

Natalya Kobysheva

*LEAD ME FROM
DARKNESS
TO LIGHT*



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«Издательские решения»

Kobysheva N.

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In this book, the author tells a poignant story of a spiritual journey that leads her to a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her. An ordinary human life becomes filled with vivid colors of love and joy, when she faithfully follows her inner value of true love on the path to discovering God.

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Содержание

LEAD ME FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
With all my heart I want to thank all the people who have helped me in writing this book. Peace be with you, and I bow to you all	7
CONTENTS	8
Acknowledgement	8
Chapter 1	9
Chapter 2	10
Chapter 3	11
Chapter 4	12
Chapter 5	13
Chapter 6	14
APPENDIX 1	15
APPENDIX 2	16
Chapter 1	17
CHAPTER 2	23
CHAPTER 3	24
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

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LEAD ME FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Natalya Kobysheva

Lead me from Darkness to Light by Natalya Kobysheva. Moscow, 2018 – 60 pages (*Spiritual Search Series*)

This book presents a recollection of five years of the author's life, following her first encounter with Avatar Sathya Sai Baba, including all events, revelations and transformations related to Him.

Translated from the original Russian by Zulfia Arbon. Edited by Johan Maurer.

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Please send all queries and suggestions to the author at:
nat3332@yandex.ru

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE SUPREME
TEACHER SATHYA SAI BABA

Chapter 2

WHY I DECIDED TO WRITE THIS BOOK

Chapter 3

EVENTS IN 2013—2014

Chapter 4
ARRIVAL AT THE ASHRAM FOR THE NEW
YEAR 2014—2015 AND EVENTS OF THIS YEAR

Chapter 5
ARRIVAL AT THE ASHRAM FOR THE NEW
YEAR 2015—2016 AND EVENTS OF THIS YEAR

Chapter 6
ARRIVAL AT THE ASHRAM
FOR THE NEW YEAR 2016—2017

APPENDIX 1

SATHYA SAI BABA

APPENDIX 2

GLOSSARY FROM THE AUTHOR

Chapter 1

MEETING THE SUPREME GURU SATHYA SAI BABA

I was born happy. More than anything in the world I loved to laugh and I still do! As a child I used to enjoy giggles and jokes, laughing out loud with my schoolmates, even to the point of disrupting lessons. My parents adored me, and they did the best they could to express that love. When I was a teenager, I sometimes thought my mother was a bit too strict with me. I realized very soon, though, that it was just her way of expressing her love, and I stopped asking more of her.

My father was in the military, so our family moved often to his duty stations throughout Russia. My older sister was born in Tynda – a tiny town in Siberia. I was born four years later in Vladivostok, in 1980. Two years later, we moved to the Moscow region, and then to Moscow.

My parents were not religious at all. My sister, as long as I remember, has always believed in God, from her adolescence on. My relationship with God was somewhere in between.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled at the university, in the bridges and tunnels department of the school of engineering. A good friend of mine used to joke that women in search of good husbands should go to college. That's how it turned out for me. Life soon showed me that the work of an engineer had no interest for me at all. I hadn't put much effort into choosing the university; it was just the one that everyone around me already knew about. When I showed up at the admissions office and saw all the nameplates of the various departments, «Bridges and Tunnels» seemed the most attractive to me. And that's how I became a bridge engineer.

However, that university was where I met my future husband Vadim. When we finished our studies, we became husband and wife. Destiny gave me a wonderful gift in Vadim; I could not imagine a better husband. As we were getting to know each other, I was captivated by his human qualities: he is kind, generous, intelligent, always calm and positive. His simplicity and openness often remind me of a child. I was never bored in his company – we both had a healthy sense of adventure. We found ourselves looking in the same direction, fascinated by the same things.

Vadim's childhood could not be called happy: his mother died at an early age, and he was raised mainly by his grandmother. His grandmother considered herself an atheist, although it would be hard to find a more loving and kind person. It was she who was able to give her son, and then her grandson, a loving upbringing.

Vadim almost never loses his temper. With him, anger and irritability are so rare that right now I can't recall any instances. Usually I'm the one who expresses these kinds of emotions, but when I catch sight of his good-natured face, there's nothing for it but to calm down. Our occasional disagreements (usually started by me) end up being resolved through humor and understanding.

Even so, I don't always let go easily. For example, our biggest problem is getting ready to travel – wherever we might be going. I start fussing and hurrying, but Vadim is all about «shanti,» serenity. He usually just waits until our two children and I are packed and ready to leave the house. That's when he realizes it is time to get ready to leave. Only then does he put on his travel clothes, even when we're in a real hurry. It used to knock me off balance to the point of tears. However, eventually

I became more patient about all this, especially since it became obvious that my reactions were the main problem in these situations, and we're never actually late!

