RE in India

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India is a vast country

To concisely summarize any aspect of the country is a fool's task. Some of the educational needs, of the population of 1,3 Billion people, are catered to by the more than 1,5 Million schools in the country (in 2013-2014; from primary to higher secondary). Indian Education is regulated first and foremost by national law and policies, like the *National Policy of Education* [NPE] and the *National Curriculum Framework* [NCF]. The above could be called a common core, which is then interpreted by different school boards that individual schools would be affiliated to. For instance, each Indian State would have its own school board. This school board interprets the common core and fashion a syllabus and curricular material.

India is a secular country

In the common core, as described above, there is nothing that could directly be called religious education. (That is, no religious education outside the religious school boards, and religious schools such as Muslim madarsas or Hindu gurukuls.) In fact, it is commonly described, both in research literature and when talking to school teachers in India, that there is no religious education at all, in denominational schools.

However, there is content which might be said to concern topics of religion, when looking closer at both syllabi and school practices. In the subject of History religious traditions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity would be described --- with a focus on the birth of the respective tradition; possible founder, basic tenets, and so on. Another subject worth mentioning is Peace, described in the common core; or more precisely: in the NCF. It describes a subject that should permeate the whole school environment. (It is, however, up to the individual school boards how this should be done.) A detail that is mentioned; something that is encouraged, is to celebrate each other's festivals. In practice, this would, more often than not, mean specifically religious festivals. To participate in the celebration of each other's religious festivals.

Research Project

Indeed, that is what I experienced when conducting field research in North India, during the spring of 2016. The common understanding of `secular' in India is somewhat different from how it's commonly understood in the West. As opposed to a `distance to religion', the Indian understanding is rather *sarva dharma sambhāva*, which could be translated as `all religions treated equally. In practice this means that it is somewhat unproblematic to include religious elements of different kinds --- I could mention singing of hymns, prayers and mantras; praying; offering incense --- as long as the practices performed are not exclusive to any one religion. As long as the hymns sung are not only of one religion, but vary. Another example is how, at the front of one school's assembly hall, there were not only one religious symbol, but were the symbols of Aum, a cross, a crescent moon, the khanda.

In short, content about religious traditions can be found in subjects like History, but there is also other kinds of religious expressions found in schools, which deserves further exploration. It is precisely this that I attempt to do in my PhD project.

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