

A Quilt India Movement



By BINDU GOPAL RAO

Taruna Sethi; (below) her handmade quilts

The pandemic has seen Covid warriors of all hues. Some are on the frontline, in the thick of deadly action. Others work in the background. These "Invisible Hands", as Mumbai-based Taruna Sethi calls them, are leading a quiet revolution of caring. Owner of the home décor venture, Simply Beautiful Always, an online quilting business, Sethi is doing it in the way she knows best—using her skills to gift Covid warriors, especially the Indian Army, handmade quilts. Her initiative, aptly named the Karuna (gratitude in Sanskrit) Quilt Movement, aims to make 1,000 duvets by August 15 to be distributed with the help of senior doctors and officers.



Having lived in Florida, Sethi fell in love with quilting as a hobby. In the US, quilting is often a calmer form of activism that has brought communities together and spurred social change. Sethi decided to bring this piece of American counter-culture to India. "I believe a quilt is an appropriate physical explanation for the sentiment of gratitude. It is the perfect tool to unite communities," adds Sethi, who started the venture with help from her household staff, before adding more people from different and challenging backgrounds, including the differently abled.



"Quilts not only provide physical warmth but can be a source of solidarity," Sethi says. In her own way, the literal comforter wants to spur social change through quilting. With the help of NGOs, she is running a 'Pilot Test' in Ballah village of Darbhanga district, Bihar. "Through demo videos and virtual meets, the women there receive training in stitching quilt tops. Due to the pandemic, all coordination is

done via a WhatsApp group. Once the work is done, the women are paid online, too," she clarifies. The finished quilt tops make their way to her Mumbai home, where Sethi and her team do three-layer finishing of each piece.

To make sure that her products are sustainable, Sethi is partnering with textiles and garment manufacturers who contribute their surplus and scraps to be upcycled. A project with its heart in the right place, the Karuna Quilt Movement is doing its bit to say thank you to Covid fighters with a touch of warmth.

