

## **A comparative study on Mahayana Sutra of the World Father (lokapitru) and the Christian Gospels' Universal Father**

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### **Abstract**

The concept of a “universal father” is mainly associated with religions that are faith-based and believe in a creator God. Creation and existence is believed by the followers to be at the pleasure of this God. Gospels clearly show that the Jesus, the son of God, from time to time addressed a powerful creator in heaven, who is God, the Father. Jesus called upon the grace of this God on behalf of his followers. The son of God or Jesus is the intermediary or link between the believers and God, the Father. Both in the Holy Bible and in Holy Quran this all-powerful creator God is considered the father of all human beings. Therefore, it is clear that the concept of a „universal father“ is directly associated with religions based on a creator God.

The same concept is also met within the context of Brahman and ātman in Indian religious philosophies as well. The creation of the universe is by the Mahā Brahma. Brahma alone is the creator while other beings have only a seed of him in the form of „Paramātman (supreme self).”

However, nowhere in fundamental Buddhist writing is there a reference to the concepts of a creator God, an everlasting soul or a „universal father.” It values the independence and individuality of the being. Accordingly the beginning of a „bhava” and its conclusion occurs according to the deeds of the being itself explained under cause and effect theory. But, in later writings in the Mahayana school there are some references to the Buddha as a creator and even as a universal father. Yet, these references are still different from the „universal father, concept seen in the Holy Bible. With the development of Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism, the role of a „universal father” was given to some Bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas appear to be regarded even as „savior” gods in a manner similar to the Savior (Jesus) in Christianity.

Although this is not seen everywhere in Mahayana Buddhism here we intend to compare the „universal father” concept in some suttanta’s in Mahayana Buddhism with the same as it is described in the Holy Bible. The idea of the ' universal father' becomes exaggerate with an increased sacredness.

**Key words:** *Universal Father, Mahayana sutra, Gospels, The God*

## Introduction

In general, the concept of the universal father is found in monotheistic religions. In monotheistic religions, doctrines have been developed based on the faith on the abovementioned concept. In Christianity, it is believed that the creation of Heaven and Earth has been brought about according to the Will of God. The doctrines taught by the Gospels of Christianity are the speech of the Father of Jesus in Heaven. In the Gospels, the reason why Jesus called God in Heaven His Father is for His servants. Jesus connects God and His servants. Like the Holy Scripture, the Koran of Islam says about God, the Father of the world. That is, the concept of the universal father is found in monotheistic religions.

According to the religion and philosophy of India, the concept of the loka pitru has come out of Brahman and atman; the concept of the loka pitru has the meaning of Param Brahman (the best above all things), and the human world begins with Brahman and existence itself is Brahman.

The oldest opinion about the beginning of the universe can be found in veda samhita. The universe has begun through mahā purusa of Rigveda 10. 90v. The veda 129v nāsadeeya sūtra expresses the beginning of the universe as asat and sat.<sup>1</sup>

Theravāda tradition has not explained about the loka pitru or an eternal ego at all. Buddhism says you should get all things from your heart. And it considers that utpāda and nirodha of existence depends upon individual ability. But in Mahayana, the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, explains Buddha as an eternal one of this world and loka pitru. The purpose of this study is to find that the concept is similar to what Christianity is talking.

This study will carry out a comparison study for the loka pitru of the Mahayana Sutras and the universal father of the Gospels of Christianity.

### Buddha as the ‘loka pitru’ of the Saddharmapundarika sūtra

The Sthavirā–nikaya does not mention about the loka pitru or an eternal ego at all. But Mahayana establishes Buddha as the concept of the loka pitru and explains that it is an eternal existence of this world and the loka pitru. This can be confirmed by the following scriptures.

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<sup>1</sup> In the beginning there was asat (a thing unrevealed). Indeed from that, sat (a thing revealed) was made.

In this chapter, we are about to mention the part which sets Buddha as the loka pitru based on the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, This sūtra, was made around the birth of Christ and has the meaning of a righteous teaching like a white lotus flower. It was considered the most important one among early Mahayana Sutras.

Buddha is an immortal being and continues to appear to save people. It shows nirvana as a way to redeem sattva but is said to stay here always and preach without being perished. Also Buddha calls himself as ‘aham lokapitā’(I am the Universal Father).

I am the loka pitru. I realized it by myself. I am a doctor for sattva and a redeemer for all living things. I show nirvana as a way to redeem foolish sattva but do not perish<sup>2</sup>.

Buddha, as the loka pitru, came down to world of human beings to preach. Buddha and sattva are connected by the link of law and this is different from the aspect of early Buddhism.

The part which expresses Buddha as the loka pitru is found through the samsāra mandira of the third Biyupoom and the details is as follows:

Śāriputra, I explain this meaning using analogy, and wise men could understand it. Śāriputra, there was a big old man in a village in a country. He was old and weak but had many properties, fields, houses and servants. His house was very large<sup>3</sup> but had only one gate and one to five hundred persons lived in it. The house was old, the walls were collapsed, columns were rotten and the girder was inclined and risky. One day, flames suddenly shot up from the house and burned it. At that time, the old man's 10, 20 or 30 sons were in it.<sup>4</sup>

The old man escaped from the burning house and thought as follows:

<sup>2</sup> Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, XXV, Vs.19, p.195 “yameva aham lokapitā svayambhūḥ - cikitsakaḥ sarvaprajāna nāthaḥ , diparita mudhāms ca viditvā bālān- anivṛ to nivṛ uta darsayāmi”

<sup>3</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “tad yatāpi nāma śāriputra iha syāt kasmimścit eva grāme vā nagare vā nigame vā.....”

