International Relations · GS - II

Cultural and civilisational connections can serve as important instruments of India's neighbourhood diplomacy. Examine this proposition with reference to the shared Ramayana heritage of India and Nepal.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Civilisational links, Ramayana tradition, Janakpur and Ayodhya, religious tourism, soft power, people-to-people relations, cultural preservation, inclusive diplomacy, regional connectivity

Model Answer

Introduction

India and Nepal share deep cultural, religious and civilisational connections. The Ramayana tradition, particularly the association of Janakpur with Mata Sita and Ayodhya with Lord Rama, provides an important foundation for strengthening bilateral people-to-people relations.

Role of Shared Cultural Heritage in Neighbourhood Diplomacy

1. **Civilisational connections:** Shared religious narratives and traditions create a sense of historical and cultural familiarity between Indian and Nepali communities.

2. **Soft power:** Cultural diplomacy strengthens India's engagement through shared heritage, religious traditions, festivals and historical exchanges.

3. **Religious tourism:** Connectivity between Ayodhya and Janakpur can promote pilgrimage tourism, local employment and economic opportunities for communities along the route.

4. **People-to-people relations:** Religious institutions, cultural organisations and educational exchanges can deepen mutual understanding beyond formal diplomatic engagements.

5. **Regional cooperation:** Joint preservation of heritage sites and development of tourism circuits can encourage institutional cooperation between the two countries.

Challenges and the Way Forward

1. **Heritage preservation:** Tourism development must protect archaeological sites, religious institutions and traditional cultural practices.

2. **Inclusive engagement:** Cultural diplomacy should respect the diversity of religious beliefs and social traditions in both countries.

3. **Infrastructure development:** Better transport, accommodation, sanitation and visitor facilities can make pilgrimage circuits more accessible.

4. **Institutional cooperation:** Joint cultural programmes, academic exchanges and heritage conservation initiatives can sustain long-term engagement.

5. **Avoiding politicisation:** Shared heritage should be presented as a bridge between societies rather than an instrument of political division.

Conclusion

The Ramayana provides a shared cultural vocabulary through which India and Nepal can strengthen mutual trust and cooperation. By combining heritage preservation with connectivity and inclusive cultural engagement, both countries can translate civilisational ties into enduring diplomatic partnerships.

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