

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

Maharaj: We are called collectively the 'Nine Masters'. The legend says that our first teacher was Rishi Dattatreya, the great incarnation of the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Even the 'Nine Masters' (*Navnath*) are mythological.

Q: What is the peculiarity of their teaching?

M: Its simplicity, both in theory and practice.

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

M: 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.

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

M: Those who practise the *sadhana* of focussing their minds on 'I am' may feel related to others who have followed the same *sadhana* and succeeded. They may decide to verbalise their sense of kinship by calling themselves *Navnaths*. It gives them the pleasure of belonging to an established tradition.

Q: Do they in any way benefit by joining?

M: The circle of *satsang*, the 'company of saints', expands in numbers as time passes.

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

M: 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.

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

M: Please your word-addicted mind! The name will not change you. At best 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.

Note:

The Nath Sampradaya came to be known as Navnath Sampradaya when sometime in the remote past, the followers of the sect chose nine of their early Gurus as exemplars of their creed. But there is no unanimity regarding the names of these nine Masters. The most widely accepted list however is as follows:

1. Matsyendranath
2. Gorakhnath
3. Jalandharnath
4. Kantinath
5. Gahininath
6. Bhartrinath
7. Revananath
8. Charpatnath
9. Naganath

Of these nine Masters, Gahaninath and Revananath had large followings in the southern part of India, including Maharashtra, the state to which Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj belongs. Revananath is said to have founded a sub-sect of his own and chose Kadasiddha as his chief disciple and successor. The latter initiated Lingajangam Maharaj and Bhausahib Maharaj and entrusted to their care his Ashram and the propagation of his teaching. Bhausahib Maharaj later established what came to be known as Inchegeri Sampradaya, a new movement within the traditional fold. Among his disciples were Amburao Maharaj, Girmalleshwar Maharaj, Siddharameshwar Maharaj and the noted philosopher Dr. R. D. Renade. Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj is the direct disciple and successor of Siddharameshwar Maharaj.