International Relations · GS - II

“India’s global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide.”
Critically examine this statement.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Indian diaspora, soft power, remittances, cultural diplomacy, knowledge networks, technology, lobbying, strategic partnerships, diaspora engagement, challenges

Model Answer

India’s diaspora represents a multidimensional instrument of global engagement, connecting Indian society with political, economic and cultural networks across continents. Its significance extends beyond cultural identity to economic and strategic domains.

First, the diaspora acts as a living bridge through language, cuisine, festivals, cinema, yoga and cultural institutions. These create familiarity with Indian civilisation and contribute to India’s soft power.

Second, it is an important economic factor. Remittances provide household income, support consumption and contribute to foreign-exchange flows. World Bank data records India among the world’s major recipients of remittances, with about $150.7 billion received in 2025.

Third, diaspora professionals constitute knowledge networks in technology, medicine, academia, finance and entrepreneurship. Their expertise can facilitate investment, innovation, research collaborations and technology transfer. Successful diaspora communities can also contribute to stronger people-to-people and institutional ties.

Fourth, diaspora networks can support India’s diplomatic outreach by facilitating political and business connections in host countries. However, their influence should not be equated automatically with state influence. Diaspora communities are diverse, and their interests may differ from those of the Indian government.

Challenges include vulnerability to xenophobia, migration restrictions, political polarisation and tensions between host-country obligations and homeland identity. Excessive reliance on diaspora diplomacy may also overlook the importance of formal state-to-state relations.

India can maximise this potential through skill and knowledge partnerships, diaspora investment platforms, academic networks, cultural diplomacy and responsive consular engagement.

Thus, the diaspora converts cultural connectedness into economic, intellectual and diplomatic linkages, but its strategic value is greatest when complemented by sustained domestic capabilities and institutional diplomacy.

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