits to heritage sites encourage interaction among citizens, scholars, tourists and cultural communities.
3. **Shared historical connections:** Mughal architecture, Buddhist heritage and Sufi traditions reflect interconnected histories across South Asia.

4. **Tourism and economic cooperation:** Heritage visits promote tourism, local employment and cultural industries.
5. **Diplomatic confidence-building:** Cultural exchanges can sustain communication and goodwill even during periods of political disagreement.

Challenges

Historical narratives may be politically contested, while security restrictions, visa barriers and religious sensitivities can limit cultural exchanges. Excessive commercialisation also threatens heritage conservation.

Way Forward

India should strengthen cultural exchange programmes, facilitate responsible heritage tourism, protect monuments through scientific conservation and encourage academic and community-level engagement.

Conclusion

Cultural diplomacy cannot independently resolve political disputes, but it can preserve social connections and create an enabling environment for dialogue. India's shared heritage can therefore serve as a valuable instrument of regional engagement.

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