

Acharya Prashant's unique theatrical performance on Mahashivratri, a confluence of dharma and art



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Greater Noida, Feb 16 (IANS) On the eve of Mahashivratri, the grand auditorium of Gautam Buddha University was packed to capacity. Hundreds of people sat on the floor when chairs ran out. Thousands who had arrived from across India and abroad witnessed a new side of Acharya Prashant -- that of an accomplished actor.

After the theatrical performance, there were tears in the eyes of the audience and thunderous applause in the hall. Mahashivratri also happens to be Acharya Prashant's birthday, and he chose to gift his audience a solo theatrical performance. Nearly 200,000 people joined the event live through the Gita App.

The opening of the event, organized by the PrashantAdvait Foundation, took the audience by surprise. The curtain rose to reveal Acharya Prashant in the role of the central character from Mohan Rakesh's renowned Hindi play 'Lehron Ke Rajhans.'

The play tells the story of Nand, a wealthy man deeply attached to his wife, yet one who also reveres the Buddha. When the Buddha attempts to initiate him, a storm erupts within Nand that has no simple resolution. He can neither fully remain in worldly life nor fully renounce it. In the words of the play, "I am this, and I am that too... I am that naked man standing at the crossroads, whom all directions seek to devour." Acharya Prashant brought this inner conflict to life on stage with such authenticity that the audience was swept into an unforgettable emotional and spiritual experience.

Explaining the purpose of the play, Acharya Prashant said, "This was a challenge that resonated from the stage -- must you really live as a weakling? What do you gain by declaring yourself helpless?" He said that people cling to the excuse of compulsion to sustain their lives of bondage, and the message of the play was that wherever there is suffering, exploitation, or injustice, it persists not out of compulsion but with our own permission and consent.

One audience member described the experience in their own words: "I am still intoxicated by that experience. Usually, Acharya Ji teaches and takes questions, but today he presented a play based on the conflict between the ordinary person and Buddhahood. I saw how a person caught in life's dilemma is torn in two. This was my own story."

This performance was not impromptu. Acharya Prashant's acting talent has deep roots. During his time at IIM Ahmedabad, he was deeply involved in theatre, where he not only acted in plays such as Rhinoceros, Pagla Ghoda, and Night of January 16th, but also directed them. Today, he has made that theatrical tradition a part of his teaching method.

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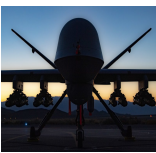
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Speaking on the message of Mahashivratri, Acharya Prashant described Shiva's Tandav as an inner signal. He said, "Shiva's destruction is not external. The demolition of all the illusions, deceptions, and ego that you have held on to within yourself, that is what Shivatva (the essence of Shiva) truly means." He added that Dharma and spirituality are not about attaining Truth, but about liberation from falsehood, and that Mahashivratri is the festival of that creative destruction.

Following the theatrical performance, a Q&A session based on the play was held with the audience. After that, Acharya Prashant conducted a special session on verses from the Avadhut Gita. Speaking on the relevance of the Gita, he said, "The Gita is no ordinary statement. It is the voice of Dharma that descended onto the battlefield of life. What was happening at Kurukshetra is still happening today." The event concluded with a grand book-signing session.

Another attendee remarked, "Acharya Prashant's event is no ordinary gathering. It is a major revolution that is transforming society." One listener shared that she had first encountered Acharya Prashant through a thirty-second YouTube clip. "In that brief clip itself, I sensed fearlessness and truth in his words. After that, I spent an entire week just listening to him, and I have now been attending the live Gita sessions for a long time," she said.

Participants for in-person attendance at the event were selected from thousands of applicants. Seriousness toward the Gita sessions and dedication to self-study were the criteria for selection.

A grand exhibition at the venue also drew the attention of attendees. It depicted, through photographs, Acharya Prashant's travels over the past several months, from Goa to Hyderabad, Kolkata to Chennai. His sessions at 16 major educational institutions, his presence at four literary festivals, and auditoriums filled with thousands of listeners, all captured at a glance.

Today's event is a continuation of Acharya Prashant's nationwide campaign over the past six months. During this period, he traveled to numerous cities and addressed over a dozen top institutions, including 13 IITs, IISc, and IIMs. From love and jealousy to artificial intelligence and global affairs, he answered more than 1,700 questions and signed over 10,000 books throughout his tour. His sessions at literary festivals in Pune, Bhubaneswar, Goa, and Delhi drew massive crowds.

Several prominent media organizations covered the event and spoke with Acharya Prashant.

Acharya Prashant is a renowned author, philosopher, and founder of the PrashantAdvait Foundation. An alumnus of IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad, he is known for presenting the teachings of Advaita Vedanta and wisdom literature from around the world in the context of modern life. He is a regular columnist for The Pioneer, The Deccan Herald, and The Sunday Guardian. His book "Truth Without Apology", published by HarperCollins, is a national bestseller, and he has over 160 published books to his name.

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