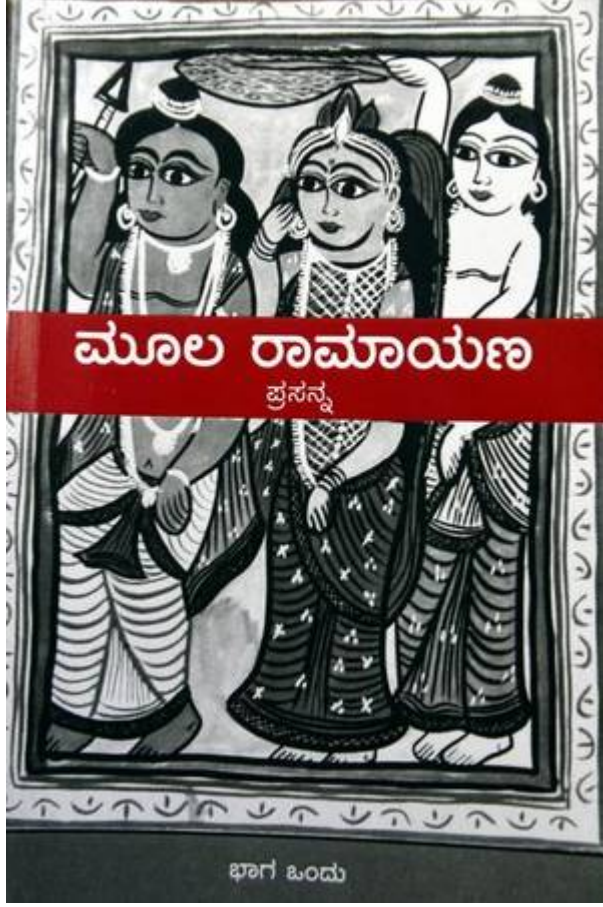


# Sending the Climate Change message through the Ramayana

Author - K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj, Published on - 27.8.2019



Theatre and handloom activist Prasanna has taken up a retelling of Ramayana as a political and cultural project, to “reclaim Rama from the Hindu right wing” while also presenting a manifesto for Grama Swarajya and fighting climate change.

Called

Moola Ramayana

, it is a work in three parts, the first of which will be released in Tumakuru on Sunday. The first volume deals with Bala Kanda and Ayodhya Kanda. “This is not a direct translation of Valmiki’s epic, but is written keeping the poem’s spirit and contemporary times in mind,” he said.

The uniqueness of Ramayana, Mr. Prasanna said, is that it never moves away from the central metaphor of the poem it begins with. “A hunter kills one of two birds in love and Valmiki curses the hunter. This inspires Valmiki to write the epic poem. Here, Sita and Rama are metaphors for Prakruti (nature) and Purusha (mankind) that form the basis of most eastern philosophies. Ramayana tells us that both man-woman and Prakruti-Purusha should strive to live in harmony despite the many obstacles they face. My retelling concentrates on this metaphor more than anything,” he said.

He argued that Ramayana is also a cautionary tale of what happens when one separates Prakruti and Purusha, advocating integrated living with nature to fight climate change. “Ramayana operates in metaphors. Rama fights Ravana, who separates Prakruti-Purusha with a green army — with monkeys, a bear, an eagle, mountains, rivers, and the sea acting as friends,” Mr. Prasanna said.

Opting for Grama Swarajya, away from big projects, technology and “development”, is the only way to fight climate change, he said. “Ramarajya is essentially Grama Swarajya. Before the Hindu right wing usurped Rama, most of the movements that used Rama as a metaphor argued for Grama Swarajya, including Mahatma Gandhi. Bharata did not rule from Ayodhya, but from Nandigram, a village nearby... Ramarajya is also a system, but a small system that stands in unison with Prakruti,” he said, adding Ramarajya combines the simplicity and dignity of labour of the Shudras and the knowledge of the other castes.

“I used to be ashamed to call myself a Rama bhakt, as Rama was associated with the divisive right wing. But not any more... Rama is called Maryada Purushottama. His *maryada* is his humility but it is now being made into his arrogance and anger,” Mr. Prasanna said.

The book is dedicated to Maryada Purushottamas — Rama, Basava, Buddha and Jesus Christ. “All are men, honourable men,” the dedication reads.

First published by [The Hindu](#) on 24 Aug. 2019