<sup>4</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “tac ca sahasā eva mahatā āgniskandhena.....”

Although I escaped this burning house safe and sound, my kids have play on the brain and don't know the fire and afraid of it. They shall suffer from great pains of burn but they do not hate nor concern about it and even think about escape.<sup>5</sup>

And the old man made up his mind as follows:

‘I am strong and will put my kids into my clothes or make them sit on the desk and drag them out of the house.’ Then he thought again that, ‘This house has only one gate and it is too narrow. And if my kids who have play on the brain and cannot figure out this situation fall, they will get burned. So I'll let them this risky and dreadful situation so that they run out of this burning house.’<sup>6</sup>

Then, he shouted "get out quickly!" to his sons.

Although a father felt pity and persuaded them earnestly, the kids had play on the brain and did not believe in their father's words. They were neither surprised nor frightened and did not want to get out of the house. Besides, they did not know what fire was and what was house and what was wrong but only romped and looked their father.<sup>7</sup>

The abovementioned analogy can be explained as follows: the house in this story is a transmigration house in which hundreds and tens of thousands of sattva live. The three worlds, like the burning house, have always flames of every kind of trouble. But sattva do not understand nor want to know this situation (na jānanti na pajānanti nodvijanti nāvabuddhyate). They are preoccupied with desire and hard to get out of it. This is avidyā. Because their asmimāna is left, they do not know fear. Here one who is called a father means Tathāgata who save all sattva from the fire of Kleśā. Buddha appears in the concept of a father.

The [Transmigration Collection] states as follows: the three worlds, like a burning house, has endless trouble of every kind. But sattva living in this house do not know it nor want to know it. This begins from an insatiable obsession over desire and is called avidyā. Therefore, the father of the abovementioned

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<sup>5</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “atha kalu śāriputtra sa purusas tam savakam niveśnam.....”

<sup>6</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “api tu ye ime mameva putrā bālakāḥ kumārakā.....”

<sup>7</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “iti pratisamkyāya tān kumārakān āmantrayatesma.....”

story means an existence which can save sattva from the sea of agony, which is Buddha and Tathāgata.

In the story, the old man saves his sons using three wagons as an instrument.

This house is already covered by a big fire; my kids might suffer a disaster unless they get out of the house. So I will use an instrument to save them from a disaster.’ The father knew that the kids like every kind of rare and funny toy and said “Here are rare toys with which you want to play. If you don't get them, you will regret. Now, toys including a lamp cart, a deer cart and a cow cart with which you can play are here, so get out of the house quickly. I will give you as many as you want.”<sup>8</sup>

Toys reflect a collection of trouble and desire of sattva. Using the toys Buddha induces sattva to approach truth, with an instrument using an insatiable obsession. To foolish sattva who cannot get out of the restraints of transmigration by themselves, Tathāgata is as good as an existence of salvation.

At that time, children were content with the toys to be given by their father and rushed to get out of the burning house with rejoice. The old man was very happy to see all his children escaped the house safe and sound and sat on an intersection safely.<sup>9</sup>

Sattva is foolish, so they are bound by an exhausting chain of life and can get free of it. The old man who was happy to see his children getting out of greed, anger and foolishness shows mercy towards all sattva (sabba bhūta hitānukampi).

Śāriputra, Tathāgata, too, is like this and the loka pitru.<sup>10</sup>

Like this, from the look of Buddha who is merciful, diligent and benefits sattva by doing good things all the time, the concept of the loka pitru is drawn. In the above analogy, the old man did not save his children by force. He saved their lives using their obsession. So does Buddha. He saves sattva using three carts, not daśa-bala and catvāri-vaiśāradya.

Buddha who was a discoverer of truth and man in the early scripture of Buddhism appears as the concept of the loka pitru. This is confirmed as follows:

<sup>8</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958) Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III,

<sup>9</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958) Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III,

<sup>10</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, “tathāgato nānabala vaiśāradya āvenika buddha dharma samanvāgatah atibalavān loka pitām.....”

Śāriputra, wise men among sattva will believe that Tathāgata is the loka pitru.<sup>11</sup>

Tathāgata mentions the word 'my children' to sattva seeking wisdom and says that they will reach nirvana using a big cart of buddhayāna. Therefore, in the third class of Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra,, it is interpreted that Buddha preaches the way of vimoka to sattva in the position of the loka pitru.

Besides, in the fifth Chapter of Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra,, we can see the concept of the loka pitru of Buddha.

Kāśyapa, for example, mountains, streams, valleys, grass and shrubs, trees and herbs in all world are various in name and color. So, rain falling from one cloud grows them and makes flowers bloom according to the type and nature. They appear in the world as if a big cloud rises.<sup>12</sup>

In this paragraph, a big cloud is Tathāgata, rain is Buddhist sermon and herbs are sattva, implying that Buddha is the loka pitru.

