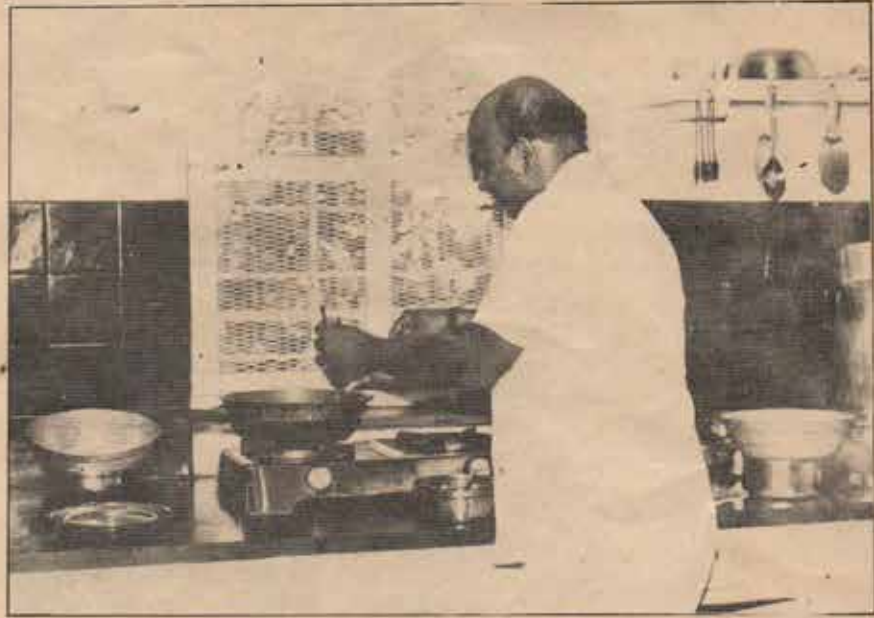


IT IS a homely house homely from the first step. The 'rangoli' on the steps, the wicker chairs in the verandah, the warm sitting room. It is a welcoming, lived-in home, filled with sounds of the happy laughter of children, the clatter of utensils in the kitchen and the almost continuous ringing of the telephone. This is the home of Arun Bongirwar, the Municipal Commissioner of Pune. We are here to keep an appointment with him, not to discuss any official business (a plaque outside states clearly — "official business will not be discussed at



Commissioner Turns Chef

the residence") but because the Commissioner is going to cook for us. Yes, the Commissioner's culinary talents are a fact, though not a much publicised one.

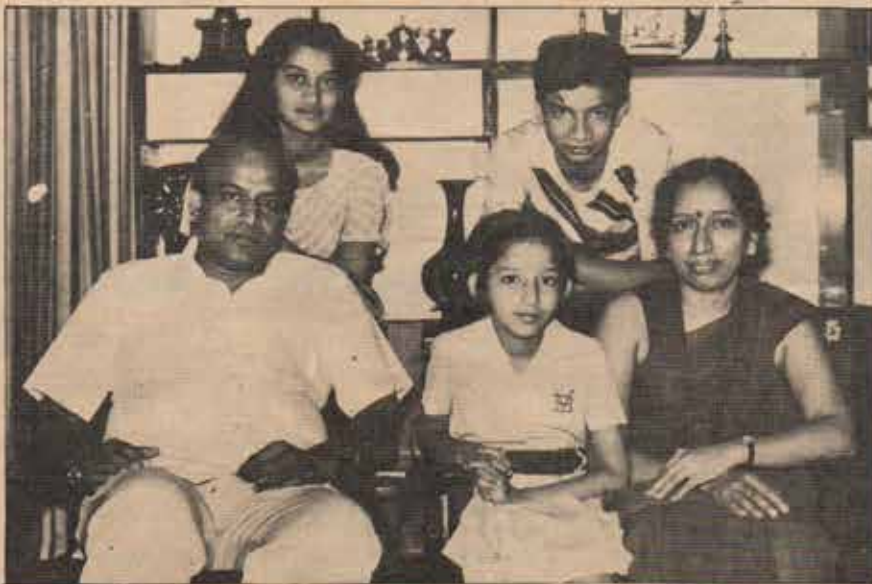
Says Mrs. Lata Bongirwar, the Commissioner's smiling, hospitable wife "this is one of his ways of relaxing. Though his duties at

the office give him little time, the children love it when their Baba is the chef, and he loves it too." The family is all present. There is great excitement in the house. Mr. Bongirwar though, has had to leave on sudden official duty requiring his immediate attention. The eldest daughter Dipti, studying for an

engineering degree in Computer Technology, is clearly the most attached to her father. "It is great fun when Baba cooks" son Piyush, a 12th standard scholar, is less effusive in his response. Gargi, the little eight-year old, is everybody's pet.

