

R.B. Sapre (1915 – 1999)

Sapre Loved Chess & Chess Players

by Manuel Aaron

Ramchandra Bhargava Sapre was born a century ago on 4 March 1915 in Akola where his father, a chess lover, was a Civil Judge. After the death of his father in 1919, 4-year old Sapre was brought up in Malgund by his maternal grandfather Balakrishna Laxman Antarkar, a Sanskrit scholar who was also good at chess.

His childhood

From Malgund, Sapre, his mother and a sister moved to Ratnagiri. When plague erupted in Ratnagiri in 1924, the family moved again, to Devrukh to stay with his uncle who was actively involved in India's freedom movement.

In his childhood, Sapre used to make his own chess pieces from wood. For black he dipped the pieces in ink. The bishops were conical and the rooks cylindrical. However, their ignorant and unappreciative landlord who was described by Sapre as a 'killjoy' considered them as bad omen and burnt them in the boiler.

Losing his father at the tender age of four and moving from place to place to complete his education in the backdrop of the Freedom Struggle in which quite a few Indians were involved in the early part of the 20th century, life must have been very unsettling. In his early years he was poised to join

the anti-British freedom movement, but was stopped by his widowed mother as most mothers would be inclined to do. He limited his activities to collecting funds for his friends in the Underground.

Shatranj ke Khiladi

At first, like most men of his generation, he started playing chess with Indian rules. However he learned modern chess rules from Parsi and Iranian friends at Ismail College, Bombay. In 1938 he met a man with a chess book on a tram. This happened to be S.V.Samant, a strong respectable player of those days. Up until that time Sapre had not imagined that there could be books on chess. It changed his life as he became an avid chess player and an addict.

Sapre wrote in the July 1983 issue of Chess Mate that it was unfortunate he got so involved with chess that he never got to pass his BSc. His fascination and talent for chess was so great that he did not realise the harsh realities of life. He was like the Nawabs of Oudh in the Munshi Premchand novel, Shatranj Ke Khiladi based on 19th century India which was made into a film of the same name by Satyajit Ray in 1977. In that the two Nawabs fought

over a chess game while the British were at their gates to usurp their kingdoms.

During his Twenties and Thirties one would expect Sapre to be at his creative best over the chess board. But unfortunately that period saw political upheaval in the country and the Second World War. There were no tournaments of note around Bombay and he could not afford to travel to Madras and Calcutta for tournaments even if he knew about them.

Getting started at 34

Sapre's chess career started to bloom only in 1949 when he was already 34. The CCI (Chess Club of India, 1947-1964) based in Bombay with V.V.Vad as secretary had a great role to play in Sapre's and India's chess development.

According to available information, Sapre's first tournament success was second place behind veteran B.D.Alurkar (1896-1960) in the 1949 'Members' Tournament' of the CCI. The same year, Sapre had his first great tournament victory. He was first in the Premier Division of the Bombay Presidency Chess Tournament organised by the CCI. He finished ahead of the cream of Maharashtra's chess players like B.D.Alurkar, B.P. Mhaiskar, M.K.Gawande, S.V. Samant, V.V.Vad, M.T.Babur, M.H.Pradhan, et al.

In late 1950 when the CCI organised the Bombay State (Premier Division) Tournament as a 13-player league, the Swiss Master Robert Fontana was first, Sapre second and Pandurang G Dongre third. (see pic below)



From 1948 to 1950 he was actively participating in Correspondence Chess, both as an organizer and as player and benefited immensely by such involvement. He tied for first with GS Dixit in the 1st National Correspondence Chess Championship (1950-51) organized by Indian Chess Association (Correspondence) which later became Bharat Mail Chess Association.

Then he started winning over-the-board tournaments and became a bit of a celebrity. Thanks to his prowess and fame in chess, he was invited by the USSR Chess Federation to visit the Botvinnik-Smyslov World Chess Championship Match in Moscow in 1954. He returned with a wealth of experience and two chess clocks, a luxury at the time.

Now, it is vegetarian!

He narrated an interesting incident from Moscow. As a vegetarian, he was disgusted when he found a piece of meat floating in the soup served to him. He called the waiter and drew his attention to the piece of meat. The waiter nonchalantly removed the meat with a spoon and told Sapre, "Now, it is vegetarian!"

Winning the Ranade

Sapre had won the prestigious Ranade Memorial Open in Poona in 1951 and 1952 and established himself as a leading player of India. However, he was not yet acknowledged as a top Indian star for the simple reason there were no big

competitions in the country for over a decade. The first National Championship presented him with a great opportunity.

First National Championship: In 1955 Sapre jointly won the First National Chess Championship in Eluru, Andhra, with Dharbha Venkayya. Strangely, this championship did not produce any young champion. Sapre was 40 and Venkayya 39. That was the time when chess was associated with old men in their Fifties and Sixties, smoking Hookah under a village tree and playing Shatranj all day long. Nowadays, anyone over 40 winning the national championship would be unthinkable!

This championship in Eluru, Andhra, was boycotted by the Madras State Chess Association which had a number of strong players. Therefore, when an Indian team was proposed to be sent to Moscow for the 1956 Chess Olympiad, the fledgling AICF, with V.V.Vad as secretary, decided to organise a selection tournament.

1955 Ahmedabad Invitation

At that time, Dr J Stein, a German national, who fled Germany in the 1930s to escape Hitler's oppression had settled in Ahmedabad. He was an affluent dentist, running a successful clinic. As a chess enthusiast genuinely interested in the development of Indian chess, he offered to run the AICF's selection tournament. The AICF accepted his offer

and a 12-player Invitation tournament for the cream of Indian chess players was held in November 1955 in Ahmedabad to select the Indian team for the 1956 Moscow Olympiad. Though Sapre and Venkayya were the joint National Champions both were not offended but delighted in being required to prove themselves once again good enough for the first Indian team to go overseas.

See Ahmedabad 1955 photo on back inside cover.

At that time, the young Swiss master, Robert Fontana, easily reckoned the best chess player in India, was displaying his chess mastery in Bombay where he was working for a Swiss firm. Sapre used to visit him to play friendly games. Fontana, born 1928, was invited to the Ahmedabad Invitation Tournament as a special case with the proviso that he would not represent the country in Moscow, whatever the result. That was a 12-player Round

Robin. Sapre finished second in this tournament, behind Fontana, but in their individual encounter Sapre beat him! Venkayya played just 2 rounds as he was taken ill, was hospitalised and had to withdraw.

1956 Moscow Olympiad

Thanks to the pioneering efforts of the then AICF Secretary V.K.Raman Menon (1914-1994) the Indian team consisting of Sapre (on top board), Ramdas Gupta, B.P.Mhaiskar and S.Venkatraman left for the Moscow Olympiad via Kabul in Afghanistan as there were no direct flights to Moscow at the time. To their dismay when they reached Kabul they found that the permit for their travel to Moscow had not yet been received. This forced the team to stay in a Kabul hotel and pay the expenses from the small amount they had kept for any emergency.

The team could have had another two members (total 6), but only these four were pre-

Ahmedabad 1955 Tournament Cross Table

N	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	T
1	Robert E Fontana	x	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	9
2	R.B Sapre	1	x	1	0	½	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	8
3	Ramdas Gupta	½	0	x	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	7½
4	B.P Mhaiskar	0	1	½	x	1	1	0	½	1	1	0	1	7
5	S Venkata Raman	0	½	½	0	x	1	½	1	1	0	1	½	6
6	G.S Dixit	0	1	0	0	0	x	0	1	1	1	1	1	6
7	SCD Devgan	0	½	½	1	½	1	x	½	0	1	0	1	6
8	M.H Pradhan	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	x	1	0	1	1	4½
9	Mohamed Ishaq	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	x	1	1	0	3½
0	B.D Alurkar	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	x	1	0	3
1	OLV Rajaram	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	x	1	3
2	Mohan T Babur	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	1	0	x	2½

pared to go to Moscow bearing the cost themselves. The young AICF had no money and the governing Sports Council of India had not yet recognized Chess. The team had a non-playing manager, S.G. Bodhe who was an organiser from Bombay.

On top board, Sapre scored 8/17 with five wins, six draws and six losses. India in its debut finished 27th among 34 nations.

3rd National Championship

Owing to ill-health, Sapre could not play in the 2nd National Championship held in Pune in 1957. However, at the 3rd National Championship in Delhi, 1959, Sapre (44) finished third behind Aaron and Hussain Ali. Sapre's achievement is creditable when one notes that four years after the first National Championship in 1959, there were many changes in the Indian Chess scene. There were 56 players in the Championship against 36 in Eluru. The biggest change was the emergence of many young players from all over the country like Aaron (24), Ramesh Seth (21), Farooq Ali (20), Mohamed Hassan (28), D.V.Ranga Rao (AP), T. Mathew (Ker) et al.