And I thank God that this sort of trivial thing has been the biggest problem in our relationship.

I've never heard my husband using four-letter words; instead all I see from him is kindness and serenity. Since childhood he has never liked meat or fish. He became a vegetarian long before he got acquainted with Swami.

When we both turned 25, we had our first son, Misha. Six years later, our second son Fedya was born, in August 2011. When our younger son was about half a year old, around the New Year, my emotional state took a turn for the worse. A lot of things began to irritate and provoke me – especially fatigue and the constant pressure of living with my parents in the same apartment. Somehow I couldn't relax – apparently I didn't even know how to relax at that time.

At some point all these factors snowballed into serious illness. I spent time in hospital, but was discharged without a clear diagnosis. Doctors put me through further tests and examinations, but they just shrugged their shoulders – they could not explain why I was experiencing digestive tract inflammations, or why my whole body was in feverish pain, even as my temperature was normal. Eating was also painful, and I lost a lot of weight.

This was when my husband and I started looking for some alternative treatments. We began reading books by Sinelnikov, Lazarev, Malahov, and many others who wrote along similar lines. I fervently prayed to all the Orthodox saints, asking for help. Vadim tried searching online for practitioners of traditional healing methods that held promise of help. He found someone who seemed a likely candidate: a healer who lived in St Petersburg and whose course of treatment would require us to live there for two weeks. As it happened, we contacted him just as a new group of patients was forming for this course of treatment, and we agreed to join the group.

Normally, buying tickets from Moscow to St Petersburg is very routine. Express trains leave every twenty to thirty minutes. In those days you could even skip the ticket office, board the train, and arrange payment directly with the conductor. Our departure was a weekday – no holiday or weekend crowds – so we expected no trouble. However, to our amazement, not a single ticket on any train was available that day except for luxury accommodations costing 18,000 rubles per ticket, an astronomical price compared to 500 rubles for an ordinary ticket. It was either the expensive ticket or nothing.

At the time we were not the sort of people who favored esoteric explanations for things, but this was an obvious sign to us that we were not to make this journey. From that moment on, events happened in quick succession that, taken together, brought us to the point where we soon came to know Swami.

In those days Vadim had become interested in the pyramids that the scientist Alexander Golod was building. Golod observed that pyramids improved the space around themselves by removing abnormal energy. He realized that the supernatural effect of pyramids could be beneficial for all forms of life. He constructed many pyramids all over the world. (I don't know the exact number, and wasn't able to find a total on the Internet, but I believe there are hundreds.)

One day, Vadim and I went to see the largest Golod pyramid in the Moscow Region, the one on the Novorizhskoye Highway. We sat under the dome, at the point of greatest power, and to my

amazement, my body pains completely vanished. We returned a couple of days later, this time with our eight-month-old son Fedya, who slept most of the time in Vadim's arms, wrapped in a blanket. The pyramid was crowded. Snow lay all around us, but the unexpectedly bright sunlight reminded us of the onset of spring and the changes soon to come. We sat on a bench outside the pyramid, waiting to go in, while several people nearby were listening intently to a female tour guide. Suddenly she interrupted herself, walked up to us, and began telling us about our past, about our previous incarnations, what planets we had come from, and the true nature of our son.

We were totally astonished at her words and her actions. I realized that this was a sign that called for my careful attention. The tour guide introduced herself as Svetlana and explained to us that she led tours to so-called energy points. She also mentioned that her next stop was the Savvino-Storozhevskiy Monastery in Zvenigorod, and invited us to join her. We agreed. It felt like she conducted the rest of the tour especially for us.



Gold's pyramid on Novorizhskoye Highway

At the monastery, we were met by a priest who had the keys to its many doors. He told us about its history. I liked the story he told of one family whose members still come all the way from France on St. Savva's birthday, bringing flowers.

In 1812, when the French already occupied Moscow, Napoleon's stepson Prince Eugène de Beauharnais led twenty thousand troops to Zvenigorod. Having captured the Savvino-Storozhevskiy

Monastery, he settled down for the night in a monastic cell, but his soldiers set about plundering the monastery.

In a dream, an elderly man, noble in appearance and dressed in a black robe, appeared to the Prince. He said, «Do not let your army loot the monastery. In particular, don't let them take anything from the Church. If you honor my request, God will have mercy on you and you will return to your homeland safe and sound.»

