

We Are Poor but So Many

THE STORY OF SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN IN INDIA



ELA R. BHATT

"*We Are Poor but So Many* is a compelling read for what it tells us about the awesome stamina, commitment, and capabilities of poor women, and about the human spirit. It challenges stereotypes of the poor and turns these stereotypes on their head. For those in power who make policy, and for those who work with the poor, its messages are many and clear. May this book inspire many others to have vision, courage, and tenacity, and, like Ela Bhatt and SEWA, to dare the undoable, enabling poor people to gain for themselves more of the better lives that are so profoundly their right."

—**Robert Chambers**, Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex

"This book is an achievement that in turn reflects the abiding achievements of Ela Bhatt's life of committed struggle on behalf of poor women in Gujarat, India. It shows what can be done with principle allied to practicality. If you want to be inspired, read this book. If you want to be informed, read this book. If you want practical guidance on organizing the poor, read this book."

—**Ravi Kanbur**, T. H. Lee Professor of World Affairs and Professor of Economics, Cornell University

"The story of Ela Bhatt's important work organizing female labor in the 'informal economy' should be required reading for all policy makers who have anything to do with developing countries and for concerned citizens who care about the impact of globalization and government policies on the lives of the working poor. It is difficult indeed for prosperous Western people to imagine the lives of poor female workers whose very existence is rarely acknowledged by government policy, although they are the backbone of India's economy: rag pickers, stitchers, hawkers and vendors, agricultural laborers. Bhatt's eloquent and richly detailed narrative shows the daunting obstacles such workers face, but also their resilience, adaptability, and solidarity."

—**Martha Nussbaum**, The University of Chicago

"This is the record of a woman who knows from years of experience the discrimination the poorest women in a country like India suffer and who has pioneered schemes to counter that discrimination. Anyone interested in women's welfare, the removal of poverty, and widening employment opportunities must read it."

—**Mark Tully**, Writer and Broadcaster



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