

## SAGRAM

In 1813 (Samvat 1869), a terrible famine struck Gujarat. It was a time when even rich merchants were scavenging for grains; one can only imagine the plight of the poor! Sagram was a poor man who lived in Limli, a village near Vadhwani. Suffering from starvation and overcome with despair, he set out with his wife to seek help from Muktanand Swami. As he walked his foot suddenly hit something. He looked down and noticed a shiny silver ornament. It was quite large, weighing about half a kilo. However, as he was a devout satsangi, even the thought of picking it up did not cross his mind. Yet, he knew that times were hard; he became concerned that his wife may be tempted to take it. He quickly kicked some dust over the ornament to hide it from her. Meanwhile, his wife was following a short distance behind him. She was engaged in recalling Shriji Maharaj's divine form when she noticed Sagram occupied with something on the road. Wondering what Sagram was doing, she caught up to him and 14 Kishore Satsang Pravesh asked about his curious behaviour. Sagram innocently explained himself. His wife exclaimed, "Oh! You have simply covered dust with dust! To me another's belongings are as useless as dust." Sagram was humbled, but within he was overjoyed by her understanding. They both continued to walk. After some time, they met some people who seemed distressed. The group of strangers sceptically assessed Sagram and his wife. From appearances they felt that Sagram and his wife were not trustworthy. They asked Sagram, "Did you come across an ornament lying on the road?" "Yes, we have seen it. It is lying over there." Sagram described the exact place where they had seen the ornament. But they did not trust Sagram. They felt it was highly improbable that anyone, especially someone like Sagram, would have left such a valuable ornament on the road. It was more likely, they felt, that he was lying and was actually trying keep it for himself. With this suspicion, they took Sagram along with them to retrieve the ornament. When Sagram and his wife show the owner the valuable ornament lying on the road Sagram 15 they came to that part of the road, they pushed aside the dust and, to their surprise, uncovered the missing ornament. Grateful, they offered Sagram and his wife a reward. Sagram, however, politely declined with the explanation that, "We are devotees of Bhagwan Swaminarayan; we were just following our religious vows." They were amazed at the integrity of Sagram and his wife. Thereafter, Sagram and his wife continued along the dusty road. After an exhausting journey, they finally arrived in Surat. When they went to Muktanand Swami, he greeted Sagram and asked him how he was coping with the famine. Sagram hesitantly revealed his desperate situation. Muktanand Swami trusted Sagram completely, and he arranged for Sagram and his wife to work for a devotee to tide them over this difficult period. After the famine passed, Sagram and his wife returned home. Sagram was born in the Vaghri community. At that time, society considered people of this

community to be low, immoral and uncivilized. Regardless of society's prejudices, Muktanand Swami had initiated Sagram and made him a devotee of Shriji Maharaj. Because Sagram moulded his life according to Shriji Maharaj's wishes, his life became purer than that of even the Brahmins, who at that time were considered the cultural and intellectual elite. Sagram had imbibed such high standards of morality that if he even accidentally touched a woman other than his wife, he would take a bath and fast on that day and thus atone for even this tiny lapse in his vow of fidelity. Word of such miraculous transformations of character spread through society. Someone told Vajesinh, the King of Bhavnagar, "Swaminarayan transforms Vaghri into Vaishnavs." In disbelief, the King had Sagram summoned to his court. Sagram came to the royal court of Bhavnagar State and sat humbly at the feet of the King. Searching for the reason for Sagram's transformation, the King probed, "Sagram! Has Swaminarayan shown you any miracles?" "Oh! My Lord, you are the master of the kingdom, whereas we 16 Kishore Satsang Pravesch are Vaghri. We lived brutishly until Swaminarayan inspired us to live a pure life by giving us spiritual vows. So, for someone like me to be able to sit here before you is itself a great miracle." The king was pleased with Sagram's frank and reasoned response. Sagram nurtured a secret wish in his mind: "Maharaj travels from town to town and sanctifies the homes of many devotees; how wonderful it would be if he were to come and sanctify my small hut." Truly pleased with Sagram's faithful devotion, Shriji Maharaj decided to fulfil Sagram's inner wish. One night, Shriji Maharaj went unannounced to Sagram's hut. When Sagram realized that Shriji Maharaj had come to fulfil his wish, his joy knew no bounds. Sagram's hut was so small, there was hardly enough room to stand. Sagram quickly brought a small cot for Maharaj to sit on, and unable to hold back his enthusiasm, danced while singing, "An elephant has entered my hut!" To Sagram, Shriji Maharaj's visit to his humble dwelling was as inconceivable as fitting an elephant in a small hut. Sagram's wife also rejoiced at Shriji Maharaj's unexpected visit. Shriji Maharaj lovingly ate what she prepared for him. Both were overwhelmed by Maharaj's compassion for them. In those days, it was considered unthinkable for even a high-caste person, let alone God, to visit a Vaghri's hut. From this incident, Sagram realized that in God's eyes, it is a devotee's devotion, and not his social status that is important. Although people often found it surprising, Sagram was well-versed in the scriptures. Once, he defeated Shivram Bhatt of Shiyani in a spiritual debate. Impressed with Sagram's spiritual wisdom, Shivram Bhatt realized Shriji Maharaj's greatness and became his disciple.