

Free University of Brussels Honorary Degree Speech

May 14, 2012

- Ela R. Bhatt¹

Thank you for inviting me today. It is a pleasure and an honor to be at this distinguished place of learning.

We are all familiar with the word *karma*. It is generally understood as fate or destiny. But in Sanskrit, karma really means action. Every action of ours not only has an impact on our self, but also on the world around us. So here are three questions, at the crossroads of thought and action, that lead us to what is essential in life: What impact will my action have on me? What impact will my action have on our planet and the people who live in it? And what impact will my action—or inaction, have on future generations and the human spirit?

Whenever I need to get my bearings, and get in partnership with my conscience, I turn to these questions, and the answers I get are always direct, no-nonsense and peaceful.

¹ Founder, SEWA, Self Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad. Email : bhattela@sewa.org