

Nisargadatta on Lineage

The Navnath Sampradaya and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

A study by Cathy Boucher

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was part of the Navnath Sampradaya, the lineage of the nine gurus. Maharaj himself did not stress his lineage with most of his western devotees.

However, he does speak about it in I Am That, Page 271 Part II, chapter 97:

Question: I see here picture of several saints and I am told that they are your spiritual ancestors. Who are they and how did it all begin?

Nisargadatta: We are called collectively the “Nine Masters”. The legend says that our first teacher was the Rishi Dattatreya, the great incarnation of the trinity of Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva. Even the ‘Nine Masters’ are mythological.

Question: What is the peculiarity of their teaching?

Nisargadatta: Its simplicity, both in theory and in practice..

Question: How does one become a Navnath? By initiation or by succession?

Nisargadatta: Neither. the Nine Masters’ tradition (Navnath Parampara) is like a river—it flows into the ocean of reality and whoever enters it is carried along.

Question: Does it imply acceptance by a living master belonging to the same tradition?

Nisargadatta: Those who practice the sadhana of focusing their minds on “I am” may feel related to others who have followed the same sadhana and succeeded. They may decide to verbalize their sense of kinship by calling themselves Navnaths, It gives them the pleasure of belonging to an established lineage.

Question: Do they in anyway benefit by joining?

Nisargadatta: The circle of satsang, the company of saints expands as time passes.

Question: Do they get hold thereby a source of power and grace from which they would have been barred otherwise?

Nisargadatta: Power and Grace are for all and for the asking. Giving oneself a particular name does not help. Call yourself by any name—as long as you are intensely mindful of yourself, the accumulated obstacles to self-knowledge are bound to be swept away.

Question: If I like your teaching and accept your guidance, can I call myself a Navnath?

Nisargadatta: Please your word-addicted mind ! The name will not change you. At least it may remind you to behave. There is a succession of gurus and their disciples, who in turn train more disciples and thus the line is maintained. But the continuity of tradition is informal and voluntary. It is like a family name, but here the family is spiritual.

Question: Do you have to realize to join the Sampradaya?

Nisargadatta: The Navnath Sampradaya is only a tradition, a way of teaching an practice. It does not denote a level of consciousness. If you accept a Navnath Sampradaya teacher as your guru, you join his Sampradaya. Usually you receive a token of his grace—a look, a touch or a word, sometimes a vivid dream or a strong remembrance. Sometimes the only sign of grace is a significant and rapid change in character and behaviour.

Question: I know you now for some years and I meet you regularly. The thought of you is never far from my mind. Does it make me belong to your Sampradaya?

Nisargadatta: Your belonging is a matter of your own feeling and conviction. After all, it is all verbal and formal. In reality there is neither guru nor disciple, neither theory nor practice, neither ignorance nor realization, It all depends on what you take yourself to be. Know your self correctly, There is no substitute to self-knowledge.

http://nisargadatta.net/Navnath_Sampradaya.html