



Simply watch the breath

When I first started meditating,
many many years ago,
it all seemed pretty simple,
there wasn't much to really know.

*'Watch your breath; don't fall asleep;
sit up straight, with an open chest.
And in case of either excitement or boredom,
simply watch the breath.'*

So I sat, and ached; and itched, and straightened and slumped.
Then I woke with a yawn!
And the session, it was over,
and I hadn't even begun!

I'd not felt a muscle, not witnessed a breath;
my concentration was feeble and flat.
And as for the *'unrivalled bliss of inner peace'*,
well, I didn't feel any of that.

All I had was a sore back and my foot had gone to sleep,
as off the cushion I limped
But meditation's supposed to be simple though,
so what could I have possibly missed?

Turns out that's normal, my teacher told me.
Happens sooner or later, to the very best!
I asked *'What should I do now?'* and the answer came:
'Simply watch the breath.'

So, back to the breath, the beguiling breath
that whistles through my nostrils;
and through the confusion of my mind,
a cacophony quite colossal!

Watch the breath, again! - and then
there was a moment of perfect bliss
I felt enlightened -
and then the session was over, and most of it I'd missed

Turns out that's normal, my teacher told me,
and a sure sign of mental strength!
I asked *'What should I do now?'*, and the answer came:
'Simply watch the breath.'

I watched that breath, over moments and minutes
and hours, day after day
but bamboozled by my untamed mind
I quickly lost my way

My muscles complained and my bones creaked;
the bits that weren't numb were in pain.
And then for a moment it was just me and the breath -
and then I thought about chocolate and got lost again.

I floundered in memories, trival and random,
strange emotions began to boil.
I obsessed about things I don't even care about,
it all felt like torture and toil

'I'll never meditate! It's hopeless!'
Mindfulness plummets like a doomed plane!
And then a breath just goes by, I don't even try -
and then I'm distracted again

as my knees grumble and my hips cry out,
my shoulders they were aching.
I straightened my back for a bit of relief
ccck! Ow! I think that's some lower spine issues I'm creating.

And now they come, in graphic detail,
vividly, one by one.
Memories of every stupid thing
that I have ever done.

It's my very own pity-party! Where I can wallow in misery
Oh! *'This is worse than death!'*
And then - I'm in stillness - there is no me
and yet I'm - witnessing a breath.

And another! and then I'm thinking of hot chips,
then remembering some show I saw on TV;
and then, just the breath! It's effortless!
And then we're off for more monkey-mind jiggery-pokery!

Turns out that's normal, my teacher told me.
'You're becoming aware of the mind's true depth.'
So I asked *'What should I do now?'*, and the answer came: (altogether!)
'Simply watch the breath.'

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