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Remote ideas

Sanjay K Bose

It had been quite a tiring day in Singapore and I breathed a sigh of relief on finally being seated for my long flight to Melbourne. My personal TV screen had a smiling airhostess telling us about all the things we should do in case the plane had to be evacuated after a water landing. Not exactly a possibility that a nervous traveller like me wanted to be reminded of just before a flight! Rather, I was more eager to change channels and catch the latest movie that the in-flight magazine had ecstatically reviewed.

Interestingly, I discovered a remote lying on my seat when I got in, only that it did not seem to have any effect as the screen obstinately continued with the emergency instructions. Not one to give up so easily, I unsuccessfully tried catching the eye of one of the airhostesses milling around. Just as I was about to climb down to the lowly level of hollering for help, I noticed that my neighbour started getting upset, muttering incoherently. I have never been able to test my first-aid skills but this seemed like an excellent opportunity to do so.

Apparently, the remote I was fiddling with was not mine but his - my own remote was lying on the other side. Hence his wrath on having channel changes unceremoniously thrust upon him was understandable, no wonder he maintained a hurt silence all through the flight!

I guess, I should have told him that my remotes and me have never been on the best of terms. I really am terrified of remotes and yearn for the simpler times when one turned knobs and flipped switches to get things to work. Unfortunately, everything comes with remotes these days and I sometimes wonder if they really belong to us or perhaps some of them might even be ones that have come visiting from the neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, I must add our remotes too seem to be perverse by nature, thus the one I really want always seems to be the one which has gone AWOL at that moment. I finally decided to buy a so-called "universal remote" that promised to combine the functions of all our remotes into one. For this, one had to "train" the device, I obviously am not a good "remote trainer", as I never got the thing to work properly.

To operate the TV, I had to press the buttons for the stereo and the VCR never worked at all. Or perhaps it did as we would always hear curses and imprecations floating down from our neighbours, whenever we tried that. May be this was what was meant by the term universal, but I am not sure my neighbours would appreciate my helpfully turning their appliances on and off with my remote.

As for now, I have given up on remotes altogether and prefer to ask my wife or daughter for help whenever I want to change channels. Needless to say, life is much simpler that way!



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