Indians at Leipzig 1960

In 1958, S.K.Narasimhan from Madras took over as Secretary of the AICF. He immediately wrote up the accounts of the AICF from its inception, got them audited, changed the Constitution in line with Government requirements and

registered the AICF as a Society. With all these formalities completed, only a small push was needed from the AICF President, Dr B.Gopala Reddy, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, for the Government to provide the airtickets for the Indian team to the 1960 Leipzig Olympiad in East Germany. Thus, the team consisting of Manuel Aaron, R.B Sapre (Board 2), Mulk Raj Wahi and Ramesh Seth was sponsored by the Indian Government for the first time ever. This time India improved on its Moscow debut, finishing 27th among 60 nations. It may be mentioned in passing that Dr Bezwada Gopala Reddy (1907-1997) and a few other political leaders who were jailed by the British during the Freedom Struggle spent all their time in jail, playing chess.

At the Olympiad:

At Leipzig, Sapre (at the age of 45) was quite senior to the other team members: Wahi born 1924, Ramesh Seth born 1938 and Aaron born 1935. The three of us were on our first trip abroad whilst Sapre was a seasoned traveller having twice visited Moscow in 1954 (for the Botvinnik- Smyslov World Championship Match) and in 1956 for the Olympiad. He was a kind of father figure to us and the spiritual leader of the team though I was the captain. Sapre and I were given single rooms in the hotel whilst the other two shared a room. After games and dinner

we regularly assembled at Sapre's room to discuss and analyse our games. It must be stated that during those years a tournament game was adjourned after five hours of play and resumed the next morning.

After the Olympiad, as we were preparing to leave Leipzig, I had the problem of packing my case with the many things (mainly toys) that I had bought in Leipzig and was proudly carrying home. I told Sapre that I was going to throw away some of my clothes to accommodate the new Leipzig acquisitions. Sapre wryly remarked, "What have you bought that you must throw away your shirts and pants!"

Strongest Indian of the 1950s and 1960s

Sapre was the strongest Indian chess player in the 1950s and 1960s. He combined his great talent for chess with study of chess literature which was not easily available in India during those times. Probably his association with the Swiss master Robert Fontana helped him in this respect. His contemporaries either lacked the talent or did not put in hard work to learn chess theory.

Sapre's National Records

After jointly winning the 1st National Championship in Eluru, Sapre did not win any National title, but qualified and played in all the National Championships till 1976 with the exception of Poona, 1956,

(due to illness) and Patna 1975 where he was Chief Arbiter! Three times, he was third and never finished lower than 10th in those tough 20-player round robins. It is a remarkable record when one considers that he was the oldest, or close to oldest, in all these championships and most of his opponents were like his grandsons!

After winning the prestigious Ranade Tournament in Pune in 1951 and 1952 he continued to play in its later editions as his daughter Subhangi, married to Prabodh Pol, had settled in Pune. His further records in the Ranade showed that even at his age, he was a prize winner: 1959 - 3rd, 1960 - 2nd, 1965 - 3rd, 1975 - 4th and 1978 - 5th. Not bad for a grandfather!

Sapre, An Organiser

Sapre was a member of the Managing Committees of the Bombay Chess Association and Maharashtra State Chess Association (MSCA). He served as Honorary Secretary of the MSCA for a year. Earlier, for about a year, Sapre had been Joint Secretary of the Bharat Mail Chess Association along with VK Raman Menon. Later he worked with the AICF Secretary VK Raman Menon in 1956, the year in which India made its debut in the Olympiads.

The Chess Club of Ahmedabad, founded on 15 Aug 1949, wanted to familiarise local people with modern chess rules as people were playing only with Indian rules. How-

ever, when they tried to organise a "Gujarat Chess Tournament" along the lines of the Bombay Presidency tournaments, they failed. But the Club succeeded in getting R.B Sapre from Bombay to give a Simultaneous Display in Ahmedabad on 11 April 1950 which was a great success and an inspiration to the Gujarat chess public.

Sapre, The Journalist

Sapre was not well off. He worked for a small pharmaceutical firm, Broadway Laboratories, belonging to Batliwala, a Parsee chess friend. To pay for his tournament expenses, he had to write for newspapers and that affected his tournament results. He wrote a chess column for the Indian Express from 1959 till his death. In addition to this column he also wrote columns in "Illustrated Weekly" in the 1960s, "Mid-day" (up to 1995) and "Sportsweek (under the pseudonym 'Arbies)". Many of his historical articles in "Chess Mate" and other commemorative souvenirs are source material for the historical work, Indian Chess History (published 2014, available on sale at Chess Mate for Rs.1050 including forwarding).

During Sapre's career as a columnist, there were no computers and he had to work on his portable typewriter. When age dimmed his eyes he used to make an average of 15 typing errors per page. He then had the laborious task of typing

strips containing the correct matter, cutting and pasting them with glue over the errors.

Sapre's Friends

He was passionate about chess and his chess friends. In the 1960s his flat was on the fourth floor of an old six storey building, in Madhavwadi, close to the Dadar Railway Station in Bombay. It was a convenient meeting place for chess players of two generations like PS Gupte, PG Dhavale, SV Samant, MK Gavande, SD Sakhalkar, SG Shaligram, Arun Vaidya, VK Raman Menon, et al.

Sapre used to go swimming daily when he lived in Dadar. On one occasion when I visited him, he taught me the technique of floating in water without making any body movement.

Government Recognition: In March 1994 the Maharashtra State Government recognized his services to chess and sanctioned him a monthly pension of Rs 500, according him the status of a 'Distinguished Sportsperson'. The Central Government in Delhi also gave him the same Rs 500 from December 1994.

Sapre's Obsession

His wife Sudha complained that though he had dedicated his life to chess he did not get much in return compared to young chess players reaping rich rewards. About Sapre's obsession with chess she once remarked: "If I lay dying he

would not lift a finger but say 'it is natural for everybody to die'. But if his knight was trapped on the chess board, he would tear his hair out trying to save it!"

Sapre's Hospitality

Despite their moderate resources, with one son and three daughters to bring up in life, the Sapres were splendid hosts. For years, his wife must have provided endless cups of tea and snacks to their numerous chess visitors. I remember having typical Marathi lunch and dinner with Sapre on many occasions.

Undying Love for Chess

Sapre's love for chess and chess players was unparalleled. Once his wife complained that they never went out as a family on Sundays because he expected his chess friends like Shaligram, Sakhalkar, Arun Vaidya, et al, to drop in. When his friends remonstrated that they do not come every Sunday, he said, "but you might!"

Sapre will do anything for his chess friends. Once I was travelling through Bombay to Madras by train. I had conveyed my desire to acquire a magnetic chess set which was available only in Crawford Market from Jhaveri Brothers. Sapre promised to get it. I boarded the Madras Mail in VT Station late in the night. When it reached Dadar a little later, there was Sapre, with the magnetic chess set in his hands!

Run in with a Chai-wallah:

I remember a tournament in Poona long ago. I was having a winning position against Sapre when there was some dispute in the hall between a chai-wallah and Sapre. I believe that Sapre was short changed by the chai-wallah. During those days organisers did not serve free tea to players. The players had to buy it themselves. A cup of tea cost two annas (equivalent of our 12.5 paise!). In this commotion, I made a blunder letting Sapre capture my bishop with a check. Sapre did not see it as he was busy with the chai-wallah. Except for the two of us all the spectators in the hall noticed that I had blundered and Sapre had not noticed the gift! Sapre made some other move and lost the game. Sapre took it in good spirit when his friends teased him that he had given up a game for a cup of tea!

As Chief Arbiter

Sapre was the Chief Arbiter at the 1975 National Championship in Patna. He was intently watching my crucial game against Ravi Sekhar. It was an intense struggle with Ravi Sekhar having the upper hand. A stage came when I had no satisfactory reply and I looked at the chess clock. The flag on my clock had already fallen and I had lost on time. I looked at Sapre expecting him to declare me lost on time. But he was so completely engrossed in the game and mak-

ing his own analysis as if he were the player that he did not see the clock. I told Sapre, "I have lost on time!" Sapre broke out of his reverie and said, "Oh, have you!" Ravi Sekhar, then 21, must have noticed the flag fall too, but kept his peace as I was nearly 20 years his senior and he would have preferred Sapre to announce it. After this, Ravi Sekhar became the new champion bringing to an end my streak of five consecutive victories in the National Championships.

Sapre's Influence

Sapre was honest in all his dealings, especially in the analysis of games. When he won a lost game he would candidly admit it unlike a few other celebrated masters! I must have analysed hundreds of games with Sapre. I believe that under his influence S.D.Sakhalkar (1933-1985) and S.G.Shaligram (1933-2014) who were closely associated with him and met him regularly, became strong players themselves. During my active chess career, I had considered the three of them as Bombay's formidable trio! All three were of master calibre. Sadly, the opportunities never came their way. But Sapre was way above the other two in achievements and in selfless service to chess and chess players.