It is also confirmed in the following paragraph that Buddha, a discoverer of the truth and teacher in the early scriptures, is materialized as a redeemer in the era of Mahayana.

I make those who did not get out of transmigration reach nirvana, those who did not know see, those who are not perfect be perfect and those who did not reach nirvana reach nirvana. I indeed know this life and afterlife, and know and see the whole thing.<sup>13</sup>

Sons of heaven, men and a group of asura, come here and listen to the law.<sup>14</sup>

Buddha appears as a redeemer, the loka pitru in that he suggests the direction for emperors, men and a group of asura to listen to the law.

Tathāgata is not limited to a being which knows everything but expanded to the concept of a redeemer. The look of a father who spares no effort for his ill child

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<sup>11</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, tatra śāriputra ye sattvā pandhita jānīyā bhavanti. te tathāgatasya loka pitur abhiśraddhanti.

<sup>12</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III, "tat yathāpi nāma kāśyapa mahāmeghā sarvāvatim lokadātum samjvdyā samam vāri pramuncati sarvam....."

<sup>13</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III

<sup>14</sup> Wogihara and Tsuchinda(1958), Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, III,

to make many medicines and passes one of them which is thought the child would take it well also expresses Buddha as a redeemer. In this story introduced in the fifth class of the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, Buddha's earnest heart towards sattva in pain in endless transmigration can be seen.

According to the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, Buddha is not the one perished but lives in this world forever. It is written that Buddha reached nirvana as a way to redeem sattva and assumes an eternal figure of the loka pitru. The concept of the Bhaiṣajya-rāja vaidya guru mentioned together with the loka pitru makes an eternal figure of Tathāgata known. Buddha is an immortal being. As seen before, the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, continues to mention this with the concept of the loka pitru.

### **Maitreya-nātha Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Manjusri Bodhisattva, and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva appeared in the concept of loka pitru,**

“Bodhi” is a derivative of “budh (realize)”, meaning enlightenment, wisdom and the wisdom of Buddha. “Sattva” is originated from “√as (exist)”, meaning a being of life, that is a creature. It also means that to save bodhi on top and save the world at the bottom. Har Daya defined that bodhisattva is a man of enlightenment or a man who seeks enlightenment.<sup>15</sup>

In Sthavirā and Mahayana, bodhisattva appears as a great master. But in Mahayana, there came a new aspect that ‘bodhisattvas lighten everywhere’ and the number of bodhisattvas increased beyond count. Among numerous bodhisattvas, 8 of them became leaders. The eight bodhisattvas are also called Dhyāni-Bodhisattva. It is mentioned in the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, sūtra that Buddha did prātiharya and let many bodhisattvas know Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (unexcelled complete Enlightenment), after he obtained Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi which was hard to get even during hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands and hundred millions kalpa of no limit. Besides, the purpose of bodhisattva is to save sattva to get Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. The obligatory look of bodhisattva to look after sattva can be regarded as the concept of the loka pitru.

#### **I. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva**

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<sup>15</sup> Har Dayal (1932) *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, London, p.4

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva and Manjusri Bodhisattva are on either side of Buddha. Manjusri Bodhisattva takes charge of the virtue of wisdom of Buddha and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva believes the virtue of reason, longevity and behavior. Because Samantabhadra Bodhisattva has a virtue to make sattva live long, it is also called Yeonsu(延壽) Bodhisattva or Yeonmyung(延命) Bodhisattva. Also, because it sits on a lotus flower seat on a white elephant, it is also called Sangwang Bodhisattva or Yeongjoa Bodhisattva.

In the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is surrounded by numerous bodhisattvas.<sup>16</sup> Not only bodhisattvas, but also many groups of sattva such as gods, nāga, devils, gandharva, asura, garuda, kinnara and manasya follow Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.<sup>17</sup> This imply the concept of the father of all sattvas. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva said to Tathāgata that it looks after all those who have saddharma. The purpose is to look after those who have saddharma and prevent evil deed. It is the role of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva to end the pain of sattva and get happiness for them, like a father taking care of his child.

I give an advice to them and make good deed for them, while preaching a dharani.<sup>18</sup>

Through this word, we can peep that Samantabhadra Bodhisattva is a being of sarva-vyāpi and that Samantabhadra Bodhisattva saves sattva in a figure of sarva-vyāpi. Buddha said that those who frequently listen to and speak of a dharani of the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, must consider that all these things are the blessing of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.<sup>19</sup> In the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra,, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva appears as the concept of the loka pitru through its role to save sattva.

## II. Manjusri Bodhisattva

Manjusri Bodhisattva is a bodhisattva which symbolizes the supreme wisdom in Mahayana. It has a great wisdom and holds a sword in its right hand and rides

<sup>16</sup> Vaidya P.L,(1960) *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, XXVI, p.264 ,x, "atha kalu samantabhadro. bhodhisattvo mahasattvah pūrvasyām ....."

<sup>17</sup> Above *sutr* , XXVI, p.264, "devanāgayaksagandharvāsurasuragrudakinnaramahauragamanusyāmanusyāi..."

