

# Elaben Bhatt

November 3, 2022

**In news**— Elaben Bhatt, 89, a noted Gandhian and a leading women's empowerment activist, passed away recently.

## **A brief note on her-**

- Ela Ramesh Bhatt was an Indian cooperative organiser, activist and Gandhian, who founded the Self-Employed Women's Association of India in 1972, and served as its general secretary from 1972 to 1996.
- A lawyer by training, Bhatt was a part of the international labour, cooperative, women, and micro-finance movements.
- Elaben was born on September 7, 1933, in Ahmedabad, in a family that engaged in social causes.
- Her father, Sumant Bhatt, was a lawyer who served as a district judge and was later appointed the Charity Commissioner for Bombay and then Gujarat, where he supervised the work of all charitable organisations, trusts and NGOs.
- **Her mother, Vanalila Vyas, served as secretary of the Gujarat branch of the All India Women's Conference** for some time.
- The organisation, founded by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in 1927, worked for educational and social reforms.
- She is the recipient of **national and international awards, including the Padma Bhushan, the Ramon Magsaysay Award, the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize and Right Livelihood Award.**
- She was globally recognised as a woman leader who founded many institutions and carried out **pioneering work in organising the informal sector for self-employment and empowerment of women** not only in India

but across South Asia.

- Elaben was the **Chairperson of Sabarmati Ashram** and recently resigned as the Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi-founded Gujarat Vidhyapith.
- In 2007, she became **part of a group of world leaders called the Elders, founded by Nelson Mandela** to promote human rights and peace across the world.
- **She was also a Member of the Rajya Sabha and of the Planning Commission of India in the 1980s.**
- She **served in** many international organisations, including **Women's World Banking**, a global network of microfinance organisations, of which she was co-founder and had served as Chairperson.
- She also **served as an advisor to the World Bank**, and addressed the United Nations General Assembly.
- Founded by her in 1972, **SEWA is one of the largest cooperatives working for women**, with a base of over two million members from around 18 States in the country and in neighbouring nations.