



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** How can Buddha's Middle Path serve as an ethical framework for civil servants in decision-making and governance? **(150 Words)**

20 Feb, 2025    GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### Approach

- Briefly introduce Buddha's Middle Path as a philosophical and ethical framework.
- Explain how it aligns with ethical decision-making in civil services and governance.
- Provide practical applications, supported by examples, ethical theories, and governance principles.
- Conclude with its relevance in contemporary administration.

### Introduction

Buddha's **Middle Path**, or **Madhyamaka**, advocates a balanced approach, avoiding extremes of indulgence and austerity. In civil services, it offers a **pragmatic ethical framework ensuring objectivity, justice, and impartial governance**, fostering **equity and long-term public trust**.

### Body

#### The Middle Path and Ethical Decision-Making in Governance

- The Middle Path embodies **moderation, pragmatism, and rational thinking**, enabling civil servants to make **balanced, ethical, and impartial decisions**.
- It aligns with **deontological ethics (duty-based approach)** and **virtue ethics**, promoting **righteous conduct (Dhamma) in governance**.
- It reflects **constitutional morality**, ensuring **fair and inclusive governance** without bias towards **any ideology, class, or community**.

#### Application of Middle Path in Civil Services:

- **Balanced Policy Formulation**
  - Civil servants must **balance economic growth with social equity**, ensuring that development is **sustainable and inclusive**.
  - Example: Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability through policies like **National solar Mission, Green GDP and Panchamrit targets**.
- **Impartiality in Decision-Making**
  - Avoiding **political pressure or bureaucratic inertia**, officers must adhere to **objectivity, transparency, and fairness**.
  - Example: **T.N. Seshan's electoral reforms** balanced **constitutional provisions and administrative efficiency**, upholding democratic integrity.
- **Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building**
  - The Middle Path promotes dialogue over confrontation, crucial for resolving disputes and

ensuring cooperative governance.

- Example: **NITI Aayog's cooperative federalism** approach balances **state autonomy and central oversight**, ensuring harmonious policy execution.

- **Corruption-Free and Ethical Administration**

- Excessive power leads to **authoritarianism**, while excessive leniency leads to **inefficiency**—a **balanced approach** is crucial.
- Example: **E-governance initiatives like DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)** reduce leakages while ensuring **welfare delivery without bureaucratic discretion**.

- **Handling Public Grievances with Empathy**

- Civil servants must balance **procedural efficiency with compassion**, ensuring **effective service delivery without bureaucratic red tape**.
- Example: **IAS officer Armstrong Pame's road construction initiative** in a remote region, balancing **public welfare and procedural compliance**.

### **Ethical Theories Supporting the Middle Path in Governance**

- **Aristotle's Golden Mean:** Encourages **moderation in virtues**, resonating with **the Middle Path's emphasis on avoiding extremes**.
- **Rawls' Theory of Justice:** Advocates **fairness while ensuring the least privileged are not disadvantaged**.

## **Conclusion**

Buddha's Middle Path serves as a **moral compass for civil servants, guiding them toward equitable, inclusive, and unbiased governance**. In an era of complex ethical dilemmas, its emphasis on **moderation, integrity, and fairness** ensures **long-term administrative stability and public trust**.

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