<sup>18</sup> Above *sutra*, XVIII,

<sup>19</sup> Above *sutra* , XXVI, p.265 "adaṇḍe daṇḍapati daṇḍā vartani daṇḍa kuśale daṇḍu sudhāri..."



on a lion that symbolizes dignity. Comparing with other bodhisattvas, this bodhisattva rarely appears as the concept of the loka the pitru but in the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra,, it is expressed as the loka pitru.

Manjusri, the son of Buddha, is invited to this gathering to get rid of doubt.<sup>20</sup>

Manjusri, dragon, kinnara and asura are looking at you awaiting your answer.<sup>21</sup>

Like this, in the Saddharmapundarīka sūtra<sup>22</sup>, Buddha invites Manjusri Bodhisattva to preach his light emitting from his body and in this case Manjusri Bodhisattva can be seen as the loka pitru. And Buddha says to praññā kūṭha bodhisattva as follows.

Bodhisattva, please wait a moment. You must see Manjusri Bodhisattva and discuss the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra with it. Then you could have completed Suhāmatī.<sup>23</sup>

And after Manjusri Bodhisattva went back from the world of nāga, 'praññā kūṭha' bodhisattva asked as follows:

“Bodhisattva, how many persons got enlightenment in the world of nāga?”

Then Manjusri Bodhisattva said to 'praññā kūṭha' bodhisattva. “I can't tell. It is not possible to count them.”<sup>24</sup>

In order to listen to the conversation between two bodhisattvas, many bodhisattvas appear in heaven. They are those who were saved by Manjusri Bodhisattva. Like this, Manjusri Bodhisattva has a great power and is a father who saves sattva. Besides, it also falls upon the concept of the loka pitru that praññā kūṭha bodhisattva asked Manjusri Bodhisattva to teach the truth.

It was the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra that I taught while living in the sea.<sup>25</sup>(25)

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<sup>20</sup>Above *sutra*, XIX, p.223

<sup>21</sup> Above *sutra*, XIX, p,224

<sup>22</sup> Above *sutra*, XIX, p224 "bhagavato mahā nimittam pratihārāvabhāsam drustvā āścarya....."

<sup>23</sup>Above *sutra*, XIX,, p.224

<sup>24</sup> Above *sutra*, XIX, p.225

<sup>25</sup> Above *sutra*, XIX, p.182

At this, the words that Manjusri Bodhisattva lives in the sea can be compared with viṣṇu of Hinduism in terms of faith. The roles of viṣṇu of Hinduism and that of Manjusri Bodhisattva of the Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra are found to be similar to each other.

### III. Maitreya Bodhisattva

According to the scripture of Buddhism, Maitreya Bodhisattva received a record as a Buddha to save sattva which could not be saved by Buddha under the nagavka (龍華樹/龍花樹). Maitreya Bodhisattva who is described as a Buddha of next world and bodhisattva of this world is the only bodhisattva respected by both Mahayana and Theravāda. In the Cakkavattisutta of Dīghanikāya<sup>26</sup>, there are records about Maitreya Bodhisattva.

It is considered that India and Sri Lanka made the statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva and of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva similarly. Buddha said that it is only Maitreya Bodhisattva that has divine power to deliver Buddhist teachings as they are since Tathāgata. Furthermore, in the śālistamba sūtra, Maitreya Bodhisattva is described as not only a man who preach teachings but also the concept of loka pitru.<sup>27</sup> Śāriputra requests to interpret Buddha's words that "those who see pratīyasamutpāda see laws and those who see law see the law of pratīyasamutpāda<sup>28</sup>" and asks about pratīyasamutpāda to Maitreya Bodhisattva. From the answer of Maitreya Bodhisattva to the following questions, we can see the great figure of Maitreya Bodhisattva.

What is the law of pratīyasamutpāda? How can see the law if one knows the law of pratīyasamutpāda? How can become a Buddha based on the knowledge of law?

Maitreya Bodhisattva is considered to be able to preach Buddha's words not only in the present but also in the past or future. It has been known that Maitreya Bodhisattva's divine power of preaching is superior to all other bodhisattvas. Through this observation, it is believed that Maitreya Bodhisattva, too, has the concept of the loka pitru.

### IV. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva

<sup>26</sup> DN, I, p.76

<sup>27</sup> śālistamba Sūtra, I, p.100 "āyusmān śāriputro mitriyam bhodhisattvam mahāsattva metadavocat. adhyātra..."

<sup>28</sup> Above *sutra*, I, p.100, "yo bhikṣavah pratityasamuppādam paśyati, sa dharmam pasyati.....artam kathamah..."

Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is one of the most well-known bodhisattvas among bodhisattvas of Buddhism. It is a bodhisattva of mercy, who keeps sattva from pain until the appearance of Maitreya after Sakayamuni reached nirvana. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva directly shows the concept of the loka pitru. The term of “Avalokiteśvara” can be interpreted in various ways and a basic interpretation is a ‘person who sees the whole world’. By language.

In Mahayana, Buddha is the center of salvation but Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva also contributes to it. It is said that preta of evil deed had been in pain for 500 lives but was reincarnated in paradise after Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s preaching.<sup>29</sup>(31) The expression that many people were saved by Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and reincarnated in paradise is also found in Suvaraprabhāsa sūtra of Samādhirāja sūtra.<sup>30</sup>(32)

According to Kalpadrūma avadānamālā<sup>31</sup>, Buddha freed a monk Sthaviraka from pain by virtue of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. At this, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is explained as a unique one, too.

