



29

My experience of a Geography Class

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I was in class 5, in St. Mary's Convent, Kolkata, in the year 1965. It was our Geography class. Mrs. Shanti Nandi was our Geography teacher. We addressed all our teachers as 'teacher', in that school. Objective of that particular class was - Map Drawing

How it was taught:

It was one of the weekly 'Map drawing' classes; we all took out our map drawing book, atlas pencil and eraser. (Free hand map drawing was compulsory in those days).

Her classes used to be always exciting; her stories from around the world, bringing 'Chop stick' to the class, a prize of 'one paise copper coin' were some of the things I could remember of her classes.

On this very day it was entirely a different thing; as she settled down in the class room, she talked about the war between India and Pakistan which was being fought along the north western border in India, somewhere in Kashmir for the past 2 months. We all knew about this, as at home we have cut strips of newspaper and my didi (elder sister) had pasted on the glass window pane to avoid casualty in case of bombing by the Pakistani Planes; We knew about curfew and blackout during those days. But teacher talked about something we have not ever thought of, she asked us to take out the atlas and turn to the page showing both the countries of India and Pakistan and pointed to the border, between these two countries.

About the teacher

She has been to many parts of the world, her husband being a FRCS doctor during the post WWII, who travelled to many places and finally settled down near our school at Tollygunge in Kolkata. She did a course in teaching the deaf and dumb, and later was a teacher of the 'Deaf & Dumb School' in Kolkata.

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I just visualized the war as she has described the physical features of this region, for a moment I felt like I was not a distant listener, but was already transported there in my imagination.

What she told next was very exciting. She told us to write a letter to the 'Jawans' at the border. "write whatever you want to", she said, "remember its cold mid-September up in the Himalayas, the Jawans are all out in the bleak, barren cold snow covered mountains far away from their hearth, far away from their families". We all sat down to write, I remember addressing the Jawan as 'Dear Jawan Dada.....'

Along with the letters teacher decided to send magazines as well. I just remember picking up few 'Illustrated Weeklies' that we used to subscribe at home, and took to school for the purpose.

Whatever may have been the objective of my teacher for that class, on that day, one thing for sure is that she jolly well drove the concept of 'Space and human relationship' into our intellect forever.

"The emergence in human geography of a more relational conception of space corresponds to the increasing awareness of the role of the social in human geography, including the ways in which space is conceptualized." - David Harvey

I studied 'geography' all my life, and am very passionate about the subject till today.