therapy. If I had spied even an iota of chance to go back on the deal, and scoot from there without any delay, I would have done that. But, I had to show I was man enough. And this was not just a question of one individual; the entire 'man'kind's reputation was at stake.

It was a disaster right from the start. I approached a shop, and felt infinitely dumb standing outside the display window seemingly looking at the products, but actually looking at my own asinine reflection in the window glass. The only aides making the picture complete were the trademark horn stumps. Embarrassed as I was aimlessly loitering around, I felt every eye in the market was on me, as if I was about to break into that shop.

I wanted to run away from this pointless exercise, it made no bloody sense. I couldn't see how it soothes and calms down frazzled nerves, or how womenfolk spend hours on it, coming back seemingly rejuvenated and kicked with life.

The 'deal' required me inside the shops too, which was even more difficult. Amid the cacophony of this childrens' wear shop, with women and kids of all sizes, I heard an authoritative yet pleading voice of one of the salesmen towering above all else, "Bolen bhai, ki niben?"

Was it the heat, humidity, or nervousness that was making my head spin? A deep feeling of claustrophobia gripped me, and I wanted to turn around and run fast. But the gentleman in me prompted me to offer a word in reply to the man's question. And so I mumbled, fumbling for words, items, objects, anything that would come to my mind. "Err, yes please. I want a, a, pen knife, and Swiss Army knife please with a red case, and a motor..."

"Sorry sir, but this is a children's store. You can try these items in some other shop!" he replied politely, but I can't forget the look of incredulity on the faces of the other customers and salesmen in the shop!

Within seconds, I was out of the shop, out of the market, into my car, calling Wifey admitting defeat...One shop, and this is what it had made of me!

The Wifey is busy 'honouring' her part of the deal blowing up that astronomical amount on herself. Worst of all, she has pulled me along. She says I need to learn. And that I need to go a long way before I am equipped to take on similar challenges.

Facing the Judgement Day may be more desirable, on balance. ■

Chess and Festivity

Chess

MODERN tournaments are a rather dull and drab affair, with a few chess addicts watching the games with great concentration in a quiet atmosphere. What is missing here is festivity. The players are hardened professionals having little time for any other pursuit. They are interested in appearance fee, good hotel, and prize money, bothering little about whether the tournament draws spectators or not. Honestly speaking, the professional masters like a tranquil setting with a few or no whispering chess fans around. You are not allowed to talk or make any noise in a tournament hall, so when a master makes a brilliant or a very bad move all that the watchers can do is exchange looks with fellow chess fans. Chess organisers are very good at muffling your voice! You will often see the fans rushing out of the hall to find a place where they can talk a bit. They settle among themselves who had foreseen the master move or the wonderful idea! It's interesting to watch players expressing their ideas or executing their plans in the language of chess, which is a mute one.

Things were different in the past, though silence was always maintained in the tournament hall. The great tournaments generated a great deal of enthusiasm and were almost always accompanied by concerts and guided tours for the guests. The great Hastings tournament in 1895 drew the very best from all round the world. And it turned out to be a grand festival for the inhabitants of the small town of Hastings in England. The Vienna 1898 meet was a very lengthy affair (Double round robin among 20 players with some off days!). It was arranged to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Austrian King's ascending the throne. The players enjoyed the royal hospitality for nearly two months! The New York tournament, 1924, created quite a stir among the American chess lovers. Most of the leading masters of the time participated in the meet held at Hotel Alamac.

Here is a game from New York 1924.

White-Alexander Alekhine
Black-Emanuel Lasker [D35]
New York 1924
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 c6 7.e3 Nh5 8.Bd3 Nxf4 9.exf4 Bd6 10.g3 00 11.00 Re8 12.Qc2 Nf8 13.Nd1 f6 14.Ne3 Be6 15.Nh4 Bc7 16.b4 Bb6 17.Nf3 Bf7 18.b5 Bh5 19.g4 Bf7 20.bxc6 Rc8 21.Qb2 bxc6 22.f5 Qd6 23.Ng2 Bc7 24.Rfe1 h5 25.h3 Nh7 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.Re1 Rb8 28.Qc1 Ng5 29.Ne5 fxe5 30.Qxg5 e4 31.f6 g6 32.f4 hxg4 33.Be2 gxh3 34.Bh5 Rb2 35.Nh4 Qxf4 36.Qxf4 Bxf4 0-1



Position after 24...h5

-PATZER