Sapre Hoodwinked

In the 1975 Kidsons Tournament in Calicut Sapre, then 60, trusting in the goodness of fellow chess players, was hoodwinked by

the National Junior Champion, T.N.Parameswaran, then only 19 and young enough to be his grandson. After some tense moves in a time scramble, Parameswaran got up from his chair and was about to walk away when Sapre asked him "Forty, over?". "Yes" mumbled Parameswaran and walked away. Sapre relaxed, leaned back, took out his tobacco pouch and started kneading the tobacco with both hands in characteristic fashion while analysing the position. After a few minutes when the flag on his chess clock had fallen, his opponent returned and told him that he had lost on time. "But you told me that 40 moves are over!" exclaimed Sapre. "Yes, 40 for me, but you have completed only 39!" was the youngster's stunning reply. Six years later Parameswaran became an International Master.

Aaron, I've lost my queen!

In 1975, my family and I were on a holiday in Bombay briefly. Sapre had met us on arrival and accompanied us to the MLA's Hostel where we stayed. As I entered the bathroom for a shower, I suggested that Sapre play a game with my 12-year old son Arvind, who was to become National Sub-junior Champion three years on. Within a few minutes I heard Sapre shout, "Aaron, I've lost my queen!" From the bathroom I shouted back, "You can still beat him!" And beat him, he did!

Sapre died on 18 May 1999 at the age of 84. His great contributions to Indian Chess and

chess players seem to have been taken for granted and forgotten. He was not a belligerent, roaring lion but a friendly gentleman who always had time for chess players.

In the 1970s

V.Venugopalan, a chess fan and National 'B' player from Avadi in Chennai, reminisces on Sapre: In the 1970s, every Sunday, we regularly bought the Sunday Standard (the Sunday edition of The Indian Express) only because we wanted to read Sapre's chess column. Incidentally, it improved our knowledge of the English language in which we were weak!

Sapre a Genius:

From his games below, one could easily come to the conclusion that Sapre was a chess genius. Unfortunately, a genius has limitations. Sometimes he is unable to do the simple

things that come naturally to other mortals. Bobby Fischer and Mikhail Tal are prime examples. Another example is Paul Morphy the 19th century American chess genius. When it was proposed to a girl that she marry Morphy, she came out with: "What else can he do other than play chess?!" On a Diwali eve, Sapre decided to set right a malfunctioning electrical gadget. As a result, the Sapre home went without electricity on Diwali day!!

Sapre was honest to the core. His fault was he wrongly assumed that everybody else was as honest and straightforward as he was. As a result, his simple, trusting nature was exploited by many, a few examples of which are found in the above narrative.

No Indian master loved chess and chess players as Sapre did!

Solutions To Sapre Magic on page 31

- 1...Rxe2! (1...Rxe2 2.Rf2 (2.Qxe2 d3+ 3.Qf2 Bd4) 2...Rxf2 3.Kxf2 Rc2+! (Or, if 2.Qxe2 d3+ 3. Qf2 Bd4.) 4. Kg1 Qc6-+) 0-1. S Nasir Ali-R.B. Sapre, National Chp. Madras 1966.
2. 1.Qxh6!! If 1...gxh6 2 e6+ mates. 1-0. R.B. Sapre-Kalika Prasad, National Chp. Madras 1966.
3. Both players were blindfolded. This was played in the Bandra Chess Festival. 45...Nxb4! 46. axb4 a3 0-1. M.H. Pradhan-R.B. Sapre, Blindfold Exhibition, Bombay 22-11-1954.
4. 21. Nxc7!! Nxc7 22. Bg5! (The queen is trapped.) 22...Qxg5 23. Qxg5 1-0. R.B. Sapre-B.D. Alurkar, Bombay State Chp 30-12-1950.
5. 39...Rxe8! 40.Nxe8 Qe5! 41.Kf1 Kf8! 42.d6 Kxe8 and won on move 49 0-1. S.G. Shaligram-R.B. Sapre, National Chp., Madras 1966.
6. Abhay Thipsay, elder brother of GM Pravin Thipsay, is now a celebrated Judge in Maharashtra. 11.Nxd4! Qxd4 12.Bxb7 Nd7 13.Bxa8 Ne5 14.Qb3! Bc5 15.e3! Nd3+ 16. Ke2! Black's forces are in a terrible tangle! 1-0. R.B. Sapre-Abhay Thipsay, Inter-Club, Bombay 26-8-1975.

R.B.Sapre - Manuel Aaron
Sicilian Kan B43

National Chp, Bangalore, 1969
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4
4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 b5 this was a
little known system which I used
to play in the Sixties. It concen-
trates on developing the
queen-side and neglects king-side
development. Sapre had prepared
for this and was ready to slaugh-
ter my king in the centre. 6.Bd3
Bb7 7.0-0 d6 8.a4 b4 9.Na2 d5
10.e5 Nd7?

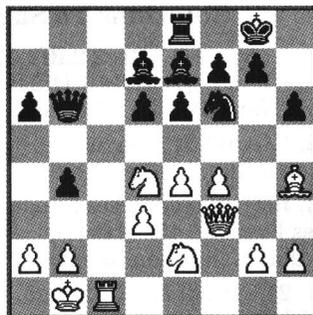


A blunder: Black should
play...Nc6 11.Nxe6! fxe6 12.Qh5+
Ke7 13.Bg5+ Ngf6 14.Rfe1!
Taking the piece could wait: he
can in the meanwhile he can in-
crease the pressure and make the
opponent more miserable!
14...Nc5 [14...Qc7 was better.]
15.Nxb4 a5 16.Na2 Qe8
17.exf6+ gxf6 18. Bxf6+! Kxf6
19.Qe5+! Ke7 20. Qxh8 Qf7
21.Qd4 Rc8 22.Nc3 Bg7
23.Qh4+ Kd7 24.Bb5+ Kc7
25.Qg3+ Kb6 26.Qd6+ Ka7
27.Bd3 Bf8 28. Nb5+ Ka8
29.Qb6 Ba6 30.Qxa5 Rc6 I could
have resigned here. However, as
Sapre often got into time trouble I
continued 31.Nd4 Nb7 32.Qd2
Rd6 33.b4 Bc4 34.a5 Bg7 35.c3
e5 36.Nf5 Rg6 37.a6 Nd6 38.
Nxd6 Qf3! The exclamation is not
for the move, but the bluff which

is called by white with only a few
seconds on his clock 39.Bxg6! 1-0

R.E Fontana - R.B Sapre
Sicilian Najdorf B95

Ahmedabad Invitation , 1955
In the 1950s, the Swiss mas-
ter Robert Fontana was working
for a Swiss firm in Bombay and
took part in the local chess life,
enriching it. He won the Premier
Division of the Bombay State
Tournament in 1950 with a score
of 9.5 points out of 12, half a point
ahead of Sapre. Sapre wrote that
Fontana's success was partly due
to his extensive knowledge of
chess theory. Born in 1928,
Fontana lives in Zurich. 1.e4 c5
2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6
5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qf3 Be7
8.0-0-0 Qc7 9.Bd3 Nc6 10.Nb3
b5 11.Qg3 b4 12.Ne2 Ne5
13.Kb1 0-0 14.f4 Nxd3 15.cxd3
Re8 16.Rhf1 Bd7 17.Rc1 Qb6
18.Nbd4 Rac8 19.Qf3? [Better
was: 19.Bh6 Rxc1+ 20.Rxc1 Nh5
21.Qh3 Bf6] 19...Rxc1+
20.Rxc1 h6 21.Bh4?



21...Nxe4!-+ 22.Be1 [22.
Bxe7? Nd2+ wins the queen.]
22...Nc5 23.g4 Bb5 24.Nxb5
Qxb5 25.Rd1 a5! The attack con-
tinues unabated. 26.h4 Qb7!
Most players would not offer ex-
change of queens in such a posi-

tion. But Sapre's positional
understanding of chess was far
greater than many of his distin-
guished contemporaries. 27.Qh3
[After 27.Qxb7 Nxb7 28.Rc1 Nc5
29.Kc2 f5! black has, apart from
his extra pawn, a clear positional
advantage.] 27...Qd5 28.Bf2 a4
29.Nc1 a3 30.b3 Ne4! 31.Be1
Qd4! 32.Qg2 Bf6! 33.dxe4 Qa1+
34.Kc2 Qb2+ 0-1.

A great game against
Fontana, the tournament winner,
who was at the peak of his powers.

S.C.D.Devgan - R.B.Sapre
Bird's Opening A03

8th National Bangalore, 1969

Shiv Charan Das Devgan was
an "Indian style" player who did
not know any chess theory but
was well experienced in slow ma-
noeuving and quaint mid-
dle-game ideas. Sultan Khan was
also such a player. Devgan was
one of the strong players from
Delhi, note that he had won the
National "B" Chp. which was the
qualification tournament for this
final championship. 1.g3 Nf6
2.Bg2 d5 3.f4 c5 4.Nh3? How
quixotic can one get! Such strange
anti-positional moves were often
made by Indian style players in
the past as a bravado. they dared
their opponents who were well
versed in modern chess theory to
prove them wrong! Often they got
away with it through sheer talent.
4...Nc6 5.Nf2 e5! 6.d3 Be7 7.c4?!

