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Giving back to society

Amid the pandemic, Bhawna Bhatnagar is helping the needy with everyday meals and basic essentials

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Chhavi Bhatia
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Interior designer Bhawna Bhatnagar is not just helping those in need but also feeding local street dogs.

Till two months ago, Bhawna Bhatnagar was living a jet-setting life, curating ideas, procuring splendid deco pieces for work. 24 hours were not enough for her to squeeze in client meetings, home visits and socialising. "And then all of it came to a grinding halt suddenly, without any forewarning. Life moved at snail's pace, nudging us to rethink our priorities," says the Gurugram-based interior designer. As with a lot of us, Bhatnagar has re-equipped herself, focusing more on the real essence of existence. Even as she modestly refuses to be labelled a 'Covid warrior', she happily feeds over 100 people twice a day.

Her 10-to-5 routine is now about bringing food, dry ration, in some cases medicines, and a few smiles to the underprivileged living near her house in Gurugram. "As part of my initiative, I am taking care of 150 people in my neighbouring areas in Gurugram by providing free meals to them morning and evening. Besides that, I try to contribute whatever I can in terms of rations or other necessities that can help these people survive these tough times," she says. Her compassion also extends to four-legged friends who have sadly been subjected to a lot of maltreatment post the pandemic. "It is not just the humans who are suffering — it is a tough time for animals as well. Many street dogs that were dependent on the generosity of people for food suddenly have no one to take care of them. I am feeding nearly 50 dogs in my locality," she shares.

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Q & A

What prompted you to take this initiative?

John F Kennedy once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country" and I abide by that. These are tough times but toughest for the poor strata of our society. Also, a large population in our country belongs to the lower income group. These people have to work every day to earn two square meal. They have no savings to support them through this crisis. Most of them don't even have bank accounts. I believe all of us, who are in a condition to help, must lend out a helping hand to these people and fulfill our social responsibility. Collective effort is the need of the hour.

Has working for this cause changed you in any way?

The feeling that you are filled with by helping someone in need is very rewarding and fulfilling. But I am particularly touched by the little ones. Whenever I go to these areas to provide food, the kids literally start jumping with joy upon seeing my car because I get candies for them besides basic food items and essentials. Seeing them happy fills my heart with joy and warmth and revitalises my resolve to help as many people for as long as this crisis looms in our country.

You are also averse to the idea of clicking photographs while on the job.

As soon as the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed, I thought it was time to give back to the society. Being in the interior design business, I work closely with labourers and I understand their financial condition. Unfortunately, these labourers and daily-wage workers have nothing in terms of savings — which makes it impossible for them to survive such a prolonged lockdown without external help. I feel it is insensitive on our part to publicise their misery like this. Moreover, I see it as a noble cause, not something I would want to extract some admiration from on social media.

Interior

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