

I am no techno geek. Not for me the world of hi fi gadgets --mobiles, computers, cable television and trappings like credit cards and fancy holiday 'packages' promised by travel agencies. Much to the discomfiture of my family, I am somewhat at sea when I stay in expensive hotels, spend huge amounts on 'food' and 'lodging'. As far as I'm concerned, when you have seen one five-star hotel, you have seen them all. Far more preferable is a modest roof over one's head in a locale like Himachal Pradesh, India or the paddy fields near Mymensingh in Bangladesh.

My children complained about my aversion to modern technology when they were very young. Their grouse was that, unlike their friends, they had to make do with a weather beaten small black and white television. And horror of horrors, there was no cable connection. So they grew up on a fare of *Sholay*, *Ramayan* and whatever else passed as entertainment on Doordarshan. Finally, of course, I capitulated to getting a colour TV and cable. This meant being constantly paranoid about the children sneakily watching unsuitable programmes when I wasn't around.

TV watching is fast eroding the reading habit. Instead of reading children's classics, the young ones prefer to become couch potatoes. Just when they should be playing outdoors, they are glued to horrific fare like WWF and hair raising offerings from AXN.

I have an equal aversion for mobiles and computers. The latter tend to play up just when you want to get on the internet or are on the verge of printing a crucial document. And what about those anti-social instruments called cell phones, which disrupt social contact and track you down with no regard for time or place? Ugh!

Credit cards--it goes without saying-- are a strict no-no for me. In the early days I may have used one, today I prefer to do without one. It keeps one's expenses under control to do without a card. 'Buy now and pay later'-- it just doesn't appeal to me.



The Road Less Travelled

KAVITA CHARANJI

TV watching is fast eroding the reading habit. Instead of reading children's classics, the young ones prefer to become couch potatoes. Just when they should be playing outdoors, they are glued to horrific fare like WWF and hair raising offerings from AXN.

The same goes for brand names. What sense does it make for a young girl or boy to own shoes priced exorbitantly or go for a fancy T-shirt which will be discarded in a few years? Yet it is hard to refuse your children a luxury when their friends flaunt fancy school bags, footwear and clothes.

Sometimes one is reluctant in taking children to the right places. I remember my daughter complaining when she was very young that while her friends were among the first to visit the newly opened McDonalds in Delhi, she --thanks to her fuddy duddy parents-- couldn't get to sample the fare right from the restaurant's opening.

So does that make me into a fossil? In some ways, yes, because one is swimming against the current; often finding it hard to be in the mainstream at a time when one is judged purely by one's monetary accomplishments and sidelined by people who are distinguished only by their intellectual snobbery.

For my part, I am blissfully happy to do without the extraneous trappings of the upwardly mobile. And if it means being backward, so be it.