The next morning, when he entered the Cathedral Church, the shocked Prince saw the icon of the monk Savva and recognized him as the man who had appeared to him the previous night. After bowing to the holy relics, Eugène de Beauharnais left the monastery, sealed it with his personal seal, and set a guard of 30 men at the door. For a month and a half, this French force guarded the monastery from their own soldiers.

The General did everything according to the elder's orders, and, just as the elder predicted, returned to France unharmed, while the fate of many other Napoleonic military leaders turned out to be tragic.

Eugène de Beauharnais described everything that happened in the Savvino-Storozhevsky Monastery in detail in his diary, which he then took to France. More than 200 years have passed since then, but the descendants of this General still come to the relics of St. Savva with gratitude that their ancestor's life was saved.

The priest led us through all the fascinating places in the monastery, including the very top of the bell tower. From there we could see an extraordinary panorama of the whole area around Zvenigorod. That's when, looking at all the beauty around me, a thought suddenly hit me: hadn't I seen some man on television, a healer, who in fact lived in Zvenigorod? He would certainly help me! Little did we know it then, but his house could be easily seen from that tower.

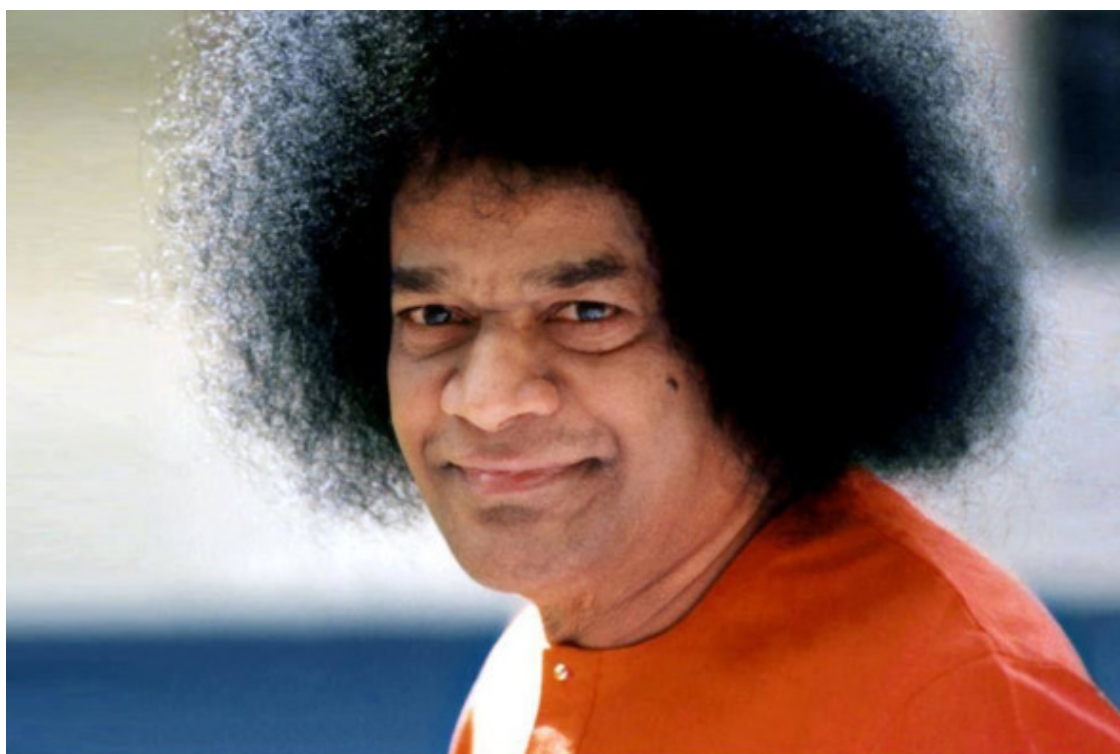
Here's what I was remembering: Two years earlier, while flipping through TV channels, I paused to watch part of «The Battle of the Psychics.» The program was just ending; I only had time to watch the award being presented to the winner – Vladimir Muranov. In just those few minutes of watching the program, I noticed that he projected kindness and humanity. The fact that he was a healer lingered in my memory. I remember calling a friend, telling her that I had seen the «Battle» and that I liked the winner very much – a good and open person. She said that he was the son of friends of her parents and that they had known him well ever since he was a child.