Through Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra, we can see various figures of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.<sup>32</sup> Especially, its figure as a redeemer is emphasized; it is written that Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva eases the pain of sattva with his thousand eyes and thousand arms. Also, he created the sun and daughters with his eyes, śiva with his forehead, Brahman with his shoulders, viṣṇu with his breast, sarasvati with his teeth, wind with his mouth and earth with his legs. Like this, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva as the loka pitru is well expressed through Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra. A precious explanation about Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is also found in the 24<sup>th</sup> class of Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra On the importance of calling the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Buddha says as follows:

A good man, if limitless numerous sattvas in all troubles call the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva with one heart, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva will immediately hear them and make them reach nirvana.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Wijesinghe.S.A., kalpadrūma avadānamālā, xiv, Vs..179-183

<sup>30</sup> The Samādhirāja Sūtra or Candrapradīpa Sūtra (Sanskrit) is a Buddhist sutra dating to c. 2nd century CE, Luis O. Gomez and Jonathan A. Silk, *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahayana Buddhist Texts*, Ann Arbor, 1989 p.11

<sup>31</sup> Wijesinghe.S.A.G, *kalpadrūma avadānamālā*, xiv, Vs.139-149

<sup>32</sup> Sasanaratana M, Sri Lanka Mahayana Adahas, p.231

<sup>33</sup>Vaidya P.L, XXIV, p.195 *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, “iha kulaputra yāvanti sattva kotinayutaśatasahasraṇi yāni dukkhati.....”,

If those who call the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva go into a big fire, the fire cannot burn them because of the divine power of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. If they fall into the deep water and call the name, they shall be in the shallow water. If numerous sattvas go into the great sea to find such treasure as gold, silver, glass, agate, coral, amber and pearl and the boat is drifted by a storm and falls into a country of devil, then even one person calls the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, all persons shall get out of the disaster of devil.<sup>34</sup> The 24<sup>th</sup> class is about that just calling the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva delivers one from pain. This is an example that shows the concept of the loka pitru in detail.

If persons receive the names of 6.2 billion bodhisattvas and practice good deeds offering food, clothing, bedding and medicine with their whole heart or call the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and worship him even for a moment, these two courses have same blessings.<sup>35</sup> This mentions that how important it is to call the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

According to Suvaraprabhāsa sūtra<sup>36</sup> and Kalpadrūma avadānamālā<sup>37</sup>, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva saves those who are suppressed, dying, suffering from bad dreams and punished to go to the hell. And they can change their figures according to the demand of those in pain, they are described as 6 figures corresponding to 6 world of transmigration including Naraka, Preta, Tiryagyoni, Asura, Imanusya, and Nirvana. Also, it is said to appear as the figure of Buddha or pratyeka-buddha and save sattva.

Sthavirā says that those who did antarī pāpakarma receive punitive justice without fail. However, according to kalpadrūma avadānamālā, they could not receive punitive justice by virtue of the divine power of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. That is, Buddha ordered the King Ajāsat who killed his father to turn to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and the king who obeyed the order reincarnated in paradise by virtue of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.<sup>38</sup> Like this, it

<sup>34</sup> Vaidya P.L, *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, XXIV, p.195, “sacet punaḥ kulaputa sattvā nadibhirubhyamānā avalokiteśvarasya bodhisattvasya.....”

<sup>35</sup> Above *sutra*, p.197, “yaśca kulaputra..... yaścadvāsaṣṭ inām gangānadivālikāsamānam.....”

<sup>36</sup> Above *sutra*, p.198, “sati kulaputra..... buddharūpena sattvānam dharmam desayati. santi loka dātvaḥ.....”

<sup>37</sup> Wijesinghe.S.A.G, *kalpadrūma avadānamālā*, xx, Vs.379, “santastu tribhaveloke bhodhicaryānusādhiṇaḥ.....”

<sup>38</sup> Above *sutra*, V.385,

seems that Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva exercises great power enough to change punitive justice. In other words, it implies that Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva has all power as the loka pitru. Besides, as seen before, among numerous bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva shows itself as the loka pitru most powerfully.

The reason why Maitreya Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Manjusri Bodhisattva and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva are outstanding among 6.2 billion bodhisattvas is because they have the concept of the loka pitru. Also, the reason why bodhisattvas are described as the figure of god in Hinduism seems because Hinduism was influenced by the then Greek culture and Pacian culture.<sup>39</sup>

### **Comparison between the concept of the loka pitru of Mahayana Sutras and the Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**

The concept of loka pitru mentioned in Mahayana sutra is also found from the four Gospels of Christianity.

The Gospel according to Matthew

The Gospel according to Mark

The Gospel according to Luke

The Gospel according to John

Among them, the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same perspective. A gospel is a record of testimonies left by subsequent generations about the teachings and life of Jesus Christ the Son of God who delivered the news of salvation.

A gospel is originated from Ευαγγέλιον in Ancient Greek (euangelion Evangelium in Latin) which means a good news. In Christianity, it means a theologian document written by authors with the Jesus Traditional handed down in the form of documents or oral tradition based on their Christology and the historical situation of community.

