

Pay It Forward

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Pay it Forward (PIF) is a powerful and amazing idea that can change the world. I believe it was back in year 2000 when the book titled PAY IT FORWARD was released by the author Catherine Hyde. The story of the book goes like this: A School teacher gives an assignment to his class - "THINK OF SOMETHING WHICH CAN CHANGE THE WORLD, AND PUT IT INTO ACTION". A 12-yr boy comes up with quite an idea. He says: "I do something real good to 3 people. When they ask how they can pay me back, I tell them not to pay back but pay it forward to 3 more people each. So, 9 people get helped in the process. This unconditional favour/help can be small or big. It doesn't matter. If this chain of helping others continues, the world will become a much better place to live in with so much goodness and peace". Later, the boy goes on practicing this idea and succeeds.

The book was later followed by a movie with the same name PAY IT FORWARD. This idea was so well received and accepted by the people all over the world that the author herself had initiated a movement called PAY IT FORWARD movement in the same year (2000) to help the schools and individuals to learn and practice the idea of PIF.

There is a very strong reason why the idea of PIF touched me so much. I was from a poor village family in INDIA. My parents were neither highly educated nor had enough financial resources to fund my education. My father was a small time tailor who stitched clothes for the people in my village and could hardly save any money for my education. I was doing very well in studies and had a strong desire to pursue my higher studies. But, that was not enough to pay my tuition costs. At one point, I had spent many sleepless nights with a fear that I would have to quit college. So, I was so desperate to receive someone's help to complete my graduation.

During the same time, I came across an organization called North South Foundation (NSF), which was based in Chicago. They had a scholarship program to sponsor poor and bright students. They came forward and offered me the required financial help and that's how I could finish my college. When this happened, I couldn't believe this was happening. There were several questions I was trying to find answers for - "Who are these people? Why are they helping me out? How do I pay them back? Why someone sitting in Chicago, USA is so concerned and wants to help a poor student from a village in INDIA? What exactly connects them both?" This strange situation prompted me to think something beyond my textbooks for the first time in my life.

Then, something struck to me immediately. "What if I continue to excel in my studies, get a good job and THEN help the other needy people around me - which is exactly the same idea of Pay It Forward. With the same inspiration, I have founded a small organization (PADALA CHARITABLE TRUST) in my district in INDIA to help the poor students who excel in academics. Each year, we pick up the poorest and bright students and offer them financial assistance so that they can go to college without worrying about their family's financial handicap. In return, I tell them not to be grateful to us or our organization but do just one thing - Pay It Forward to at least one other person when they can. Keep the cycle going.

So far, we have managed to provide 219 scholarships to such deserving students. More important thing that we accomplished is, we have been successful in inspiring them to help other needy people around. A dozen of our scholars have been in good jobs, successfully supported their families and already on their way to help others. In fact, one student whom we supported in the past got a job recently. He sent his first pay check to me asking to use that to help other needy students waiting for help. This is what we are really proud of. We are able to

ignite their minds with a 'Giving Attitude" at such a tender age. I am very confident that we will keep this chain of PIF going for ever to touch as many lives as possible.

Now, you understand the magic power of Pay It Forward. It made a big difference in my life. Let me take this opportunity to ask you my friends - Please think of some help however small it is you received from someone you may or may not remember, and please see if you can Pay It Forward to at least one person. If you are able to do that, you will be part of this amazing world of PIF to change the world in a big way. Then, for sure you WILL BE proud of yourself.

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