[This system of playing f4 and
c4 was adopted for long by the
Andhra star Rentala Subrah-
manyam (1908-1982). I think
that it was to cock a snook at mod-
ern chess theory which swore, and
still swears, by 'correct' pawn for-

mation. Unlike Rentala, Devgan
had no favourite systems to fol-
low. He just played what came to
him at the spur of the moment!
Better 7.e4] 7...dxc4 8.Bxc6+!?
bxc6 9.dxc4 Qc7 10.Nc3 0-0
11.e3 Be6 12.b3= Nd7 13.0-0
exf4 14.exf4 Bf6 15.Qf3 Bd4
16.Bd2 g6 [Better was:
16...Rad8! 17.f5? (17.Kg2=)
17...Ne5 18.Qe4 Nd3! 19.fxe6
(19.Qxd3?? Bxf2+) 19...Nxf2
20.Rxf2 Bxf2+ 21.Kxf2 Rxd2+]
17.Kg2 Nf6 18.Nfe4? [This move
daring black to win the exchange
leads to defeat. Better was:
18.Rfe1=] 18...Nxe4 19.Nxe4
[For many moves now white of-
fers his rook for black's bishop
and black does not capture it.
Both players place more value on
the well-placed bishop in this po-
sition than on the dormant rook.
Also losing was: 19.Qxe4 Rfe8!
20.Qd3 Bf5 21.Qf3 Qd7! 22.Rfe1
Bh8! 23.Qf2 Bh3+ 24.Kh1 Qd3
Black is clearly winning.]
19...Qd7! 20.Be3 Bg4 21.Qf2



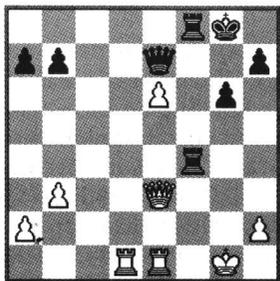
21...Qe7! Sapre sees that
white's minor pieces are unfortu-
nately lined up on the e-file and
decides to take the knight instead
of the exchange with 21...Bh3+.
22.Bxd4 Qxe4+! 23.Kg1 Qxd4
With a whole extra bishop black is
winning comfortably. 24.Rae1

Rfe8 25.Kg2 Re6 26.Re5 Rae8 27.h3 Bf5 28.Re6 Re6 29.g4 Be4 30.Kg3 Bd3 31.Qxd4 cxd4 32.Rd1 Re3 33.Kh4 c5 34.b4 Bc2 35.Rd2 d3 36.bc5 Kf8 37.c6 Ke7 38.Kg5 Re2 39.c7 Kd7 0-1.

Debabrata Sett - R.B.Sapre
King's Indian Def E72

National Chp. Bangalore, 1969
Debabrata Sett was not only a prominent player of West Bengal in the 1960s winning the WB State Championship in 1966, but also the Secretary of the WB State Chess Association between S.C.Auddy (1908-1979) and Shib Shankar Roy (now 86).

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.d4 Nc6 7.Nge2 e5 8.d5 Ne7 9.0-0 Nd7 10.f4 exf4 11.gxf4 [11.Bxf4 Ne5 12.b3 has been tried here.] 11...f5 12.Nd4 Nc5 13.Re1 fe4 14.Ne4 Ne4 15.Be4 Nf5 16.Ne6 Bxe6 17.de6 c6 18.Rb1 Qe7 19.b3 Rad8! 20. Bb2 d5!f [Carefully played. If 20... Qxe6?? 21.Bd5 wins the queen.] 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.Bxf5 [22.Bxd5? Qc5+ 23.Kh1 Rxd5-+] 22...Rxf5 23.Bxg7 Qxg7 24.Rc1 Qe7 25.Qd4 Rdf8 26.Rcd1 [White misses 26.Re5 Rxf4 27.Qxd5 b6=] 26...Rxf4 27.Qxd5 R4f5 28.Qe4 Rf2 29.Qe5 R2f5 30.Qe3 Rf4

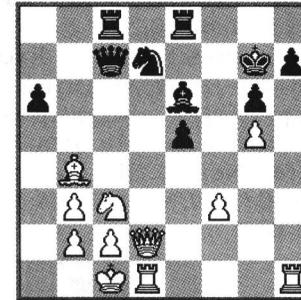


31.Qe5? [White misses his best way to prevent the black queen from entering his half of the board. He should play: 31.Qg3! and if now 31...b5 32.Kh1 Qb7+ 33.Kg1 Qb6+ 34.Kh1 R4f5 (If 34...Rf2 35.e7 Re8 36.Rd8 Kf7±) 35.Qg2 Re8 36.Qe4=] 31...Qh4 32.Qd5 R4f5 33.Qc4?? [33.Qd3f] 33...Qf2+ After 34 Kh1 Qf3+ 35 Kg1 Rg5+ mates. 0-1.

R.B.Sapre (Chess Club of India)
S Nawab Ali (Associated Cement)
Sicilian Classical B56

Inter-Club Team Ch, Bombay 1960
Nawab Ali (1921-1984) was a strong chess player from Jabalpur whose attacking chess gained him employment with the Associated Cement Companies in Bombay in the 1950s. He had excellent scores against India's top players and represented India at the 1962 Varna Olympiad. Leonard Barden wrote in Sports & Pastime that among the Indian players in the Varna Olympiad Nawab Ali impressed the most with his "daring and dynamic chess." Unfortunately he did not enjoy good health for the best part of his life. 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nd7 3.Nf3 c5 4.Nc3 Ngf6 5.Bc4 cxd4 6.Nxd4 g6 7.Bb3 Bg7 8.Be3 0-0 9.f3 a6 10.Qd2 Re8 11.0-0-0 b5 12.h4 Bb7 13.h5 Nc5 [13...Nxb5 14.g4 Nhf6 15.Bh6 Bh8 16.g5 Nh5=] 14.hxg6 Nxb3+ 15.axb3 fxg6 16.Ne6 Qc8 17.Nxg7± Kxg7 18.g4 Qc7 19.Ne2 [19.b4! or 19 Bg5 was also good.] 19...Rac8 20.Bd4? e5!= 21.Bc3 d5 22.g5 Nd7? [Slightly better was: 22...Nh5] 23.exd5 b4 24.Bxb4

Bxd5 25.Nc3 [The idea behind black's pawn sacrifice is: if 25.Qxd5?? Qxc2#] 25...Be6



26.Rxh7+!! Kxh7 27.Qh2+! Kg8 28.Rh1! [28.Rh1 Nc5 29.Qh8+ Kf7 30.Qf6+ Kg8 31.Rh8#] 1-0

R.B. Sapre - S.M. Natu
Queen's Gambit D51

Bombay, 29.11.1949
Shivram Mahadev Natu (1913-1983) impressed in the Ranade tournaments but not in the National Championships. Noteworthy was his ability in his teens to hand-walk up the 100+ stone steps of the Parvati Temple in Pune with his feet in the air.

1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.a3 h6 7.Bh4 Bd6 8.e4 dxe4 9.Nxe4 Be7 10. Nxf6+ Nxf6 11.Bd3 Bd7 12.Ne5 Qb6 13.0-0 Qxd4?



14.Nxf7!! Rf8 [14...Kxf7?? 15.Bg6+! Kxg6 16.Qxd4] 15.Bg6! Qxh4 [The best defence also lost: 15...Qxd1 16.Ne5+ Kd8 17.Rfxd1+.] 16.g3! After this, the black queen is lost. 16...Qe4 [16...Qh3 17.Ng5+ wins the queen.] 17.Nd6+! 1-0.

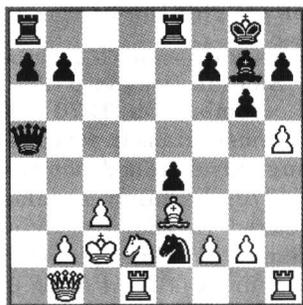
Shamsul Hassan - R.B.Sapre
Sicilian Dragon B72
Bombay Ch, 1970

Shamsul Hassan was a very strong player from Bombay. In the 1970s he fairly regularly appeared in the prestigious National "A" Championships. However, his best was 6th place in both 1975 and 1979. 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6.Be2 g6 7.Be3 Bg7 8. Qd2 0-0 9.h4 d5 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.Nxd5 Qxd5 12.Bf3 Qc4 13.Be2 Qb4 14.c3 Qa5 15.Nb3 Qc7 16.h5 Rd8 17. Qc1 Bf5 18.Bf4 Qd7? Logical is 18...e5 at once 19. Qe3 e5 20.Bg5 Re8 21.Bc4??



[White could have obtained an approximately level game with 21.hxg6?? Bxg6 22.0-0 The text move is a blunder leading to disaster by a series of moves brilliantly executed.] 21...Nd4! 22.0-0-0 Qa4 23.Bd3 Qxa2! 24.Nd2 Bxd3!

