

ALFP e-magazine: *Voices of Asia*

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Culture and Identity

Overview

Guest Editor: Samrat Choudhury (Author / Independent Journalist / ALFP 2018 Fellow)

A considerable part of the world's problems today seems to revolve around questions of culture and identity. The two are implicated in conflicts over religion and language, of course, but also in battles over gender, sexuality, skin color and even class. In this edition, writers in four Asian countries reflect on different aspects of culture and identity.

Asia really is the cradle of human civilizations, from the Fertile Crescent in the west to the river valleys of India and China in the east. These are places where people still talk of events thousands of years ago as though discussing the news. Through a span of over five millennia, cultures and identities here have collided with one another, shaping and being shaped in the process. Change and fluidity have been the only constants. This dynamism by which languages and religions were born, and spread, acquiring local tinges, and giving people answers to life's questions of who they were, is still evident. Cultures across Asia are still evolving, adapting to globalization and technology. Their clashes, sharpened by the death of distance, exacerbated by migration, are evident.

What are the reasons for these clashes? What underlying dynamics power them? Must these clashes be unending, or are there ways for people to be authentically themselves without being perennially at odds with certain others? We hope that this edition will throw light on some of these questions.