The Gospels and the Mahayana sutras have some similarities in the concept of the universal father and the loka pitru, for the concept of loka pitru which is corresponded to the universal father found in the Gospels is found from the concept of bodhisattva in Mahayana.

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<sup>39</sup>*Bodhisattva Doctrine*, pp.18-19

In *rāṣṭrapāla paripṛuchā sūtra* of Mahayana<sup>40</sup>, the duties of bodhisattva are explained as follows:

By looking at poor people in pain, I abandoned my body by myself. I am the king who does everything for them. When they come to me, I make them rich.

This shows the look of bodhisattva who save sattva well. In the Gospel of Luke<sup>41</sup>(43), we can find a similar case.

God loves you so much. He is your Father. His love raises poor people. He has mercy on bad persons, lepers and prostitutes.

Like this, the duty of bodhisattva and Jesus is to save the poor. Also, they have mercy and charity on all persons and appear as Savior and give their lives to save the poor. Besides, Jesus tries to save Jews, and according to *Lalitavistara*<sup>42</sup>, bodhisattva also has mercy on sattva like a father and free them from transmigration.

While bodhisattva believes that all sattva are his children, like parents love their children, Jesus made Jews obtain citizenship and through His Divinity, helped people. For example, in the Gospel according to Mark, the following 18 cases are written.

1. Jesus heals a man with an evil spirit (1:23-28).
2. Jesus heals Simon's mother –in-law who was sick in bed with a fever (1:30-31).
3. Jesus heals a leper (1:40-45).
4. Jesus heals a paralyzed man (2:1-12).
5. Jesus heals a man with a paralyzed hand on the Sabbath (3:1-5).
6. Jesus calms the wind and the waves (4:35-41).

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<sup>40</sup> *rāṣṭra pāla paripṛuchā sūtra*, Vs.118, p.133, “*dukkhitān vikṣya narān daridrān tyaktā mayā priyameva śarīram - prāpya dhanam sa kṛ utaśca ādyaḥ sarvamddena nṛupeṇ satā me*”

<sup>41</sup> **Luke** 12/6-7)

<sup>42</sup> Mitra, *Lalitavistara*, Vs.15, p.203, “*mātuḥ pituś caikaputre yatā prema pravṛ utate-tathā anyonya sattvānam putra prema tadābhavat*”

7. Jesus heals a man with evil spirits (5:1-20).
8. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter who was thought to die (5:21-24, 35-43).
9. Jesus heals the woman who touched His Cloak (5:25-34).
10. Jesus feeds five thousand men (6:34-44).
11. Jesus walks on the water (6:45-52).
12. Jesus heals a Gentile woman's daughter (7:24-30).
13. Jesus heals a deaf-mute (7:31-47).
14. Jesus feeds four thousand people (8:1-9).
15. Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26).
16. Jesus heals a body with an evil spirit (9:17-27).
17. Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52).
18. Jesus curses the fig tree (11:12-14).

The 18 cases written in the Gospel shows Jesus' love. According to Lalitavistara, bodhisattvas did actions of same meaning as what Jesus did. That's why we can consider Jesus and bodhisattvas are similar in behavior.

Bodhisattvas made those who had no eyes, ears and noses perfect<sup>43</sup> and insane people sane. Those who suffered from diseases became healthy.<sup>44</sup> And with the light of bodhisattvas who came under the linden tree, all pains of sattvas in the hell were removed and the sick became healthy. In other words, the act of bodhisattvas in Lalitavistara is similar to the act of Jesus.

We can compare both cases; one is that Buddha invites maha barahama to save sattvas and Jesus is told to save people.

A great hero, remember the promise to save sattvas. The time is now. Go.<sup>45</sup>(46)

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<sup>43</sup> Mitra, Lalitavistara, Vs.11, p.203, "caksu śotra vihinaś ca ye cānye vikalendriyaḥ..."

<sup>44</sup> Mitra, Lalitavistara, Vs.13, p.203, unmattāḥ smṛ utimantaś ca daridrā dhaninaś thatā...."

<sup>45</sup> Mitra, Lalitavistara, Vs.3, p.212, "sādho vīro smaracaryāṃ purimāṃ yā te āsīj jagathitapraṇidhiḥ....."

According to the Gospel according to Mark, after John the Baptist was put in prison, he said as follows:

“This is the right time. The Kingdom of heaven is near.”

We can compare the birth of Tathāgata and that of God. In the Gospels, it is written that the birth of God is unseen by the eyes of ordinary people. The same thing is mentioned in samādhi rāja sūtra; that is, the birth of Tathāgata is unseen and unknown by and to ordinary people.<sup>46</sup>

Also, according to samādhi rāja sūtra<sup>47</sup>, after doing salvation, bodhisattvas go to sukhāvati where Amitābha Buddha is and are reincarnated in it. Likewise, Jesus died and rose back to life and was taken up to heaven. This is written in the Gospel according to Matthew Ch. 28 verses 1-8 and the Gospel according to Luke Ch. 24 verses 1-12. Consequently, the positions of bodhisattvas and Jesus are similar.