25.Qxd3 e4! The key move in the attack. If: 26. Kxe4? Qa1+ etc wins the knight 26.Qb1? [If 26.Qc4 Qa1+ 27.Nb1 Qa5 28. Be3 Rac8 is also losing for white.] 26...Ne2+ 27.Kc2 Qa5! 28.Be3



28...Nxc3!! 29.Qa1 Na4! 30.hxg6 hxg6 31.Nb3 Rac8+ 32.Kb1 Qb4 33.Qa2 Nc3+!! This tears into white's castled position. 34.bxc3 Rxc3 35.Rd2 Rxb3+ 36.Kc1 Rc8+ 37.Rc2 [37.Kd1 Rb1+ 38.Ke2 Qb5+ mates.] 37...Rxc2+ 0-1.

R.B.Sapre-Shamsul Hassan
English Symmetrical A30
National Chp, Bangalore, 1969

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.Bg2 e6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Nc3 c5 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 Nc6 9.Qd1 0-0 10.e4 With this move, white pressures black's d6 square, a pressure that finally explodes on the 33rd move with disastrous consequences for black. 10...d6 11.b3 Black just cannot play d6-d5 and has to keep on defending his d6 pawn for the best part of the game. 11...Qb8 12.Bb2 Rd8 13.Qe2 Rd7 [This appears to be the moment for black to liberate himself with d6-d5 as he has enough pieces bearing on d5.

But the situation of the other pieces is unfortunate and would lose material: 13...d5 14.exd5 exd5 15.cxd5 Nxd5 16.Nxd5 Rxd5 17.Ne1! Rd7 (as white is threatening 18 Bxc6 Bxc6 19 Qxe7 winning a bishop) 18.Qg4!+- picks up the rook with a double attack.] 14.Rfd1 Ne8 15.Nb5 Nc7 16. Nbd4 Qf8 17.Nxc6 Bxc6 18. Nd4! Bb7



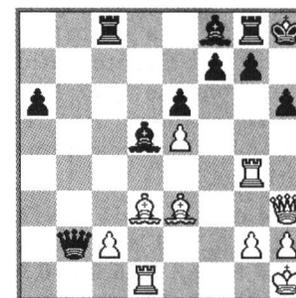
19.Nc2 (Now d6-d5 is made impossible as white has five pieces bearing on d5 while black has only four.) 19...Rad8 20.Ne3! Ne8 21.Rd2 Bf6 22.Bd4 Bxd4 23.Rxd4 Qe7 24.Rad1 Qg5 25.Nc2 (Now that white has permanently restrained d6-d5, his next step would be to collect the d6 pawn free of cost.) 25...a5 26.e5! Bxg2 27.Kxg2 Qe7 28.Qd2! White's fight against d6 is reaching its peak. 28...d5 29.Ne3! With ...dxc4 impossible because of his insufficiently protected rook on d7, black is in grave danger. 29...Nc7 30.f4 Black will have to willy nilly open up his own position with f7-f6 as he cannot be caged over his Rd7 for ever and black is preparing for that very moment. 30...Qc5

31.f5 Qc6 32.Kg1! Keeping your king on the same diagonal of your opponent's queen or bishop should be avoided. 32...f6? [Black has reached the end of his patience and is now immediately lost. He should have played 32...g6 33.f6 Qc5 which is not lost and would have put up a lot of resistance.] 33.fxe6 fxe5 34.cxd5 Qc5 35.Rc4 Rxd5 36.Rxc5 Rxd2 37.Rxd2 After 37...Rxd2 38 Rxc7 black is totally lost. 1-0.

R.B.Sapre - R.Ravi Sekhar
Sicilian Rauser B66
National Chp, Calcutta 1976
Analysis: R.B.Sapre

In the notes to this game we see Sapre being absolutely truthful and giving credit to his opponent where credit is due. Very few players would mention games that they lost. But in the commentary to the 9th move, Sapre mentions his 1974 loss to KBL Srivastava! Though this game ends in a draw, it has lots of interesting tactical skirmishes and complications worth studying. (M.Aaron) 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Be2 a6 8.Qd2 h6 9.Be3 Bd7 [9...Be7 10.0-0-0 Qc7 11.f4 Bd7 12.g4 Nxd4 13.Qxd4 e5 14.Nd5 Nxd5 15.Qxd5 Bc6 16.Qd3 0-0-0 17.h4 and despite the absence of the Black king on that flank, White's king-side attack was effective. K.B.L. Srivastava - R.B.Sapre, Bhilwara Trophy, Delhi 1974.] 10.0-0 b5 11.a3 Be7 12.f4 Qc7 13.Rad1 Rc8 14.Qe1 0-0 And now, despite White's king-side castling,

Black's king on that flank is liable to attack because of the target for sacrificing - h6. 15.Qg3 Kh8 16.Kh1 Qb8 17.Bd3 b4 [A bold decision to start a complicated fight on opposite flanks, and possibly, Black's best bet. 17...Nh5 18.Qh3 e5 19.Nf5 would only further White's attack.] 18.axb4 Qxb4 19.e5! dxe5 20.Nxc6 Bxc6 21.fxe5 Nd5 22.Nxd5 Bxd5 23.Rf4! [White's king-side attack is evidently worth a pawn, but I had not anticipated that Black's distant operations would affect my king. Tame would be: 23.b3 Qh4 exchanging queens.] 23...Qxb2 24.Rg4 Rg8 25.Qh3 Bf8



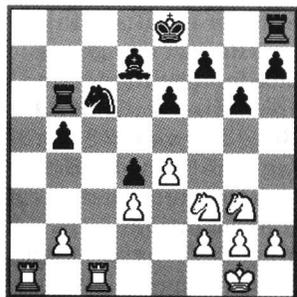
26.Qh5? [After the game Ravi Sekhar showed me: 26.Rh4!! Rxc2 27.Bxh6 Bxg2+ 28.Kg1! followed by inevitable discovered check mate whether or not Black takes the queen. Rarely one gets such a chance for a brilliancy and it is a pity I missed it.] 26...Rxc2! 27.Bxc2 Qxc2 28.Rg3 g6 29.Qg4 h5 30.Qd4 Be7? [At the postmortem analysis Ravi Sekhar mentioned: 30...Bc5! forcing exchange of queens and remaining with two pawns

for the exchange. Black then has a weakness on f7, but the chances may be even.] **31.Rc1 Qe2 32.Qf4 g5 33.Qxf7 Rg7 34.Qe8+ Kh7 35.h4!** Probably Ravisekhar was playing for a win with the threat of ...h4. And he would have been justified, but for my good luck in finding 35 h4! **35...Be4 36.Rc8** Threat 37 Qh8, etc., mating. **36...Bxg2+ 37.Rxg2 Qe1+ 38.Kh2?** [Time trouble! 38.Rg1 Qxh4+ (38...Qxe3?? 39.Qxh5#) 39.Kg2 wins.] **38...Qxh4+ 39.Kg1 Qe1+ 40.Kh2 ½-½**

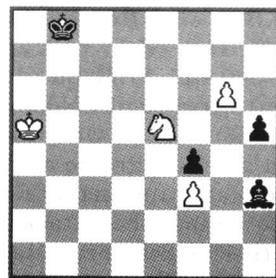
R.B Sapre - Mohamed Hassan
Caro-Kann B11

5th National Ch. Bombay, 1963
Mohamed Hassan (1931-1994) the native talent from Hyderabad was unfortunate not to become an International Master from the 1972 Tehran Zonal Tournament. He drew a won game which cost him the IM title.

1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 d4 4.Ne2 c5 5.Ng3 Nc6 6.Bc4 e6 7.d3 b5 8.Bb3 Na5 9.0-0 Ne7 10.c3 Nec6 11.cxd4 cxd4 12.Nh5 g6 13.Bg5 Be7 14.Be7 Qe7 15.Ng3 Nxb3 16.Qxb3 a6 17.a4 Rb8 18. Rfc1 Qb7 19.ab5 ab5 20. Qc2 Bd7 21.Qc5 Qb6 22. Qxb6 Rxb6



23.Nxd4! 0-0 [23...Nxd4?? 24.Ra8+-] **24.Nxc6 Bxc6 25.d4 Rd8 26.Rd1** Sapre plays the whole game elegantly, carefully and without taking any risks. **26...b4 27.f3 Bb5 28.Kf2 Rc6 29.Rd2 Rdc8 30.Ke3 Rc2 31.Rad1 f5 32.Ne2 Ba4 33.Rxc2 Rxc2 34.Rd2 Rc8 35.Nf4 Kf7 36.Nd3 Rb8 37.Nc5 Bb5 38.d5 exd5 39.exd5 Rc8 40.Nb3** [40.Kd4!] **40...Ba4 41.Nd4 Ke7 42.b3 Bd7 43.Rc2 Ra8 44.Nc6+ Kd6 45.Kd4 Ra3 46.Kc4! Ra1** [46...Bxc6? 47.dxc6 Kxc6 48.Kxb4+] **47.Nxb4 Rd1 48.Ra2 Rc1+ 49.Rc2 Rd1 50.Nd3 Bc8 51.Kc3 Rg1 52.Kd4 Bb7 53.Rd2** [Probably stronger was: 53.Ra2 Rb1 54.b4 Bxd5 55.Ra6+ Bc6 56.h4!+-] **53...Bxd5 54.b4 g5 55.Kc3?! [55.b5±] 55...h5?! 56.b5 Rb1 57.Nb2 f4 58.b6 Re1 59.Nd3 Rb1 60.Nb2 [60.h4!] 60...Re1 61.Kb4 Kc6 62.b7! Re8 63.Ka5 Rb8 64.Nd3! Kb7 65.Rb2 Kc7 66. Rb8 Kb8 67.h4 Bc4** [If 67...g4 68.fxg4 hxg4 69.Nxf4+-] **68. Ne5 Bf1 69.hg5! Bg2 70.g6 Bh3**



71.Ng4!! This looks like a composed study! **71...Bf1 72.Kb4! Bd3 73.g7** If 73...Bh7, 74 Nf6 wins. 1-0.

