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It's been nearly a decade since Swami Muktananda was entombed in the traditional crypt preserved for perfectly liberated souls. His Kashmir Saivite teachings survived for a while in the shared spiritual leadership of Swamis Chidvalasananda and Nityananda, a sister/brother team specifically raised and ordained for the task by Muktananda himself. The, the two became on in a dramatic saga that might year be the stuff of multi-million-dollar movies - especially since the story is still unfolding.

Amid charges of kidnapping, beating, etc., in 1986 Swami Nityananda relinquished his co-successorship and, in a unique ceremony for the occasion, renounced his swami vows. Chidvalasananda has continued dynamically since that time as the sole spiritual leader of Siddha Yoga Sham. Nityananda re-emerged in 1987 with the foundation in America of "Recognition Dynamics," which is now known as "Shanti Mandir."

HINDUISM TODAY has learned that on December 26th Nityananda reaffirmed his vows of sannyas in a spontaneous rededication ceremony. After a freezing 3:00 AM dip in the 32-degree waters of the Ganges near the Mahamandaleshwar Ashram in Kankhal, Haridwar, Nityananda, age 28, turned to a friend and asked: "What will I wear now?" As the friend gaped on, baffled and bewildered, Nityananda requested tat some orange cloth be cut to his size.

"I put the cloth down, sprinkled some water on it and sat to pray." Nityananda recounted. "I said, 'God, this is going to be a big step. I need to know whether this is the right thing for me to do at this time, or whether I need to wait. There is no going back, and this cannot be a mistake.' I sat with my eyes closed in prayer. I envisioned myself going right into the middle of the Ganges, with the water flowing swiftly. When I finished my prayers, I opened my eyes and right in the middle of the river stood Bhagwan Nityanand, Baba's guru, with his hands in the form of a

blessing. I did not imagine this. He was real. All I could say was, 'Thank you.' I prayed that whatever karmas had to be relinquished at that time, be relinquished. I came out, picked up the orange cloth and draped it around myself.

"During the succession ceremony Baba performed in India in 1981, my life had been given to God's work, and that promise had to be fulfilled by me. The last few years have been a time of a reassessment of my life. It was a time to reflect and contemplate my relationship to God, family, friends, life and most important of all, my connection to Baba Muktananda and his wok that he left to me."

In looking back on the experiences that led him to leave his lifetime obligation of sannyas, Nityananda is forgiving. "I am grateful for the past few years, because they have shown me what I have learned from Baba. To accept this challenge to grow takes a lot of courage."

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