As soon as my husband and I returned home from Zvenigorod, we started searching online to find out where Vladimir Muranov worked and how to arrange an appointment. We succeeded in making contact and arranging a visit, but the first opening was six whole months away! I was very disappointed. He was in great demand and only received patients twice a week. But a couple of days later, I received an unexpected phone call: a «window» had opened up in Vladimir's schedule, and if I wanted to, a first visit could be arranged that same day. I got ready and off we went like a bullet. And that is how my second life – my real life – started.

I have so much appreciation and gratitude toward Vladimir that I could write a whole separate book about him and the significant role he has played in my life. He has become a wise mentor in my life. He taught me valuable life lessons, and his prudent advice and help often saved me and my loved ones from all sorts of unpleasant situations.

As it turned out, Vladimir was a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a spiritual teacher from India, and Vladimir introduced us to him. This happened in May of 2012, a year after Sai Baba had left his earthly body.

Two months after we met with Vladimir, I had a vision. While I was meditating, this vision came to me: while I was driving our family car on a familiar road, I had an accident. The accident had just happened – the car had come to rest in a ditch, a hissing sound could be heard, and I felt myself flying slowly above the ground, away from the accident site. I was just gliding in the air and observing what was happening below. I had no anxious feelings, just a sense of weightlessness and peace. It didn't feel at all like the end – my life was to continue. Then suddenly the face of Jesus appeared in front of me, looking at me intently. I realized then that I had been shown something that could have happened but didn't. Swami had intervened in my fate.



Vladimir Muranov's path was predetermined by a series of circumstances. In his youth, he was very ill. At first he sought help from conventional medicine. Then he became convinced that this path was fruitless, and he began to look for alternative treatments offered by traditional healers. So he became the student of a master teacher, who restored his health and taught him how to be a healer. In time Vladimir, now a healer in his own right, established a school of his own. There he began to teach his students the fundamental nature of human beings and their interaction with the Universe, together with the basics of healing.

There was a large portrait of Sai Baba in Vladimir's classroom. He told his students what he had learned about Swami, often sharing memories and knowledge from his own travels to India. Twice a year he gathered a group of people and traveled to India, going to Puttaparthi for a few days and introducing his group to Sathya Sai Baba's ashram. During the five years of our friendship with the Supreme Teacher Sathya Sai Baba, I have observed that almost everyone who had ever visited this ashram as a tourist, or had just passed through, always returned or intended to return. For those visitors, a deep process of transformation had begun in their lives, an enduring friendship with the Supreme Teacher that touched many lives.

The Ashram (Monastery) of Sathya Sai Baba is located in Puttaparthi, India, a town located 150 km from Bangalore. Puttaparthi had once been a small village, but now there are schools, colleges, universities with residential campuses, museums, shops, a major hospital, clinics, libraries, temples, sport complexes and a vast stadium, a planetarium and many hotels. It is a place of pilgrimage for believers of all religions, people of different nationalities, who speak all the languages of the world. For convenience of communication people use the mantra «Sai Ram», which replaces such popular phrases as «hello» and «excuse me» and all the other things you might want to express in a language that's not your own.

The Ashram is called Prasanthi Nilayam, the Abode of Supreme Peace. Here you can often hear about miracles: the materialization of various objects, the sacred ashes of Vibhuti in Swami devotees' houses, and complete healings from illness. We know a lot of incredible stories that have happened to people after they became acquainted with Swami. In this place of love and peace, there are wonderful manifestations of the Divine in everything, and a person's spiritual transformation begins with their first steps on the Ashram's paths.



CHAPTER 2

WHY I DECIDED TO WRITE THIS BOOK

In June 2014, Vadim and I took a trip to Lake Baikal in the company of Vladimir Muranov and other friends. One evening, after dinner, everyone was sitting and chatting away. Vladimir and I were exchanging our impressions of the trip. He suddenly broke off the conversation. He gave me an odd look and then said, «Write a book.» Seeing my surprised face, he added, «This wish doesn't come from me.» This suggestion – practically a command – surprised me. I asked:

«A book? What should I write a book about?»

«About your life, about Sai Baba,» replied Vladimir.

Inwardly I couldn't help laughing at this suggestion. I have never been eloquent, and, outwardly, my life seemed too ordinary to write about. I had tried not to tell anyone about events connected with Sai Baba, except for my husband and Vladimir. These events were too personal and, as it seemed to me, would be of no interest to others.

I listened to Vladimir's suggestion and decided to take my time thinking it over. It would have stayed on the back burner indefinitely if I hadn't had a dream just that night after our conversation. Since my first trip to the Ashram, I had been having prophetic dreams that gave me intimations and counsel on how to deal with difficult situations. Those dreams, bright and clear, usually came just before I woke up, so I remembered them very well. On this occasion I dreamt of Prema Sai (the next incarnation of Sai Baba). He came up to me, put His arm on my shoulders and looked at me with deep loving eyes, as only God can! He said, «Go ahead and do it, get started!»