R.B.Sapre - B.D.Alurkar

Bombay State Ch. Poona, 1952
Analysis: R.B.Sapre in Chess Mate

Balwant Dattatreya Alurkar (1896-1960) won the 1934 Sangli tournament jointly with V.K.Khadilkar. That event was to decide who will take on Sultan Khan in the 1935 match. As there was no time to break the tie, Alurkar let Khadilkar have the honour of playing Sultan Khan. A close rival of Sapre, Alurkar could never finish ahead of him. **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Qa5 7.Qc2 [Opening books give 7.Bd2] 7...Ne4?! 8.f3! Nf6 [8...Qxc3+? 9.Qxc3 Nxc3 10.a4! traps the knight] 9.Bd2 Nc6 10.Bd3 Qc7 11.Ne2 Na5 12.Nc1 d5** [Consistent is 12...d6 leaving white with the double pawn complex.] **13.cxd5 c4 14.Be2 exd5 15.e4 0-0 16.e5 Ne8 17.0-0 f6 18.f4 fxe5 19.fxe5 Rxf1+ 20.Bxf1 Qf7 21.Be3 Bf5 22.Qa4 b6 23.Ra2!** This way, the rook is quickly activated. White has the better position with his passed pawn on e5, two bishops and king-side prospects. **23...Nc7 24.Rf2 Qg6 25.Ne2 Rf8 26.Nf4 Qf7 27.g3 h6 28.Bg2 g5 29.e6** a tactical breakthrough increasing piece activity. **29...Qe7!** [29...Bxe6 30.Nxd5± (Aaron)] **30.Nxd5 Qxe6 31.Nxc7 Qxe3**



32.Qb4! [Here, I wrote the natural looking move 32.Nd5?? on my score sheet. It was my habit to write the move first and then re-examine it before making it on the board. Alurkar saw my written move and straightened up with a jerk as if to say 'I have got him!' (The game was played in the old 'Indian style' with the players seated on the floor over large cushions.) I smelt a rat and there it was: 32...Qxf2+! 33.Kxf2 Bd7+ winning a rook. I canceled the written move and played 32 Qb4.] **32...Kg7 33.g4! Nc6** [33...Bxg4?? 34.Qxf8+-] **34.Qd6 Rf6 35.Qxf6+!** A nice case of trapper trapped! 1-0.

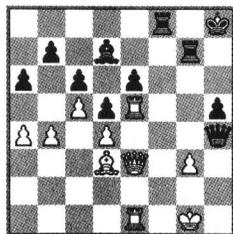
R.B. Sapre - V.V. Vad

Dutch Defence A96
Dadar Club Tmt, Bombay 1960
Analysis: Manuel Aaron

Vinayak Vasudev Vad (1917-1995) of Bombay was a talented chess player who was the very first Secretary of the All India Chess Federation (AICF). He had beaten all the top players of his day, including the Swiss Master Robert Fontana. He was instrumental in the founding of the Chess Club of India in Bombay, the Bombay State Chess Association and the AICF itself. Sapre wrote of him, "In his zeal for organisational work in chess, he neglected his own progress as a player."

1.d4 f5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 e6 4.c4 Be7 5.Nc3 0-0 6.Nf3 d6 7.0-0 c6 8.Qc2 Qe8 9.Bg5 Nbd7 10.e4 fxe4 11.Nxe4 Nxe4 12.Qxe4 Bxg5 13.Nxg5 Nf6 14.Qe2 h6 15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Qxe4 Rf6 17.f4! In many of

his games we see Sapre playing high class positional chess. Focussing on a weak square and controlling the game was seen time and again in Sapre's games. Invariably, such positional control terminated the game with a brilliant tactical finish. 17...Qf7 18.c5! This gains crucial control over the e5 square. 18...d5 19.Qe3 Bd7 20.b4 a6 21.Rab1 Rf8 22.a4 h5 23.h4 g6 24.Rf2 Qe8 25.Bf1 Kg7 26.Rfb2 R6f7 27.Bd3 [Sapre keeps the threat of 27.b5 axb5 28.axb5 alive, but does not execute it as it would be uncommonly hard for him to achieve victory. He has his eye on the king-side where sacrificial play may be available.] 27...Qe7 28.Qe5+ Qf6 29.Qe3 Rh8 30.Re2 Re7 31.Qf2 Rf8 32.Re5 Kh6 33.Qe3 Threatening a discovered check. 33...Kg7 34.Rg5 Be8 35.Re1 Kh8 36.Re5 White's plan on the king-side is taking shape. Black can do little except wait and watch for events to unfold. 36...Bd7 37.f5! [This break must come sometime or the other if white is to win. A more elaborate preparation for this break does not seem to get white closer to a win as the following would show: 37.Kh2 Rg7 38.Rg5 Kg8 39.Kg2 Qf7] 37...gxf5 38.Bxf5! Rg7 39.Bd3?! [He could keep the advantage with: 39.Bxe6 Bxe6 40.Rxe6 Qf3 41.Kh2+] 39...Qxh4?



[In all likelihood, black was in time trouble. He could save the game with: 39...Qf3! 40.Kh2 Qf2+ 41.Kh3 Qf3=] 40.Qh6+ Kg8 41.Qxg7+! Black loses a whole rook. 1-0.

S.M. Muzumdar - R.B. Sapre
Slav Defence D13

Matunga Tmt, Bombay 1952
Analysis: Manuel Aaron

When the AICF was formed in Bombay on 23 Sep 1950 a Provisional Committee was set up to draft its constitution and organise India's first National Championship. The secretary of that Committee was Sadanand Muzumdar (1912-1999) a structural engineer whose spacious flat in Matunga was the meeting place for Bombay's chess elite for a few years. 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Bf4 Nh5 7.Bg3 Nxd3 8.hxg3 e6 9.e3 Qb6 10.a3!



A small trap worth knowing! 10...Bd7 [If 10...Qxb2? 11.Na4! (the queen is trapped and black must sacrifice his bishop to extricate his queen.) 11...Bb4+ 12.axb4 Qxb4+ 13.Qd2+] 11.Bd3 Rc8 12.Qc2 g6! [12...h6=] 13.Rc1 Bg7 14.b4 0-0 15.Qb1 Qd8 16.Kd2? [In all probability, white wanted to attack the black forces along the semi-open h-file. Better was: 16.0-0=] 16...e5! It is well-known rule in chess that a

wing attack in the middle-game is best countered by opening up the centre. Here, Sapre does it in style. 17.dxe5 Bg4 18.Nb5 Bxf3 19.gxf3 Bxe5 20.f4 Bg7 21.Qb3 d4! 22.Rc5 [22.e4?? (to block the centre, then comes...) 22...a6!-+ and the knight is trapped.] 22...dxe3+ 23.fxe3 a6 24.Rd5 Qe7 25.Nd6 Rcd8! 26.Ne4? [White has voluntarily chosen to keep his king in the centre and he has to pay for it now. He is now losing but his best is: 26.b5 axb5 27.Nxb5 Na5 28.Qa2 Rxd5 29.Qxd5 Rd8 30.Qa2 (30.Qf3 Qd7!) 30...Qe4!-+] 26...Qe6! Pinned against his queen, the white rook is strangely lost. 0-1.

R.B. Sapre-M.H. Pradhan
Slav Defence D15

Chess Club of India, Ch Bombay1950
Analysis: Manuel Aaron

Malharrao Haibatrao Pradhan (1905-1990) was one of Bombay's leading chess players in the 1960s. He worked for the Bombay High Court as its Chief Translator and Interpreter. In 1983 at Nagpur, when he was 78 he won the National Veterans' Championship which was open only to those above 50.

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.e3 Bf5 6.Bxc4 e6 7.0-0 Nbd7 8.Qe2 Nb6 9.Bb3 Ne4 10.Nxe4 Bxe4 11.Ne5 Qf6? [11...Bd6=] 12.f3 Bg6 13.e4 0-0 14.Be3 h5 15.Rfc1 Kb8 16.a4 Nd7

See diagram

17.Nxc6+!! With all of his pieces developed and in good positions, it was time to finish the game with some tactical play.



