

From the Editor-in-Chief

This issue of *Katha* contains five articles on a wide range of topics written by scholars and academics from different parts of the world. As a journal published by the Center for Civilizational Dialogue dedicated to the pursuit and advancement of intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue concerning cross-cultural human problems in all their dimensions, *Katha* tries as far as possible to publish articles pertinent to these issues. In this issue, we have two articles dealing explicitly with issues of dialogue. One is the article by Dr Stefan Bucher entitled 'Clash or dialogue?' written when he was a Visiting Associate Professor at the Center (2006-2007). In this article Dr Bucher criticizes Samuel Huntington's theory of clash of civilizations and his rejection of multiculturalism. Dr Bucher argues for cultural pluralism and global universalism and the importance of dialogue as a means of achieving this goal. For him, dialogue should take place both at the individual and the group levels. He then discusses what he considers as some of the major obstacles to dialogue. He mentions religious sectarianism and political opportunism, as good examples of obstacles to intercultural dialogues. Finally, Dr Bucher argues for the desirability to develop a form of human identity or cosmopolitanism, that is, an identity as human beings and as citizens of the world.

The other article dealing explicitly with dialogue is written by Dr Osman Bakar, and entitled 'Dialogue of civilizations after 9/11 with specific reference to the West-Islam cultural divide: promises and obstacles.' In this article Dr Bakar discusses several aspects of the outstanding issues in contemporary dialogues between Islam and the West, particularly in the post-9/11 era. Before attempting to answer several questions pertaining to the post-9/11 dialogues between Islam and the West, Dr Bakar raises the issue of the inappropriateness of the phrase 'Islam and the West' in the contemporary context, since, among other things, there is a significant and still growing Muslim community in both the United States and Europe. Dr Bakar examines the impact of 9/11 on dialogues between Muslims and non-Muslims, particularly in the West. He maintains that initially, 9/11 had impacted negatively on dialogues involving Muslims, but beginning in 2003 dialogues in the West between Muslims and non-Muslims gained momentum. The same is true of dialogues between the West and the Islamic world. Dr Bakar also draws attention to extremism on both sides of the West-Islam divide which has created obstacles to dialogue, and offers some answers on how to overcome these obstacles.

The remaining three articles do not deal explicitly with the theme of dialogue. However, the various issues raised in these articles are closely related to dialogue issues that are dear to the Center for Civilizational Dialogue. Dr Abdul Hadi, a leading Indonesian Muslim intellectual, has

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not implemented in a wise and efficient manner. He makes the pertinent observation that the present reconstruction is hampered by such local and national problems as rampant corruption and bureaucracy and by social jealousies within the Aceh province arising from the fierce competition for allocation of aid between areas affected by tsunami and those that were not. Dr Thaib concludes with a plea for a close monitoring of the reconstruction process in Aceh. By implication, the peace agreement between Aceh and Jakarta and the post-tsunami as well as the post-civil war reconstruction agenda still demand the continuation of various forms of dialogue among the concerned parties.

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