A car drives up, in strides Mr. Bongirwar, "I am sorry I had to keep you waiting, shall we start at once?" The kitchen is a picture of cleanliness, all preliminary preparations have been made. Straight to the gas stove, "Gas lighterkarai.....tup.." Amidst giggling and laughter, his daughter and wife comply with the Commissioner's precise, surgeon-like commands. He seems quite at ease with the ladle, the pots and pans.

Mr. Bongirwar's is a large family. He is one of three sisters and three brothers. His wife says "Ours is a joint family. Living in such a large family even



though the need may never arise, his mother has trained all her sons to cook. If ever required, Mr. Bongirwar can manage to do all the normal cooking." An extremely valuable and progressive education to give to a son, especially in a society where it is considered infra-dig for a man even to assist in the kitchen.

"I am very fond of trying out new dishes. No sweets for me, ever, but spicy food I am quite fond of. We are strict vegetarians. We eat out, also quite often," says the Commissioner. "He is fond of company and loves having friends over," adds Lata, "wherever we go, our friends' circle just grows."



The Bongirwars are extremely fond of the movies and see at least two every week. Says Mr. Bongirwar "often I do not remember the name of the cast of the film after seeing it, whereas the children can rattle off entire sequences. That is because I relax myself so completely in a movie that nothing is important, just the images no straining of the mind." Equally fond of English and Hindi and Marathi

films, they are also avid theatre fans, "there is hardly a play, especially Marathi that we miss," says Lata, "And then, of course, there is Pankaj Udhas and Anup Jalota too."

Mr. Bongirwar is a family man. He likes to spend as much of his spare time as possible at home, "which is, of course, much less than what he would like to," says Lata.

PUDACHI WADI

Ingredients:

6 bunches of coriander leaves
1 whole dry coconut
10-12 green chillies
18-20 pods of garlic
2 tsp. of cumin seeds
1 katori of poppy seeds
1 lime
½ katori oil
¼ tsp. turmeric
1 tsp. salt

For covering:

6 katoris of chana flour
½ katori of oil for mixing the flour
2 tsp. red chilly powder
½ tsp. of turmeric powder
2 tsp. of salt

For frying : 3 katori oil

Method:

Clean wash, dry and chop the coriander leaves. Grate the coconut and roast it in a pan without oil or anything else, till pink in colour. Grind this mixture. Grind the garlic and jeera to a paste and chop the chillies into small pieces.

Heat the oil in a pan and fry the paste of garlic and jeera till pink in colour. Add the chillies, stir fry for some time and add the coriander leaves. Stir fry till mixture dries up, then add the coconut, poppy seeds, turmeric, salt and lemon. This mixture is ready for filling and keep aside for cooling.

For covering:

Take the chana flour, salt, turmeric, chilly powder and oil. Knead it well to a thick dough. Leave aside for 15

The phone has been ringing all through. Mr. Bongirwar has been pacing up and down, phone in hand, now popping into the kitchen, now looking up his son who has a headache, now answering our questions. The Commissioner is a man of energy, and likes to spend it. The atmosphere is very relaxed and full of cheer. It is a happy home.

Geeta Kapoor ●

minutes. Take a ball of this dough and roll it out. Put a layer of garam masala (to the garam masala, add a little water and make a paste). Now put the mixture in the middle of the rounds and close both the ends. Follow the same method till all the dough and the mixture is over.

Deep fry all the wadas till golden brown in colour. Serve hot with sauce.

TAMARIND RICE

Ingredients:

2 katoris rice
5-6 red chillies (whole)
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. turmeric
2 tsp. oil
½ katori tamarind
8-10 garlic pods
8-10 curry leaves
½ katori til powder
2 tsp. jaggery
coriander leaves

Method:

Cook rice separately. Soak the tamarind in 1½ katori of water, keep aside and squeeze out the tamarind. Boil this water till it reduces to half and add the jaggery. (Keep at least ½ katori of sour water)

Put the rice in the thali. Add sour water. Then add the til powder and salt.

For tempering:

Heat ½ katori of oil in the pan, add to it chillies, garlic pods, curry leaves and turmeric. After two minutes add the rice to this masala. Mix well, sprinkle coriander leaves on top and serve hot.