



# The ten powers of a buddha

Dominique Side (based on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosha*)

A buddha possesses ten powers, which, taken together, are exclusive to an enlightened being. Others may have some of these powers partially at various stages of the path, but in the case of a buddha all ten are present and each one of the ten is completely unlimited. Each one of these powers serves to guide suffering beings to enlightenment.

- (1) the power of knowing what is true and what is not, and what is possible and what is not, especially in terms of causation;
- (2) the power of knowing the specific karmic causality at work in the lives of each being throughout past, present, and future, thanks to the ability to know others' minds;
- (3) the power of knowing the resolutions taken by each being in terms of what personal and spiritual goals each one is striving for;
- (4) the power of knowing the personal dispositions of all beings, defined as thoughts that are fully established by the imprints of prior habits;
- (5) the power to discern each person's level of understanding and the ability to identify those who are of superior acumen and those who are not;
- (6) the power to comprehend all spiritual paths (Buddhist and non-Buddhist) and their respective results.
- (7) the power of knowing all meditative states, and the associated defilements remaining and purification attained;
- (8) the power of remembering the past lifetimes of self and others, even down to minute details. This arises on the basis of the four meditative absorptions which are generated through the union of shamatha and vipasyana meditation.
- (9) the power of knowing the future existences of self and others: when each person will die and be reborn, and in what realm of existence that person will be reborn. This also arises from the four absorptions.
- (10) the power of knowing how each affliction is eradicated and of experiencing the eradication of all afflictions.