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Q3(b)**"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes." - William James**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS IV · 10 marks · Attitude

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Attitude: content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour; moral and political attitudes; social influence and persuasion.

DEMAND

- Explain **William James**'s line that changing attitude can change a life. Apply it to a civil servant without blaming the poor

REVISION MAP

- **William James** held that changing attention and attitude can change a life.
- For an officer this means choosing service over cynicism in daily work.
- It does not mean blaming citizens for poverty or withdrawing welfare.

INTRODUCTION

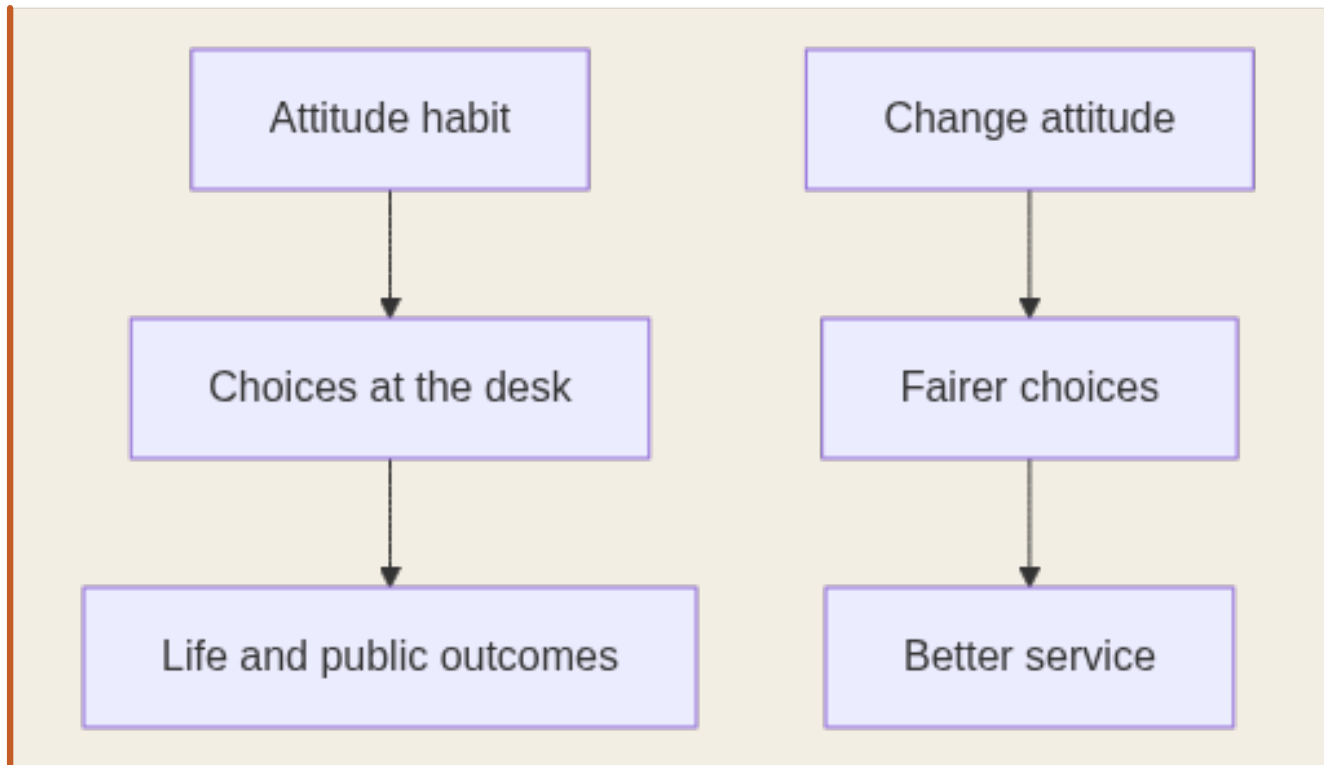
William James said the great discovery of his age was that a person can change life by changing attitude. He meant the way we attend, judge, and habitually respond. He did not mean a magic wish that ignores real hardship.

BODY

- Attitude here means the habit of mind with which we meet work, people, and failure.
- James argued that if we change that habit, our choices and our outcomes can change too.
- **Attention matters:** what we notice every day slowly shapes what we become.
- A bitter officer who treats every citizen as a cheat will miss honest need and create harsh files.
- An officer who chooses a service attitude looks for a fair path inside the same rules.
- The same desk can be a place of seva or a small throne; attitude decides which one it becomes.
- The quote must not be twisted to say that poverty is only an attitude problem; hunger and injustice are real.
- A State cannot tell a hungry person to think positive and then walk away from welfare.

- **For the civil servant, the useful reading is inner freedom at the desk:** choose learning over cynicism.
- Small daily habits - listening fully, writing reasons, admitting a mistake - are how attitude becomes character.

Flow diagram



CONCLUSION

James points to the power of a chosen **professional attitude**. Use it to improve your conduct and service, never to deny another person's material hardship.

FACTS & FIGURES

William James

American psychologist and pragmatist who stressed habit, attention, and the will as shapers of conduct.

Attitude vs structure

Inner change helps the agent; social policy must still address hunger, rights, and exclusion.

Professional attitude

In public service, attitude shows in tone, fairness, and willingness to correct an error without ego.

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