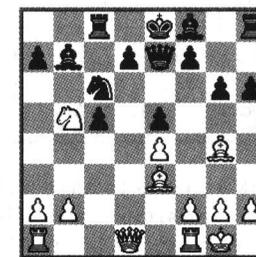
Position after 16...Nd7

17...bxc6 18.Rxc6 Nb6 19.a5 Rxd4 [Desperation. If 19...Rd6 20.axb6! Rxc6 21.Qa6! winning.] 20.axb6! Bd6 21.Qa6! 1-0

R.B. Sapre - V.V. Vad
English Opening A34
Chess Club of India, Bombay
07.12.1949

Sapre precisely punishes an 8th move error by his opponent to finish the game in another 8 instructive moves.

1.c4 c5 2.Nf3 b6 3.Nc3 Bb7 4.e4 Nc6 5.d4 cxd4 6.Nxd4 g6 7.Be2 Bg7 8.Be3 e6?? [The cause of all of his problems. Better was 8...Nf6!] 9.Ndb5! Bf8 10.Bf4 e5 [Better was: 10...Rc8 11.Nd6+ Bxd6 12.Bxd6+] 11.Nd5! Rc8 12.Be3 h6 [If 12...Nf6 13.Bg5 Bb4+ 14.Kf1!-] 13.0-0 Nf6 14.Nxf6+! Qxf6 15.Bg4! Qe7 [15...Rd8?? 16.Nc7+ Ke7 17.Nd5+-] 16.c5! Threatening 17 Nd6+ winning. 16...bxc5

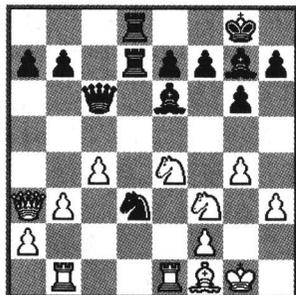


17.Bxc5! Qxc5 18.Qxd7# 1-0

S.V. Samant - R.B. Sapre
Colle System A48

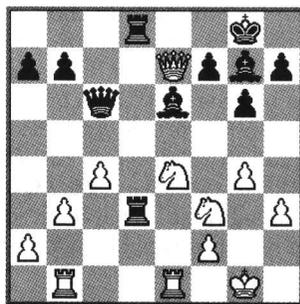
Chess Club of India Ch Bombay
19.04.1949

Shripad V Samant (1910-1984) was a distinguished academician with a string of degrees after his name. He took an active part in the activities of the Chess Club of India in Bombay. Sapre had the highest regard for him and had him as his sparring partner. 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.b3 g6 3.Bb2 Bg7 4.e3 0-0 5.Be2 d6 6.d4 Nbd7 7.Nbd2 c5 8.c4 cxd4 9.exd4 Nh5 10.0-0 Nf4 11.Re1 Nc5! 12.dxc5 Bxb2+ Black has the initiative after this. 13.Rb1 Bg7 14.cxd6 Qxd6 15.Bf1 Bf5 16.Ne4 [16.Rc1 Bb2 wins the exchange anyway.] 16...Qc7 17.Qc1 Rad8 18.Qa3 Qc6 19.Nfd2 Rd7 20.h3 [If 20.Qxa7 Rfd8 21.Qa5 b6 22.Qb4 Rd4 23.f3 Qd7+ At the cost of a pawn, black has tremendous play.] 20...Rfd8 21.g4 to save his rook white has to make this move which further weakens his castled position. 21...Be6 22.Nf3 Nd3



Black appears to have a tremendous position with his bishops raking the board. The end should be near but white is

not without his chances. 23.Bxd3? [After giving up this fianchettoed bishop, White's position collapses quickly. Better was 23.Re3!- though black's chances are better because white's enlarged pawn structure in his castled position gives black practical chances.] 23...Rxd3 24.Qxe7?



[Better was: 24.Nfg5+ 24...Re8! White is totally lost. 25.Nf6+ Bxf6 White loses his knight on f3 also. 0-1.

R.J. Mehra - R.B. Sapre
Bird's Opening A03
Bombay State Ch, 01.04.1961

R.J.Mehra (1904-1991) was a Bombay businessman who had a great love for chess. In 1967 he won the Senior Division Tournament of the Bombay State Chess Association with a score of 9.5/10, finishing ahead of players like Parrel, Hussain Ali and Dr A.B.Surveyor. He is said to have been a sparring partner of Sultan Khan. Though they were born around the same time, their styles of play were different. While Sultan Khan played 'Indian-style' positional chess, Mehra's play was based on

modern principles with tactics as his main stay. 1.f4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 I have named this 'system' of white playing f4 and c4 in the opening as the Rentala system after the Andhra talent, Rentala Subrahmanyam (1908-1992) who played this extensively. Rentala even played ... f5 and ...c5 with the black pieces! Now I realise that during those days, it was not Rentala alone who was using this system. M.H.Pradhan had used it and here it is Sultan Khan's contemporary R.J.Mehra who is using it. 3...Bg7 4.Nc3 d5 5.e3 0-0 6.Qb3 c6 7.d4 Qb6 [Perhaps this move involved psychology as Mehra, though belonging to the old guard, was known to be more of a modern classical player than an 'Indian style' player. His penchant was to place his pieces aggressively and initiate an attack. When making this move, Sapre must have guessed that Mehra would shy away from queen exchanges so early in the game. 7...a6 for an eventual ...b5 blocking the queen-side or to play dxc4 and ...b5 comes under consideration.] 8.Qa3 [White eyes the e7 pawn. Better was: 8.Qxb6 axb6 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Ne5 Nc6 11.Bd2 Bf5 12.Bb5±] 8...Nbd7?! [A pawn sacrifice for the initiative so early was risky, but playable. With his king still two moves away from castling, Mehra must have worried himself debating the wisdom of accepting or not accepting the sacrifice. He was 57 when this

game was played while Sapre was 46. Sapre like many established masters must have considered gaining the initiative and bringing white's e-pawn under a pin worth a pawn. Safer was 8...Re8=] 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Qxe7 Re8 11.Qa3 Bf8 12.Qb3 Qd6?! Sapre refuses to play with caution as he has trust in his position. Now, white stands better. 13.Ne5 Nb6 14.a4 Be6 Planning a further sacrifice. 15.a5 Nc4 16.Nxc4 dxc4 17.Bxc4 Bxc4 18.Qxc4 Qxf4 19.Qe2 Qd6 20.0-0 Bg7 21.Qf3 Qd7 22.Ra4? A slip which is immediately taken advantage of. 22...Ne4! 23.Rb4 f5! Thus black has established a stranglehold over the e4 square. though white is a pawn up, the position of black is good. 24.Nxe4 Rxe4 25.Qd1 (Threatening 26 Qb3+ and 27 Rxb7.) 25...Re7 26.Qb3+ Kh8 27.Bd2 Rc8 28.Rc4 Rxc4 29.Qxc4 h6 30.g3 Bf6 31.Kf2? Qe8 32.Qc3 Bg7 33.Rc1 Kh7 34.b4 Qd7 35.Qc8 Qd5 Now begins a long phase of queen moves where Mehra wants to exchange off the queens while Sapre dodges it and tries a knockout. 36.Qc4 Qe4 37.Qc2 Qd5 38.Qd3 Rd7 39.h4 a6 40.Qc4 Qe4 41.Qc2 Qg4 42.Qc8?

See diagram

42...f4! 43.gxf4?? [White can draw with 43.exf4! Bxd4+ (white probably avoided this variation because of this bishop move capturing d4 with check, but it was okay for white.) 44.Kg2 Bf2

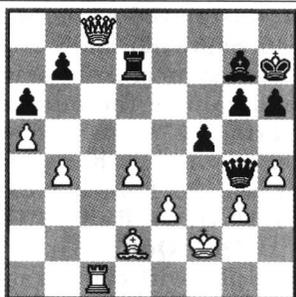


Diagram after 42.Qc8?

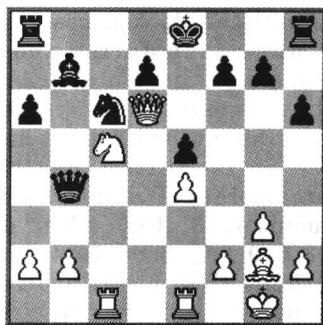
45.Bc3 Qxg3+ 46.Kf1 Qh3+ 47.Kxf2 (47.Ke2?? Qe3+ 48.Kf1 Qxc1+-) 47...Qxh4+ draw by perpetual check.] 43...Bf6! 44.Rg1 Bxh4+ 45.Rg3 0-1.

