

## Abstract

This is a systematic study on the psychological, soteriological and historical significance of *adhimutti/adhimukti* and *adhimokkha/adhimokṣa* as these concepts are found in the *Pāli* Canon, the Chinese *Āgamas*, the Abhidharma and the Sanskrit Buddhist literature. The central point of this investigation is to highlight the psychological and soteriological applicability of *adhimutti/adhimukti* and *adhimokkha/adhimokṣa*, thus going beyond the limits of academic textual analysis.

This study has unearthed the significance of these concepts in the practice and attainments. In doing so, the relevant concepts have been studied from the following perspectives: (i) from an ethical point of view, (ii) from a karmic perspective, (iii) as a requisite condition that advances religious praxis, (iv) as a tool for the Mahāyanists to justify their *yāna* system, (v) the soteriological meaning of *adhimukti* as 'the stage of practice of transcendental assertion' (*adhimukti-caryā-bhūmi*) which marks the stage of progress preceding a *bodhisattva*'s ascendance to the first *bhūmi*, (vi) from a supramundane point of view in which the development of *adhimukti* up to the level of a Perfection of Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna-pāramī*), or the first of the Five Strengths (*pañca-balāni*), as *saddhā bala* (faith), the active will and effort of the individual which is instrumental in transforming an ordinary person to a noble one (*ariya/ārya*).

Methodologically, this study falls into the broad category of textual interpretation and translation. It traces the genealogy of the concept of *adhimutti/adhimokṣa*, and examines how a particular concept has been interpreted, re-interpreted and understood across various Buddhist traditions. It highlights the continuity and change of a concept within the larger Buddhist tradition from ancient to southern to northern Buddhism.

This study is meant to provide a case study of textual interpretation ultimately pointing to the crucial need for taking a fresh look at the inner dynamics of Buddhist thought.