

## How A Library In A Village In Bihar Is Changing The Lives Of The Students

👤 Shreya Pareek

🕒 November 5, 2014

Surya Prakash Rai started PRAYOG and created a library in a village in Bihar which has changed lives of over 400 students in many ways. From eliminating the caste system to encouraging students in taking education seriously, read how Surya's efforts are improving the conditions and attitude in rural Bihar.

**V**ijay Kumar Chauhan is a Bihari youth, born to a landless daily-wage-worker family. He migrated to Ludhiana at the young age of 15 for a job. The petty salary he received was not enough to support even his basic necessities. Hence, he decided to come back and continue his studies. He knew the power of education and also encouraged other students by giving them free lessons. He met Surya Prakash Rai, a person with a motive to improve the education scenario in the villages of Bihar.

Since then, he has never looked back and has been actively participating in bringing a change with Surya. *"I always wanted to give back to the society, and then I thought, what could be better than education? That is when I started PRAYOG,"* says Surya.



During the start of the initiative – June 15th, 2013

PRAYOG (Professionals Alliance for Youths Growth) is a platform which is catering to the needs of children from lesser advantaged communities by filling the deficit of infrastructure, health and education facilities in villages. Set up in a remote village in Gopalganj district of Bihar, PRAYOG is serving more than 400 kids of 12 villages at present.

*"I figured out that value based education is the key to bringing a change and that is why I opened a PRAYOG library," says Surya.*

### Engaging Kids

The best way to reach out to kids was by offering them something which they had never experienced before. Hence, PRAYOG library was set up in a community open space in June 2013. The first day saw a mere five students walking in haltingly but within a year's time, the library was a hit and saw a regular footfall of around 400 students.

The books covered a vast range. From newspapers to weekly and monthly magazines, the books were offered to the students according to their choice. Another initiative that helped Surya in grabbing people's attention was exposure visits.

*"We took around five students to Parivartan NGO for a 4-5 days exposure trip where kids learnt yoga, dancing, painting. This was a great confidence booster for the kids, and more students started getting connected with us," he says.*



*A night class in progress with more than 100 children from different villages*

The second exposure trip was organized with 15 students to Bhutan, which again was a big success. *"We pick students who deserve to be part of this trip. Now, when students see the advantages of learning, they take part in*

various activities in order to get shortlisted for these trips," says Surya.

The PRAYOG team also prepares kids for debates and motivates them to be socially aware.

*"We gave them a topic 'how to create a model village?' and the kids were required to write on this. The way they expressed their feelings was tremendous. It is great to see that these kids are now taking part in the welfare of their village," he says.*

#### **How did he do it?**

Surya identified two major problems: education and electricity. *"Most of the villagers were illiterate; they did not consider their children's education as their priority. There was a serious lack of interest from parents' and students' side and we needed to change that,"* he says.



Surya briefing children and community on Prayog and Global literacy project – June 18th, 2014

Apart from lack of awareness, a low teacher-student ratio was another challenge. *"Kids were more willing to attend tuition classes than school,"* Surya explains.

This problem was solved through an interesting initiative which involved older students mentoring the younger ones. Surya identified potential students of higher classes and asked them to adopt 4-5 younger kids. The extra attention helped these kids to a great extent and there was a significant change in the attendance in

schools.