R.B. Sapre - M.T. Babur
English Symmetrical A30

Bombay State Ch, 27.12.1953

Mohan Thakurdas Babur was born on 31 Oct 1924 in Karachi. He migrated to India during the turbulent partition of India in 1947 and learned modern chess only in Ahmedabad where he settled. He now lives in Dubai with his children. He was a strong Correspondence Chess player, winning the 1966-67 National CC Championship jointly with S.C.Auddy of Calcutta. Between 1972 and 1978 Babur played in five National "A" Championships. He won the 1973 National "B" in Ahmedabad. 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.Bg2 c5 5.0-0 e6 6.Nc3 Be7 7.Re1 Ne4 8.Nxe4 Bxe4 9.d3 Bc6 10.e4 h6 11.d4 cxd4 12.Nxd4 a6 13.Be3 Bb4 14.Bd2 Bxd2 15.Qxd2 Qc7 16.Rac1± Bb7 17.Nb3 Nc6 18.c5!?

[18...e5? [This immediately hands over the initiative to white. Better was: 18...b5±] 19.cxb6! Qxb6 20.Qd6! Qb4? [Probably this was played without foreseeing white's next move. 20...Rc8 for 21...Qc7 next could have been tried.] 21.Nc5!±



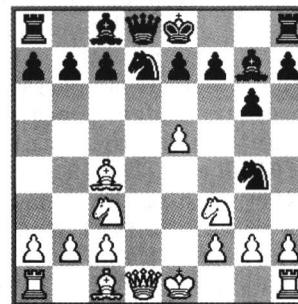
21...Bc8 22.Bh3! Qb8? [This leads to a total collapse. Better was 22...Qd4 23.Qc7 0-0 24.Bxd7 Bxd7 25.Nxd7 Rfc8 26.Qb7±] 23.Bxd7+ Bxd7 24.Qxd7+ Kf8 25.Qxc6 Kg8 26.Nd7 Qa7 27.Nxe5 Kh7 28.Qd5 1-0.

R.B. Sapre - A.S. Awate
Modern Defence B06

Maharashtra Selection, 27.12.1975

Avinash S Awate, born 1954, was one of Maharashtra's brightest hopes in the 1970s. When he was banned during his peak by the Bombay chess authorities it led to the creation of the first Chess Players' Association of India led by Manuel Aaron and Sekhar Sahu. In later years, Awate acquired the FIDE Master and International Arbiter titles and was Secretary of the Maharashtra Chess Association

for two years. When this game was played Awate was just 21 while Sapre was 61. 1.d4 g6 2.e4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.Nf3 Nd7 5.Bc4 Ngf6? [This opening needs special care. After this move black is already lost! Better was: 5...Nb6±] 6.e5 [Also winning was the immediate 6.Bxf7+! Kf8 (Worse was 6...Kxf7 7.Ng5+ Kg8 8.Ne6 Qe8 9.Nxc7 Qd8 10.Nxa8+-) 7.Ng5+ white wins.] 6...dxe5 7.dxe5 Ng4



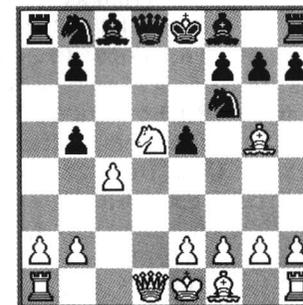
8.Bxf7+!! [After 8.Bxf7+ Kxf7 9.Ng5+ Ke8 (9...Kg8 10.Qd5+!) 10.Ne6+- the queen is mated!] 1-0.

Dharbha Venkaiya-RB Sapre
Queen's Gambit D50

First All India CC Chp 1950-51

This was played in the first All India Correspondence Chess Championship jointly won by R.B.Sapre and G.S.Dixit of Pithapuram (AP). Venkaiya (1916-1986) was no ordinary player. Five years later, in 1955, when the First National Chess Championship was held in Eluru in Andhra, Sapre and Venkaiya were joint champions though Venkaiya beat Sapre in their individual encounter. 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.Nc3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 d5 6.Bg5 e5!?

8.Qa4?! Bd7 9.cxd5 Qb6 10.Be3 Bxb5 (Not 10...Bc5? 11.Bxc5 Qxc5 12.Qc4! Qxc4 13.Nd6+±) 11.Bxb6 Bxa4 12.Nxa4 Bb4+ 13.Kd1 Nbd7±] 8...axb5



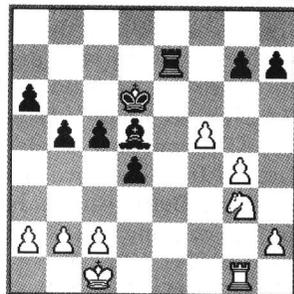
9.Bxf6 [White realises too late that his intended 9.Nxf6+? is defeated by 9...Qxf6?? (9...gxf6?? 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.Bxf6+-) 10.Bxf6 Bb4+! 11.Qd2 Bxd2+ 12.Kxd2 gxf6-+] 9...gxf6 10.e4 Be6! It makes sense to get rid of your opponent's strongest pieces at the earliest. 11.Qb3 Bxd5 12.exd5 Qa5+ 13.Kd1 Nd7! 0-1.

R.B. Sapre - A.A. Alvi
Grunfeld Defence D88

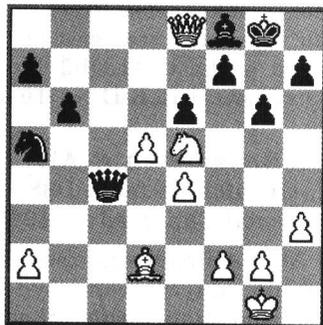
National Chp, Madras 1966

Abid Ali Alvi was the first All Muslim player from Hyderabad who studied chess theory and applied it in his games. Unlike the other Muslim players like Mohamed Hassan, Turab Ali and Farooq Ali, Alvi was more inclined to tactical play than to positional chess. And he had some remarkable brilliant victories over his contemporaries. But in this game Alvi is no match for the all round strategic and tactical play of Sapre. 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4

Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Bc4 c5
 8.Ne2 0-0 9.0-0 cxd4 10.cxd4
 Nc6 11.Be3± b6 12.Rc1 Bb7
 13.Qd2 Na5 14.Bd3 Bc6?!
 [Better was: 14...Qd6 to
 quickly bring his rooks into the
 game.] 15.d5± Bb7 16.Rfd1
 [16.Bg5!] 16...Qd7 17.Nd4
 Classic positional play!
 17...Rfc8 18.Bb5 Qd6 19.Nf3
 Rxc1 20.Rxc1 Rc8 21.Rxc8+
 Bxc8 22.Qc2 Bd7 23.Bxd7
 Qxd7 24.Bd2 Qb5? [Better
 was: 24...Nb7 25.Qc6! Qxc6
 26.dxc6 Nd6 27.Bf4 Nc8
 28.Kf1± White's strategy
 would be to move his king to
 the queen-side and target the
 black pawns there.] 25.Qc8+
 Bf8 26.h3 Thus white takes
 care of his king and now threat-
 ens mate with Bh6 26...Qc4
 27.Qe8 e6 28.Ne5!



headache. But not so for Sapre.
 See the finish of his game
 against Mohamed Hassan pub-
 lished elsewhere in this issue.
 In this game he displays ex-
 traordinary endgame prowess
 by continuing brilliantly:
 29.f6! Re5 [If 29...gxf6
 30.Nf5+ winning the exchange
 for a pawn.] 30.fgx7 Rg5 [If
 30...Ke7 31.Rf1 Rg5 32.Nf5+
 Kf7 33.g8Q+ Kxg8 34.h4! and
 the rook has no escape.] 31.h4
 Rg6 [31...Rxc7?? 32.Nf5+-]
 32.Nf5+ Kd7 33.g5! h5
 [33...Be6 34.h5! Bxf5 35.
 hxg6+-] 34.Ng3 Bf3 35.Rf1
 Bg4 36.Rf7+! Ke6 [Black is to-
 tally lost. If 36...Ke8 37.Rf8+
 Ke7 38.g8Q+-] 37.Rf6+ Rxf6
 38.g8Q+! 1-0.



28...Qc7 29.d6! Qxd6 [If
 29...Qb7 30.d7+-] 30.Qxf7+
 Kh8 31.Bc3! Qd1+ 32.Kh2
 Qd6 33.f4! Bg7 34.Nxg6+! 1-0

R.B. Sapre - R.L. Randive
 Bombay State Premier Divn.
 26.02.1960

See diagram

Sapre excelled in all depart-
 ments of the game. For some
 good players, the endgame is a

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SK Vaidya Memorial Tournament, Sangli 1970

Seated L to R: NV Padsalgikar, JV Rajwade, KD Pillai,
 Manuel Aaron, Prof SJ Oak, RB Sapre, PL Khadilkar, Mohamed
 Hassan, Sopan Shingare.

Middle row: Sontakke, MH Jamdar, TR Jayaram, Raja Rao,
 BGN Iyengar, NS Patil, N Ghalib, M Vachha, VB Adhikari,
 Ashok Khare.

Top row: Gokhale (Bombay), NN, HN Deshmukh, LP
 Khadilkar, NN, Sutar, NN.

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