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# Acharya Prashant: The Philosophical Voice Championing Caste Equality

Acharya Prashant advocates for caste equality deeply with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's legacy, p

By Sathish Raman Updated: Wedr



Constitutional protections haven't made caste-based discrimination disappear from Indian society. The shadow persists. And yet, few philosophical voices reject caste hierarchy as completely as Acharya Prashant does. The author and philosopher, whose online following now exceeds 90 million subscribers, keeps returning to this theme across his public work. When he reads Hindu scriptures, he finds no room for caste division. Campus events, media appearances, public forums: wherever he speaks, he upholds the dignity of marginalised communities.

AI-generated summary, reviewed by editors

## A Vedantic Case Against Caste

His rejection of caste comes straight from the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta. In session after session, he has been clear that caste distinctions hold no spiritual validity whatsoever. The Vajrasuchika Upanishad is a text he turns to often. Its name means "the diamond needle that pierces ignorance." In one session, he takes listeners through its logic carefully. A student asks the Rishi a simple question: "What is caste?" What follows is a systematic dismantling. Does the body have caste? What about blood, bone, flesh? These are just the pancha-bhuta, the five elements. Soil doesn't have caste. So if the body doesn't, does the Atman? The Self? No, the Atman is unborn, unconditioned. What was never born cannot belong to any caste. Caste, the Upanishad concludes, exists nowhere in reality. It's just an idea that ignorance keeps alive. There's another distinction Acharya Prashant draws that matters here: between the Upanishadic core of Hindu philosophy and the social codes that came much later. He wrote about this recently in The Pioneer. Philosophical symbolism, he explained, gradually hardened into social rules. Around 400 BCE, the Dharmasutras started functioning as practical guides for how society should be organized. Dharma began meaning social order rather than inner inquiry. Centuries passed. Eventually the Dharmashastras appeared, law codes like the Manusmriti, and with them came explicit inequality based on birth. What passes for "Hindu practice" today, he argues, often draws from these later codifications rather than the Upanishads themselves. "We speak of Vedic heritage," he has observed, "yet we live by hierarchies that emerged well after the Vedic period." This lets him criticize caste while staying true to Vedanta. The spiritual insight remains; the historical distortion gets called out. When he speaks at elite institutions like the IITs and IIMs, places where caste discrimination still shows up in documented ways, he's direct about it. Caste belongs in museums and history books, he has said. He's not denying that discrimination continues. He's rejecting caste as a legitimate way to think about identity or evaluate people. Even curiosity about someone's caste, he points out, is casteist. Judge actions, judge character if you must, but wanting to know someone's caste reveals the very impulse that keeps hierarchy breathing.

## A Serious Engagement with Dr. Ambedkar's Legacy

His engagement with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar isn't token reverence but something philosophically serious. In April 2025, he spent three hours addressing students at Kirori Mal College, Delhi University, on Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary. The session was titled "Ambedkar: The Champion of Social Justice." What drew attention was his refusal to flatten Ambedkar into just one political identity. In an article for Business World, he made the case that really understanding Ambedkar means looking at everything: economic thinking, educational vision, the fight for women's rights, religious inquiry. Call him merely a politician and you miss the thread running through his life, that sustained pursuit of dignity and justice. On Ambedkar's turn to Buddhism, Acharya Prashant asks for historical honesty. Ambedkar tried for decades to reform Hindu society from the inside, almost until the very end of his life. When it became clear that structural change wasn't going to happen, conversion wasn't some rejection of spirituality. It was an ethical necessity, a way to protect his followers from continued humiliation under a system built to exploit them. At Kirori Mal College, someone brought up Ambedkar's criticism of the Manusmriti. Acharya Prashant questioned the assumption behind the question: is the text people cite as religious actually religious in the Vedantic sense? Buddhism attracted Ambedkar, he noted, because it was rooted in inquiry, not ritual prescription.

## A Clear Stand on Affirmative Action

He doesn't hedge on reservations. At the same Kirori Mal College event, he put it plainly: reservation exists to empower. When empowerment is genuine, it turns recipients into contributors. But he added something important. The success of some individuals cannot become an excuse to pull support from those who still remain marginalised. The Union Government announced a caste census. Prashant offered his view. Data, he says, matters is intent. Use it to understand prosperity, gender equality, and it becomes a tool to harden identities or rally voters.

Carrying Forward a Long Tradition

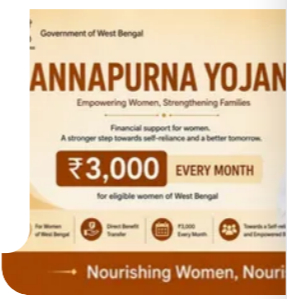
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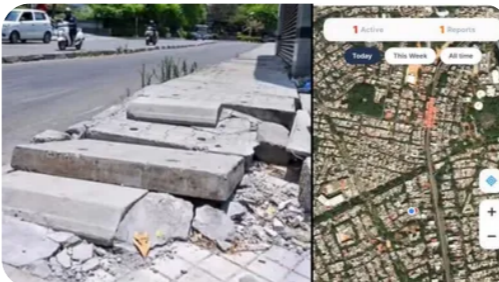
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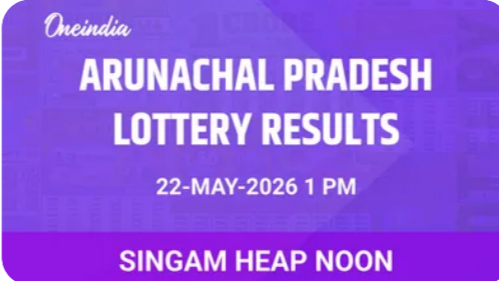
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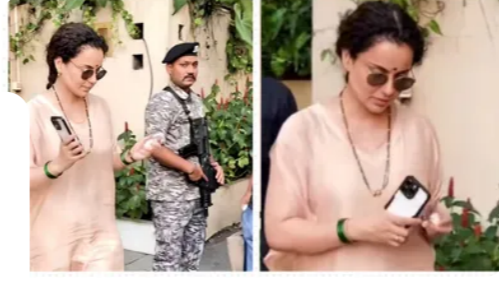
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