According to the Gospel according to John, heaven and earth will pass away, but God is eternal. Jesus is the Eternal God and will come to this world to save people.

Samādhi rāja sūtra<sup>48</sup> and Svarṇaprabhāsa sūtra<sup>49</sup> tell the eternity of Tathāgata. According to these sutras, Buddha lives in this world forever whether he died or not. He reached nirvana as a way to save sattva and assumes the eternal figure as the loka pitru. The same is written in Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra<sup>50</sup>.

Therefore, we can know that Mahayana considers the greatness of Tathāgata in terms of faith. The Bible explains the Eternal God and the Mahayana sutra explains the eternal Tathāgata. The Gospels say that if you see God, the Father, you can live forever. The Mahayana sutra also preaches that through the encounter with the eternal Tathāgata, you can attain Buddhahood, which means entering sukhāvati or buddhakṣetra (paradise). In sukhāvati, countless numbers

<sup>46</sup> Vindya, samādhi rāja sūtra, Vs.5, p.144 “evam sambhavaḥ buddhānam-lokanāthānam idṛ uṣṭh.....”

<sup>47</sup> Vindya, samādhi rāja sūtra, Vs.69, p.169 “itaścyavitvāna sa bhodhisattvaḥ sukhāvatiṃ”

<sup>48</sup> Vindya, samādhi rāja sūtra IV, Vs.1, p.19, “apāvṛ utam me amurtasya dvāram-acakkhito dhaṛ ma svabhāvuyādṛ uṣṭh”

<sup>49</sup> svarṇaprabhāsa sūtra, “na buddhaḥ parinirvāti na dharmāḥ parihyate...” p.19

<sup>50</sup> Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra, Buddhist Sanskrit text -06 Vs.14, p.21 “yameva ahm lokapitā svayambhū- cikitsakaḥ sarvaprajāna nāthaḥ”



of Tathāgata are. Samādhi rāja sūtra<sup>51</sup> says as follows: bodhisattvas who free from obsession and follow laws enter sukhāvati after saving sattva. Like this, sukhāvati or buddhakṣetra suggests the same direction as the Kingdom of God (Heaven).

It is the duty of Christ to send all those who believe in God to God. A similar process is found in gaṇḍavyūha sūtra<sup>52</sup>. The duty of bodhisattvas is to free sattva from pain and lead them to nirvana. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva expressed as the son of Amitābha Buddha exists between Amitābha Buddha and sattva. This concept is similar to the role of Jesus who is between God and men. This concept can be found in many sutras including Sukhāvātī sūtra<sup>53</sup>, Samādhi rāja sūtra, and Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra. Jesus in the Gospels preaches the words of God and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva preaches the words of Amitābha Buddha.

According to kalpadṛuma avadāna mālā<sup>54</sup>, sometimes bodhisattvas appear as a guide who leads sattva to sukhāvati. This role is same as the position of Christ who leads people to God.

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.<sup>55</sup>

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, ‘Show us the Father’?<sup>56</sup>

Generally, the four Gospels explain the relationships between God and Jesus, the Son of God.

The Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him. Then a voice said from heaven, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.”<sup>57</sup>(59)

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<sup>51</sup> Vindya, samādhi rāja sūtra, XIII, Vs.18, p.81, “anopaliptā lokena loka dharma na sajjati-asajjamāṇaḥ kāyena buddhakṣetrāni gacchati”

<sup>52</sup> Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra, Vs.99, p.383, “esa durgati viśodhaisyati- esa svargamupadarśisyati”

<sup>53</sup> sukhāvātī sūtra, Buddhist Sanskrit text Vs.41, p.243, “so'va lokitesvaro artha kovidaḥ hitānukampī bahusattvamocakaḥ....”

<sup>54</sup> Wijesinhe, kalpadṛuma avadāna mālā, XX, 283v

<sup>55</sup> John, 14:6

<sup>56</sup> John, 14:9

<sup>57</sup> Mark, 3:13

The way God calls Jesus and the look that Jesus prays to God show that God is the Father and Jesus is the Son of God. A similar relationship to the concept of the Son of God in the Gospels can be found between Buddha and bodhisattvas. Buddha's sons explained in Mahayana are bodhisattvas. For example, in Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra, it is found that Buddha calls bodhisattvas his sons. Also, Maitreya Bodhisattva and Manjusri Bodhisattva are explained as Buddha's sons.<sup>58</sup>(60) Buddha is said to teach Vaipulya-sūtra to his sons bodhisattvas.<sup>59</sup>(61) If to teach Vaipulya-sūtra is to show a father-son relationships, it indicates the form of covenant. This is shown in the form of covenant between God and Jesus in the Gospels.

In Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra, I, the father of sattva tells my sons to free from pain.<sup>60</sup> Like this, bodhisattvas preach laws with the concept of the Son ship of Jesus.

In the Gospels, it is written that God is the Creator who made the universe.

God made all things.<sup>61</sup>

According to Mahayana, the creator of the universe is Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. It is said that at the time of vipasvim Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva created the world.<sup>62</sup> In the concept of the loka pitru as seen in above, the world is made and exists by bodhisattva. This can be understood as same as the concept that God is the Creator of all things.