Upon waking up, I had no more doubts about writing the book. It was also clear to me that the Supreme Guru's words didn't just apply to the book I was to write, but also to my spiritual advancement more generally. But I still had questions: what exactly should I write about? What style should I use? Who was my intended audience? I was racking my brains for days. But then I calmed down – time would tell.

CHAPTER 3

EVENTS OF 2013—2014

Make one step towards me and I will make a hundred steps towards you
– *Sathya Sai Baba*

My husband, my eldest son Misha, and I made our first visit to the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram in early December 2012 for just four days. This was our first trip to India; we were travelling with a group organized by Vladimir Muranov, and Puttaparthi was one of our stops. At that time India was a whole new world for us – and, not least, this wondrous Ashram. The air was filled with the fragrance of flowers in bright sunshine, and everywhere there were people dressed in bright colors. Large numbers of local people came to the Ashram every day, mostly from the villages. When I attended *darshans* (meetings conducted in the Divine presence, where Vedas are read and then the devotional songs – bhajans – are sung), there was such a large number of multicolored saris that I was continuously drawn to observe the women, their clothing and adornments, and the way they carried themselves. The Mandir (temple) itself was no less brightly colored than the people.

At that first visit, Sai Baba remained a puzzle for me, but we loved the Ashram and its atmosphere to such an extent that we decided we would definitely come back. Four months later, in April 2013, my son and I returned to the Ashram.

We found information about Swami mainly from books, and from talking in the Ashram with witnesses of Swami's earthly life. We enjoyed going to the Chaitanya Jyoti Museum with the old Swami devotee Igor Mehanoshin who acted as a guide for Russian groups, explaining the Museum's exhibits in great detail.

In those days Sai Baba was incomprehensible to me, despite my best efforts to comprehend His acts and work out explanations for things that I just couldn't square with my logic. Eventually I grew weary of these efforts and gave them up, realizing that to comprehend the incomprehensible was simply beyond my conscious ability. All I knew was that simply being present in the Ashram was a one-of-a-kind experience, making us feel completely calm and serene, and that we had never experienced anything like this anywhere before.

From this visit I took home a framed picture of Swami. It was just a photo of his smiling face, but it seemed to me the best likeness that I'd seen. When I returned to Moscow, I put it on a shelf in my kitchen. One day, while thinking about Sai Baba and doing household chores, I heard a crash; that same picture had fallen on the floor! I picked it up and moved it to another shelf. A few days later, as I was watching a video about Sai Baba, I suddenly felt such a strong wave of love and longing for Him that my tears flowed like a river, with this thought swirling around nonstop in my head: «Why didn't I find You alive, still among us on earth? Why did You call me so late?» It was like waking up from a dream... All of a sudden the same picture of Swami fell down with a crash yet again. That's when my tears stopped! I sat down and looked at what was happening around me: at that moment, it was as if Sathya Sai Himself had appeared in front of me. He let me know, «I hear you. I see you.» As I came back to myself, I pressed that picture of Swami to me and began to jump and twirl from pure joy. From that moment I began to sense His constant presence by me.

A few days later, mysterious incidents started to happen. A large icon with an image of Jesus Christ fell from the icon stand. When I picked it up and put it back, I was surprised to see what happened to the icon next to it. The face of the Kazan Mother of God was covered with a thick layer of soot, even though I never burn candles around these icons. This coating was only around the face of the Virgin, of uniform thickness and confined to the curve of her face; it didn't touch her clothing at all. I want to emphasize that all of these icons and portraits were securely fixed to the icon stand and nothing like this had ever happened before. I never could explain the sudden appearance of the layer of soot but I regarded the incidents with the photograph and the icons as a call for me to visit the Ashram once again. So a few days later my older son and I departed for India.

That trip was full of unusual situations, interesting visions, and new acquaintances.

On the day after my arrival in Puttaparthi, a young woman approached me to ask for help, as it was her first time in India and in the Ashram. I gladly agreed, and soon we became friends. The girl turned out to have incredible abilities, which, due to natural modesty, she generally concealed and was in no hurry to share. Without any particular difficulty, she could make quick and accurate predictions of what would happen in the foreseeable future, and had visions of what had happened in the past.

In the evening of that same day, I said I would accompany her to her hotel, which was not on the Ashram's grounds. At the gates, an elderly *sevadai*

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