Closed Ego to Opened Self

—Relationship between Self and Others in Buddhism—

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Advanced religions consist of two relationships, or principles. The one is the relationship between Self and the Eternal, that we can also call it the principle of Eternal. The Eternal corresponds to Dharma or Tathāgata 如來 in Buddhism, and the God or Holy Spirit in Christianity. The other is the relationship between Self and others, that we call it the principle of Sympathy. That is Charity in Buddhism, and Love of neighbors in Christianity.

And man is egotistic by nature based on his desire. We call that state of man as Closed Ego. This Closed Ego will be converted to Opened Self by the workings of the Eternal. This is the prototype of conversion in all religions.

Now, the aim of early Buddhism is vimutti 解脱 or nibbāna 涅槃, and vimutti means the emancipation from all sufferings or transmigration personally, and nibbāna means the extinction of desires that cause sufferings. And Gautama Buddha thought that they could realize that aim or ideal personally, and taught that they should keep aloof from human relations that brought sufferings. On the other hand, Buddhists of Mahāyāna thought that they could not complete their aim as far as others would not be saved from pains. So they laid stress on human relations, and practiced relief of others.

The development of mahāyāna Buddhism from early Buddhism can be understood from these points of view.