

# Delusions: Six Root and Twenty Secondary

Compiled by George Draffan from  
*How to Meditate on the Stages of the Path* by Katheen McDonald

*Anger, lust – these enemies of mine –are limbless and devoid of faculties.  
They have no bravery, no cleverness; how then have they reduced me to such slavery?  
I it is who welcome them within my heart, allowing them to harm me at their pleasure!  
(Shantideva, 4:28-29)*

## Six Root Delusions

1. **Ignorance** is a lack of understanding about how things exist. Examples include *ignorance of karma*. Another is *seeing things in a way opposite to reality*, such as believing in a solid self existing inherently and independent of everything else; this ignorance is the root of samsara, the source of all other delusions as well as the karmic actions that keep us circling in samsara.
2. **Attachment** arises toward objects we find attractive and pleasing, whether external (person, food, music), or internal (knowledge or experiences). There is an element of exaggeration involved--the mind views the object as more wonderful than it really is and projects qualities that aren't there.
3. **Anger**, or hatred, is a delusion that arises toward a person or object that we dislike or has caused suffering to oneself or someone cared about. When we are angry, we do not see the object of our anger in a realistic way--the mind exaggerates its unlikeable features and superimposes qualities that are not there.
4. **Arrogance**. Based on the false notion of self, arrogance or pride is an inflated sense of self, seeing itself as superior in terms of social standing, intelligence, education, wealth, abilities, physical traits, and so on.
5. **Deluded doubt** involves aspects of Dharma such as karma, rebirth, and the possibility of attaining enlightenment. Although we are encouraged to question and investigate the teachings rather than blindly believe in them, if doubt is leaning toward an incorrect conclusion (e.g., "There's probably no such thing as enlightenment") it becomes an obstacle to our practice.
6. **Deluded views** are incorrect views. One example is *the view of the transitory collection*: the belief in a real, independent "I." Another example is *extreme views* based on a false notion of "I," believing it to be an external, unchanging soul.

## Twenty Secondary Delusions

### Five secondary delusions derived from anger

1. **Wrath**--of belligerence, aggression--is due to an increase in anger; this mental factor wishes to cause immediate harm to others.
2. **Vengeance**--or resentment, grudge-holding--firmly holds to past harm done by another, does not forget it, and wishes to retaliate.
3. **Spite** is preceded by wrath or vengeance and wants to speak harsh words in response to unpleasant words said by others.
4. **Jealousy**, or envy, is a type of anger that, out of attachment to respect or material gain, cannot bear others' good things and accomplishments and feels resentful about them.

5. **Harmfulness**, or cruelty, is a type of anger that, with a malicious intention devoid of any compassion or kindness, desires to inflict harm on others.

### Three secondary delusions derived from attachment

1. **Miserliness** is a mental factor that, out of attachment to respect or material gain, firmly holds to onto one's possessions with no wish to give them away.
2. **Complacency**--or haughtiness, self-satisfaction--is a type of attachment that, being attentive to our accomplishments and good qualities, generates a deluded sense of confidence.
3. **Excitement**--or agitation, restlessness--is a type of attachment that does not allow the mind to remain focused on a virtuous objects but scatters it here and there to many other objects.

### Six secondary delusions derived from ignorance

1. **Concealment** is a type of ignorance that wants to hide one's faults when another person talks about them with a beneficial motivation.
2. **Dullness**--or lethargy, foggy mindedness--is a type of ignorance that makes the mind lethargic and dark so it cannot comprehend its object clearly.
3. **Laziness** is a type of ignorance that, having firmly grasped an object offering temporary happiness, either does not wish to do anything virtuous, or although wishing to, is weak-hearted.
4. **Lack of faith** is a type of ignorance that does not believe, does not have admiration for, and does not aspire to the qualities of virtuous objects. It is the opposite of faith.
5. **Forgetfulness** is a mental factor that, having caused the apprehension of a virtuous object to be lost, induces memory and distraction toward nonvirtuous objects.
6. **Non-introspective awareness** is a type of deluded intelligence that is not fully alert to one's actions of body, speech, and mind, and thus causes one to become carelessly indifferent.

### Two secondary delusions derived from both attachment and ignorance

1. **Pretension** is a type of ignorance or attachment that, motivated by attachment to respect or material gain, wants to pretend to have qualities one does not have.
2. **Dishonesty**--or dissimulation--is a type of ignorance or attachment that, motivated by attachment to respect or material gain, does not want others to know one's shortcomings.

### Four secondary delusions derived from all three poisons

1. **Lack of integrity** is a type of ignorance, anger, or attachment that is devoid of shame; it does not avoid nonvirtue out of self-respect or for the sake of one's spiritual tradition.
2. **Inconsideration for others** is a type of ignorance, anger, or attachment that is devoid of consideration for other sentient beings, lacking embarrassment; it does not avoid nonvirtue out of consideration for others.
3. **Nonconscientiousness**, also known as heedlessness or recklessness, manifests along with one of the three poisons and with laziness and wishes to act in an unrestrained manner without cultivating virtue or guarding the mind against contaminated phenomena.
4. **Distraction** is a type of ignorance, anger, or attachment that, being unable to direct the mind to a virtuous object, disperses it to a variety of other objects.

Source: Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate on the Stages of the Path*, p.139-141 and 338-340.