Table I :Comparison between Christianity and Mahayana

<b>Kristianity</b>	<b>Mahayana</b>
Heaven	Buddha's World ,(sukhāvati, buddhakṣetra)
The God (Universal Father)	Buddha(World Father)
Jesus (Son of the God)	Bodhisattvas(Sons of Buddha)

<sup>58</sup> Vindya, samādhi rāja sūtra, I, Vs.56, p.10, "puccheti maitreyu jinasya putra....."

<sup>59</sup> Buddhist Sanskrit text -06 Vs.40, p.30 "bhavanti ye ceha sadā viśuddhā- vyaktā suci surata buddha putrāḥ"

<sup>60</sup> Buddhist Sanskrit text -06 Vs.78 p.33, "putra mamā yūyaham pitā vo mayā ca nikāsita yūya dukkhāt"

<sup>61</sup> Yohan, 1. 3-7

<sup>62</sup> gaṇḍavyūha sutra, II p.120

Testament	Vaipulya- sūtra, Nine Dharma
Eternal state (Meet the God)	Eternal state(Meet Amitāba Buddha)

Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra is a great teaching and studies the law preached at the Dharma samgāyana of bodhisattvas.<sup>63</sup> At this, Tripitaka means the Old Testament and Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra is the form of the New Testament. And the new ideas and positions found in Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra appear in the form of the New Testament. That is, the reason why the term of samdhābhāsyam is used in Vs. 16 of the 12<sup>th</sup> class of Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra can be attributed to such grounds. And to conclude, the Gospels and the Mahayana sutras have many similarities.

### Conclusion

We have looked into whether the concept of the loka pitru attributed to various religionists is also found in the life of Buddha. The reason that many religionists are expressed as universal (sarvavyāpi) god may be attributed to the social viewpoint that it is not right to see those who mastered their mind through practice. However, Buddha points out that it is not right to express a man as god. Therefore, it is inferred that in Nikaya, Buddha does not appear as the concept of the loka pitru or God-Godhead.

Born as a man, Buddha is a unique person beyond man, god, and Brahman; that is, Buddha is a great man. A big difference between Mahayana and Theravāda Buddhism occurred after Buddha reached nirvana is the life of Buddha.

In addition this study compares the concept of the loka pitru in Mahayana Buddhism and the universal father of Christianity.

In the age of Veda in India, there was a solid faith in gods. But as time went by, people had doubt ‘To which god should we perform ancestral rites?’ In this process, Nihilism arose. So Brahmanists newly established the relationships between god and men and the power of god, while reviving the faith in god. Criticizing this point, other various religions have arisen. Among them, Buddhism was at the head of them.

<sup>63</sup> Buddhist Sanskrit text -06, Vs.17, p.212 “ye bhodhisattvā.....samgīti dharmesu ca ye karonti...”

Today, people try to get an answer for the concept of faith through modern science, which seems to be problematic. Especially, many illogical parts have been broken by modern science. In 1658, an Irish Ursar bishop insisted that God made the universe on March 23, 4004 before Christ. However, he was criticized by many scholars. ‘Davin’ discovered ten-million-year-old fossil men. According to ‘Prajapati Paramestin’, the universe was made from unexplainable liquid. The theories of the past that the universe was made by someone have been criticized by modern science. For this reason, we should not regard it as false because it cannot be proven by modern science.

Revealed religions inevitably have the concept of the universal father. For Buddhism, however, it is too much to express such a concept, for it is expressed as an important part that it is you who aid yourself. This also means that do not rely on others. Therefore, it might be not right to express Buddha as the loka pitru. It seems that Mahayana adopted this concept as an instrumental way. But if it is expanded more, it would appear as eternity beyond an instrument. Mahayana interpreted the concept of Buddha in various ways. Among them, the concept of the loka pitru expanded and appeared in not only Buddha but also bodhisattvas. Especially, it is found that bodhisattvas appear as the messenger of Buddha, while carrying out their role of savior. This study compared Buddha and bodhisattvas of Mahayana, not Theravāda Buddhism with God and Jesus in Christianity and found that the Mahayana sutras and the Gospels have close relationships variously. The Gospels might have been written in the period that the Mahayana sutras were made. In other words, the Mahayana sutras were discovered earlier than the Gospels. The concept of devāti deva which expresses Buddha in Theravada Buddhism is shown in Prince Siddhartha of Mahayana. And Buddha is explained far higher. It is said that faith and charity and various unique thoughts for the life of Buddha are found in many sutras including Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra. They have much effect on the Gospels of Christianity.<sup>64</sup> It is also said that the idea of bodhisattvas and Jātaka have much effect on making of the life story of the disciples of Jesus.<sup>65</sup> Besides, Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra and Lalitavistara seems to have much effect.

Christians have said the Mahayana sutras were influenced by the Gospels. Despite of difficulty to make an exact conclusion, it should be recognized from a plural viewpoint that both religions exchanged influence with each other.

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<sup>64</sup> Sanskrit Buddhism, p.172 “And this is also the period of the rise of apotryphal Gospels in which we are able to demonstrate quite a series of undoubted loans from Buddhistic literature.”

<sup>65</sup> Ven. Sasanarathana(1961), lakdiva Mahayana adahas, p.165

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