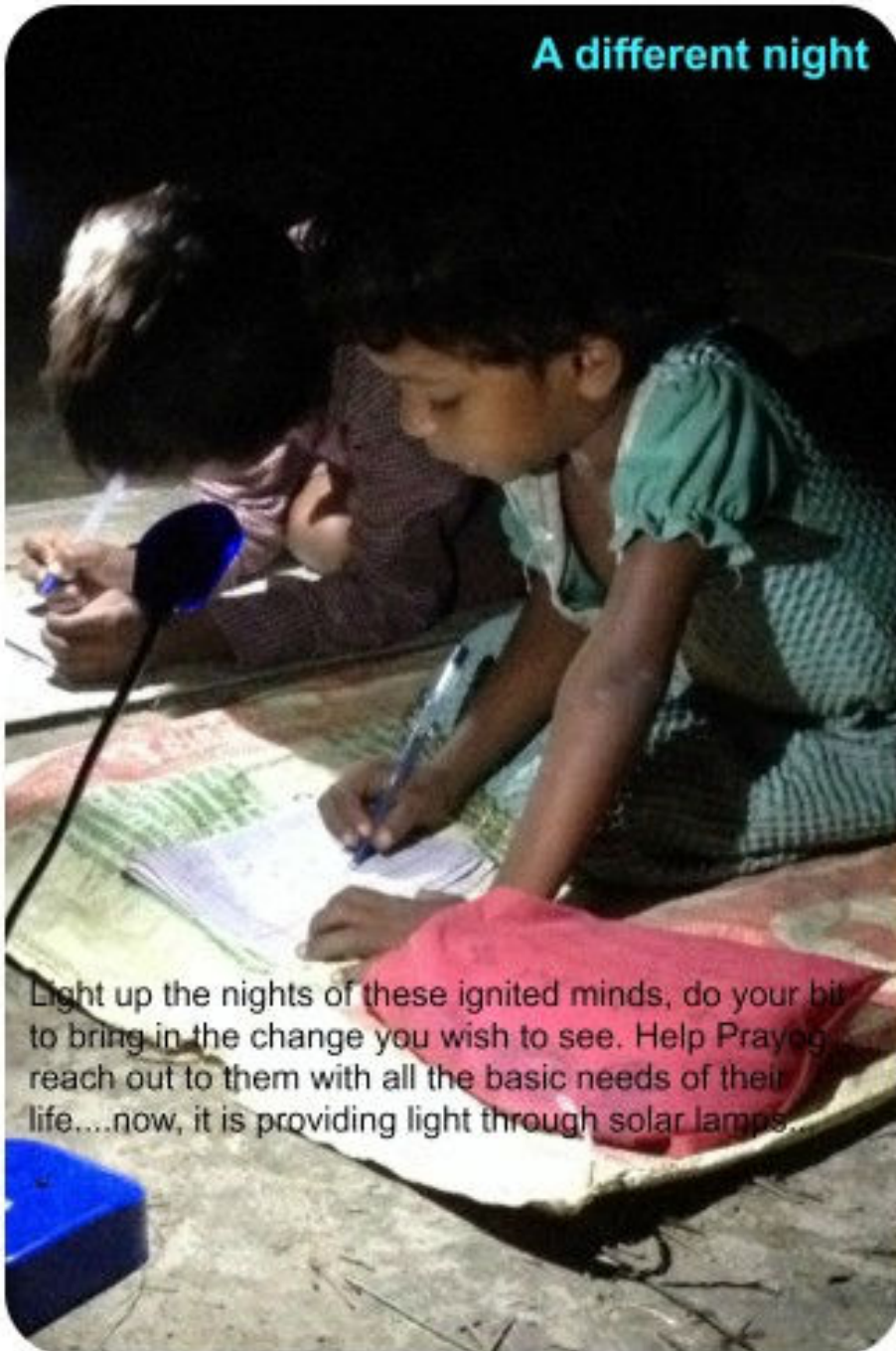
Another victory that came Surya's way was when he noticed the caste system which was followed by every community in the village and decided to do something about it. One day when Surya came to the village, women of a backward community gathered around him and asked him, "Are our kids not entitled to attend your library?"

Surya was shocked and asked them what made them think so.

"The kids from higher communities do not allow our kids to enter the class," said one of the ladies.

Surya immediately took all the students who wanted to attend the library with him and gave a lesson on history and caste system of India to all his students. He also explained to them how every individual should have access to equal rights.

## A different night



Surya Prakash is looking for funds to provide solar lamps to the village children.

*“Today, the same kids from all the communities stay together in the same room during exposure visits, hug each other, and share their food. It is a great achievement,” Surya says.*

Apart from education, another challenge came with electricity. As there was no electricity in the village, students who wanted to study after school hours could not do so. To solve the issue, the PRAYOG team distributed 10 solar lamps to students who had won an essay writing competition. *“We saw that those students were sharing lamps with other students too. And we thought that this could be a solution to the problem,”* he says.

This inspired PRAYOG to start a fundraising campaign on Milaap to raise funds for purchasing 200 solar lamps. A basic solar study lamp costs Rs.450 and the entire project would need Rs.90,000 to become operational. He has managed to raise around Rs.30,000 so far and is hoping to get more help to reach his goal. The campaign will close in 12 days.



Girls exploring a tablet for the first time

### **The future**

PRAYOG has a tie up with Prajnopaya Foundation, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology initiative where both the organizations will be supporting ‘Global Literacy Project’, whereby 100 children between 3-8 years of age would be using a tablet each to learn on their own. The programme is expected to kickstart by the end of November 2014.

Expanding the area of operations is yet another thing on PRAYOG’s agenda. They plan to reach out to 10 more villages and engage 2,000 students in their various initiatives.

**Click here to donate so that 200 students in rural Bihar can get solar study lamps and be able to read in the nights without inhaling harmful fumes.**

**Update:** PRAYOG achieved their goal of raising Rs.90,000 for 200 solar lamps within 20 hours of this article getting published! Thank you all for your overwhelming support.

Want to know more about PRAYOG’s work? Check out his [blog](#).