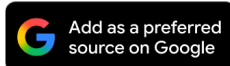


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5 Things Acharya Prashant Says About AI That Most People Are Missing

Acharya Prashant says AI's real challenge is not technology but human conditioning, artificial living, and lack of self-awareness.

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By [Priyanka Gupta](#) Edited By [Anika Rana](#)

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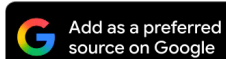
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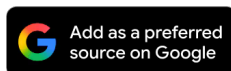
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Most conversations about artificial intelligence in recent days end up in the same three places: jobs, regulation, and existential risk. Who loses work, who makes the rules, whether the machines eventually turn on us, and so on. These are real concerns and they dominate everything from congressional hearings to dinner table arguments.

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globally with over 66 million subscribers, has been asking that question consistently, across packed public sessions including those at premier science and technology institutions IITs, IISc, BITS, UC Berkeley and others. Drawing from the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, Madhyamika Buddhism and a range of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, while at the same time deviating from them on many key aspects, his positions on AI are unlike anything coming from the tech industry or the policy world. They are also, in several ways, more unsettling. His most concise formulation: the threat is not artificial intelligence, but artificial living.

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Here are five positions that unpack what he means.

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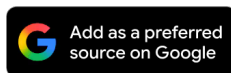
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AI Is the Greatest Equaliser in History, and Most People Are Squandering It

Sam Altman has said the common person has never been more empowered, that there are now effectively PhDs available in every pocket. His vision of that empowerment is economic at its core: know more, do more, advance further. Acharya Prashant accepts the democratisation argument, but then he takes it somewhere Altman never goes.

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The access, he says, should be turned inward. Not used to accumulate more, but to interrogate what you already carry. Most human suffering, in his reading, originates in unexamined inherited conditioning: beliefs about identity, religion, relationships, and purpose handed down across generations without anyone stopping to ask whether they are actually true. AI, for him, is a litmus test for all of that accumulated unquestioned baggage. "The kind of knowledge that AI puts in the hands of the common man today is unprecedented," he has said, warning that those missing this moment will be "fossilised."

The PhDs in your pocket are most valuable not for what they help you build, but for what they help you question, he says.

AI Will Enslave You Through Your Own Patterns, and Regulation Cannot Save You

Yuval Noah Harari has argued, most recently in *Nexus*, that AI gives authoritarian governments and corporations unprecedented tools for surveillance and control. He is not wrong about the danger. The liberal response has been legislation: data protection laws, transparency mandates,

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when an intelligent system pulls all of it together, it builds a picture of you that is often more accurate than your own understanding of yourself. "What does AI do?" he has asked. "It works on logic. It is very good at determining how the dots connect with each other." You scattered the dots without thinking. AI connected them without asking.

"The more your patterns are visible through data to AI, the more it will be able to predict you and therefore enslave you." His prescription is not a privacy setting or a regulatory filing. It is dissolving the fixed, mechanical patterns that make you so readable in the first place. Regulation addresses what corporations do with your data. Self-knowledge addresses what you are handing them.

If AI Can Take Your Job, You Should Be Glad

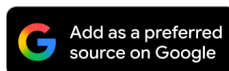
The numbers are not subtle. The World Economic Forum projects AI displacing hundreds of millions of roles. Geoffrey Hinton has spoken publicly about the speed of this transition outpacing society's ability to respond. The entire mainstream conversation is organised around protection: retraining schemes, universal basic income proposals, calls for regulatory brakes on automation.

Acharya Prashant rejects the premise underneath all of it.

"If your job can be taken away by a machine, you never deserved to be in that job in the first place." He said it at an IIT campus, without hedging, to an audience of engineers. His reasoning is not economic. A job a machine can perform is a job that required no human consciousness. Why was a conscious being doing it? "Human beings are creatures of consciousness, and consciousness cannot be programmed." What AI has actually done, he argues, is expose the degree to which most people were doing mechanical, repetitive work that was simply beneath their actual capacity. The displacement is not a wound, it is a diagnosis.

And his prescription for surviving it is not a new skill set. "There is only this way to beat AI: originality, authenticity, creativity, love, understanding, and suffering. Either have these or make way for AI." Losing a mechanical job, in that reading, is the beginning of something rather than

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...economically irrelevant because it has absorbed their cognitive and physical contributions. The anxiety this produces goes well beyond job security. If a machine can write, reason, paint, and decide, what is left that is distinctly human? What remains that is worth something?

It is a real question. Acharya Prashant's answer is that it is also a confused one.

The fear, he argues, rests on a mistaken definition of self. It assumes you are your capabilities: your memory, your processing speed, your emotional patterns, your accumulated knowledge. If those things can be replicated or exceeded, the self feels under threat. This is precisely the error. "You are not that which can be replicated," he has said. "And if something can be replicated, that is not you." Drawing on the Nirvana Shatkam of Adi Shankaracharya among other sources, he is precise about what AI actually replicates: the mechanical and conditioned dimensions of human functioning, the parts that were never really you to begin with.

A photograph replicates your face without threatening you. AI replicates your data-patterns and conditioned responses in exactly the same way. The self that serious philosophical inquiry points to sits entirely outside that territory. The real danger is not what AI is, it is what humans have spent their lives mistaking themselves to be, he says.

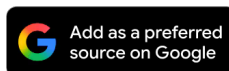
The Only Real Defence Against AI Is Inner Freedom

Every major regulatory response to AI works on the same side of the equation. The EU's AI Act, the open letters from researchers calling for development pauses, and the international treaty proposals all focus on what corporations can do, what systems must disclose, and what algorithms must explain. Nobody in any serious policy forum is asking the other question: what kind of human being will be on the receiving end of all this?

That is where Acharya Prashant plants his flag.

"In a wise man's hands, AI can be put to constructive use. Unfortunately, most of us are far from being wise, and so, AI will be put to violent, destructive use." It is a blunt position, but the logic is hard to argue with. A law can constrain what a corporation does with a tool. It cannot touch

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At IISc Bangalore in December 2025, a researcher asked him directly: is AI a threat? He turned it around. The threat is not artificial intelligence but artificial living, a distinction that exposes the gap in every other conversation about AI happening anywhere else.

About the Author



Anika Rana

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