



## Four Nooses of the Mind

The very moment we begin to bring a discipline into our life, our heart rejoices, but our mind feels threatened. The heart has no option, but the mind has many. The very nature of the mind is to be free and undisciplined, and an undisciplined mind subject us to excessive cleverness. Although we know what is good for our soul, by practicing excessive cleverness instead of nurturing ourselves, we end up deceiving ourselves. To save ourselves from this predicament, we have to understand how our mind manages to stay in control.

To stay in control, a threatened mind practices four trusted methods of victory: saam, daam, dand, and bheda. In this context, saam, the first noose can be translated as denial. After we decide to bring a discipline into our life, when it comes time to bring it into action, the first suggestion will come: "It's not a big deal ... I can skip it today ... I can start it tomorrow." An undisciplined mind will try to procrastinate on the implementation by denying the importance of the undertaking.

If somehow, with the help of enthusiasm, discipline, fear or guilt, we are able to push through the first obstacle, the second noose will be thrown at us: daam – a better option. Mind does not care what we do, as long as we do not do what we set out to do in the name of our practice.

Let's take an example. You decide to make a promise to yourself that starting tomorrow you will meditate every morning. Before going to bed, you set the alarm clock. When the alarm rings, the first suggestion will come, "It is still early ... I am having such a good sleep ... a little longer sleep won't hurt ..."

But somehow you are able to work through this obstacle and get out of the bed and sit down to meditate, the second noose, daam, a better option, will be hurled at you. The suggestion will come, "It's such a nice morning – I can go for a walk ... and I'll be getting my exercise at the same time ... it will be much better than trying to sit here with my eyes closed ..." Remember, the mind's main concern is that you do not stay sitting on that meditation seat!

If you are able to ignore the second noose and continue your meditation, the third noose will be flung at you. It's called dand, which means punishment or instilling fear. Your mind will come up with thoughts like, "Did I leave the stove on? ... I must make this call right now otherwise that person may leave ... My legs are going to fall off ..." There are so many variations of fear that can come into your mind and try to distract you from your meditation.

Ignoring it all, if you are able to continue your meditation, the last and most powerful noose will be thrown at you – bheda or separation. To stop you from keeping the promise you made to yourself, the mind will say, "It is not for me ... I am separate, I am different ... I am a certain body type or personality type or zodiac sign ... I am special ... I don't deserve it ... I am too old for it ... This is not for me, it's for somebody else ..." Those who fall prey to this noose become deprived of their growth and never move past the place where they had begun their journey.

When bringing any new discipline into our life, we must be aware of those four trusted methods of victory of an undisciplined mind if we want to continue our practice. An undisciplined mind is always looking for something more. Through a regular practice once our mind has become our friend, the journey becomes very meaningful and nothing remains impossible.