



## Teachings of the Eastern Masters

“Treading on the path suggested by Him, everything is pleasurable to begin with. But later, that path will be so overspread with thorny shrubs, that there will only be thorns on all sides.

“Faith then begins to waver, the mind is easily swayed by doubts and starts wondering why God brings it to this by-path.

“And it is when you feel thus, that your faith should remain steadfast. These difficulties are the real test and that is how an unshakeable faith is firmly planted.

“By facing the hardships squarely, with a ceaseless chant of God’s name, all the calamities will disappear. Such is the tremendous power of the Name of God.

“And this is the main purpose behind these obstacles. For they too are created by God and it is only then that God is remembered. The troubles also vanish only then.”

### Commentary

Many aspects of the world situation are very disturbing. It can be easy for the human mind, only seeing the current “snapshot” of God’s play, to be very discouraged by current events and question God’s plan and maybe even His Presence in the world. This passage for me reaffirms our faith and hope - that there is a Divine Plan running this show even though it is beyond our comprehension and perception.

I also appreciated that Shirdi Sai does not encourage a blind passivity - we “face the hardships squarely,” and as Jerry says, we do everything in our power to get the outcome that we think is right and for the Good. However, we always refer back to God and use His Name and Pure Knowledge as supports to endure the hardships.

When contemplating this theme I remembered a passage in C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters* that was one of my biggest takeaways from that book. For those of you who haven’t read it, *The Screwtape Letters* is a correspondence between the devil and his nephew Wormwood, who is a junior demon in charge of orchestrating a young man’s descent into sin and damnation.

Throughout the book, Wormwood reports back on his progress, and the devil responds and coaches him on strategies to promote this man’s downfall. Since this passage is spoken from the devil’s perspective, when he speaks of “the Enemy” he is referring to God.

“You must have often wondered why the Enemy does not make more use of His power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment...His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve.

“He is prepared to do a little overriding at the beginning. He will set them off with communications of His presence, which, though faint, seem great to them, with emotional sweetness, and easy conquest over temptation. But He never allows this state of affairs to last long. **Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives...**It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be...Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best...if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles.

“Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, **looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished...and still obeys [Him].**”

This week’s quotations are from the *Shri Sai Satcharita*, Chapter 29, v. 125-129, and *The Screwtape Letters*, Chapter 8.

Love,

Erin