

Puspa Shrestha

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Before reading

Discuss the following questions.

- Why do you think people from your country migrate to another country?
- Do people from other countries migrate to your country? Why?

A winner of Man Booker prize for his novel *The Famished Road*, the Nigerian poet, fiction writer, and essayist **Ben Okri** (1949-) spent his early childhood in London. Informed by folk tales and dream logic, Okri's writing also treats his family's experience of the Nigerian civil war. In an interview for *The National*, Okri stated, "I grew up in a tradition where there are simply more dimensions to reality: legends and myths and ancestors and spirits and death. You can't use Jane Austen to speak about African reality.



Which brings the question: what is reality? Everyone's reality is different. For different perceptions of reality we need a different language."

A prolific poet and story teller, Okri, like in his other works, portrays the hardships of the African people in "The Awakening Age". In addition, he makes a call for unity, peace and solidarity among human beings from different parts of the world.

O ye who travel the meridian line,
May the vision of a new world within you shine.

May eyes that have lived with poverty's rage,
See through to the glory of the awakening age.

For we are all richly linked in hope,
Woven in history, like a mountain rope.

Together we can ascend to a new height,
Guided by our heart's clearest light.

When perceptions are changed there's much to gain,
A flowering of truth instead of pain.
There's more to a people than their poverty;
There's their work, wisdom, and creativity.
Along the line may our lives rhyme,
To make a loving harvest of space and time.

Glossary

meridian line (n.): any imaginary circle round the earth that passes through both the North and South Poles

rage (n.): violent anger

harvest (n.): the act of cutting and gathering grain and other food crops

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

- a. Who are the people 'who travel the meridian line'?
- b. What does the poet mean by 'a new world'?
- c. How are people connected to each other?
- d. What can we gain after our perceptions are changed?
- e. How are we benefited by new people?
- f. Describe the rhyme scheme of this sonnet.

Reference to the context

- a. What does the poet mean by 'the awakening age'?
- b. Why, in your view, have these people 'lived with poverty's rage'?
- c. Why does the poet appeal for solidarity among the people?
- d. Does the poet present migration in a positive light? Why? Why not?
- e. Nepal is also known for its economic as well as educational migrants. Have you noticed any change in the perceptions and behaviours of these migrants when they return home from abroad?
- f. Relate the rhyme scheme of this sonnet to the kind of life idealized by the poet.

Reference beyond the text

Write an essay on 'The Impacts of Migration on Nepali Society'.