

## Buddhism

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### **Introduction:**

Buddhism is one of the Dharmic religions which was started in India. The principles of Buddha had a profound influence on world religions and civilisations all over Asia. Consciousness is the seat of this religion and its teachings. In this essay, few of the aspects of consciousness in Buddhism are explained.

### **Consciousness:**

According to Buddhism there are nine consciousnesses. Consciousness is nothing but knowing that we are aware of doing something or existence or understanding a phenomenon. It also helps in understanding the cycle of life and death according to the Buddhism.

These nine consciousnesses always operate together to create our lives. Consciousnesses are:

#### **Sight :**

Sight consciousness is nothing but ability to see the objects, world around us.

#### **Example:**

Ability to see a thing is nothing but taking the visual inputs from the outside world. When we see anything we take the visual inputs and interpret them.

#### **Hearing:**

Hearing consciousness is nothing but ability to perceive the sound from surroundings.

#### **Example:**

Ability to hear sound is nothing but taking the audio inputs from the outside world. When we hear anything we take the audio inputs and interpret them.

#### **Smell:**

Smell consciousness is nothing but the ability to perceive the scent of something around (environment).

#### **Example:**

Ability to identify an object or characteristic based on the scent of the object.

#### **Taste:**

Taste consciousness is nothing but the sensation of flavor perceived in the mouth and throat on contact with a substance.

There are six different tastes:

- 1) Sweetness
- 2) Sourness
- 3) Saltiness
- 4) Bitterness
- 5) Umami

**Example:**

Sweetness - sugar  
Sourness - lemon  
Saltiness – salt  
Bitterness - coffee  
Umami - cheese

**Touch:**

Touch is nothing but the ability to sense the space around the us (environment).

**Example:**

When we encounter an object in the space , we feel the object.

**Sixth consciousness:**

According to the buddhism this consciousness integrates and processes the various sensory data to form an overall picture or thought, identifying what it is that our five senses are communicating to us. In other words to say , this consciousness takes all the above five inputs and they are processed , and having awareness how these five consciousness communicate. For this reason this consciousness is very important for our daily activities.

**Example:**

When we are seeing a movie, we have to process and integrate both the video and audio signals to have the complete picture of the movie . This consciousness helps in giving that complete awareness of watching that film.

**Seventh consciousness:**

Above six consciousness depends and interacts with the outside world . But this consciousness interacts with the inner life and not dependent on the outside world. It is most important for consciousness as it is the base of our sense of individual identity and which separates from the others . It is the cause for egoism.

**Example:**

All the above six consciousnesses make sense to us only when one can perceive them, and self identity is the base for perception which is the seventh consciousness. Perception is objective, it always has to be associated with some person or being.

### **Eight consciousness:**

This consciousness is known as never-perishing or storehouse consciousness. This consciousness always exists and flows from cycle of life-death to the other cycle of death. But the above seven consciousness disappear at the end of each cycle of life-death or after one dies. It can be thought of as the life-flow that supports the activities of the other consciousnesses.

When someone has undergone clinical death their experiences can be said to be occurrences at the borderline of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses. Understanding of these levels of consciousness and the interaction between them can offer valuable insights into the nature of life and the self, as well as pointing to the resolution of the fundamental problems that humanity confronts.

The illusions arise from the relationship between the seventh and eighth levels of consciousness and manifest as fundamental egotism. These teachings describe the seventh layer as emerging from the eighth consciousness: it is always focused on the eighth consciousness of the individual, which it perceives as something constant, unique and isolated from other things. In reality, the eighth consciousness is in a state of continual flux. At this level our lives constantly interact, exerting a profound influence on each other. The perception of a fixed and isolated self that the seventh consciousness generates is thus false.

The seventh consciousness is also place of the fear of death. Being unable to perceive the true nature of the eighth consciousness as an enduring flow of life energy, it imagines that upon death, the eighth consciousness will become permanently extinct. Fear of death thus has roots in the deep layers of the subconscious.

#### **Example:**

If one perceives the eighth consciousness then he need not fear of death, as is nothing but the starting of the other life.

### **Ninth consciousness:**

The most fundamental layer of consciousness is the ninth or *amala* consciousness. This is considered as the purest form of consciousness. According to Nichiren Buddhism this is uninfluenced or unchanged by the workings of karma, this consciousness represents our true, eternal self. It is believed that this level of consciousness purifies the other superficial layers by bringing forth the energy of this consciousness. It even changes the well beings of negative karma in the life.

#### **Example:**

This is considered as the purest consciousness attained by Buddha himself.