

PREFACE

In this issue, *Katha* is focused on education system and development of educational levels in Thailand and Cambodia; multiculturalism in Indonesia; and a historical moderation policy in Malayonesia (the Malay world).

The two articles on education describe the reformations and transformations in education in Thailand and Cambodia. The changes led to positive outcomes as well as to new problematic situations.

One of the article on education mentions that a reformation of the higher education system in Thailand 1999 was intended to ensure that the nation attains the possible maximum achievements in skills as well as knowledge in moulding the citizen to be the best as they can be. They made the changes in order to set the nation to be in line with the developed countries. The changes had emphasised the importance on a reform action in learning and teaching strategies to enhance and improve students' skills in education for both public and private institutions. The paper discusses some of the outcomes of the reformation.

The other education paper discusses the changes in education policy at the basic education level in Cambodia which had been going on for the last four decades. The author states that some had argued that the changes in the education system in Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s were largely considered as unsuccessful due to lack of adequate infrastructure and the guiding framework for action. The flow on maintaining and enhancing basic education to Cambodians seemed to be unsuccessful due to the clashing of traditional and modern approach of education in Cambodia. The author argues that, despite the social insecurity, a considerable and an appropriate progress on the present educational situation for Cambodia can still be seen as promising as the national rehabilitation and reconstruction has been implemented since 1980s.

Regarding the paper on moderation policy, the author presents some new facts that in the past, histories of Southeast Asia, Malayonesia, had shown that their best leaders had practiced moderation instead of policies based on optimization. The great Malayonesian kings and rulers had shown the attitudes of modesty, balance, justice, sufficiency in their policies even before their Islamic period. During Islamic era, Malayonesian rulers had been taught and advised by their scholars to be '*wusta*' which was meant as being Islamically moderate principle in ruling the kingdom.

The last article on Indonesian multiculturalism is another very interesting discussion. Indonesia is well known for her plurality of ethnicity, languages and religions and as such Indonesia is entitled to be call as a land of world's wonders. The effort in developing appropriate social relations has been an issue and debated for years since a multicultural society definitely will face issues in horizontal conflicts and separatism which they hope to be avoided. The author proposes that a humane approach should be developed to solve the issues on horizontal conflicts, mass rioting and separatism in certain areas. The approach should be in balance with the cultural aspects of the community and also should be well received by all religions in order to form the best solution in maintaining peace, tranquillity and justified action for this particular multicultural country.

It is hoped that the readers would once again at least be enlightened by the articles presented in this journal.

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