Relative

SHARING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SPACE

Meher and Pheroz Pudumjee

N PERFECT COMPANY

Pheroz and Meher Pudumjee of Thermax find themselves most connected and in sync when they are taking care of their successful business empire

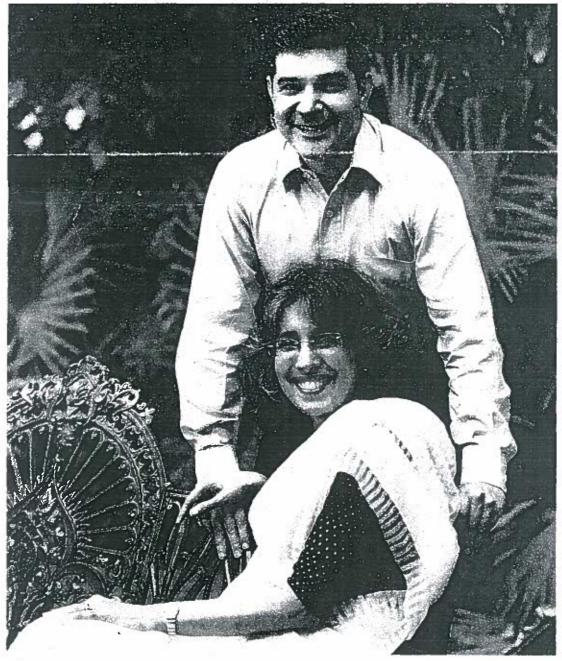
Mrunmayi.Ainapure

t's been an eventful 22 years for Pheroz and Meher Pudumjee as a couple who fell in love over shared interests that haven't changed with time, but the energy and environment engineering company Thermax remains unequivocally the apple of their eyes. Despite hectic schedules, the Pudumjees manage their personal lives with style. Meher who is quite the music aficionado heads off to choir sessions while Pheroz catches up with his friends and when they are together, Thermax takes precedence over every conversation.

"Pheroz and Estarted working together at Thermax as trainees in sales and service. Around that time, Thermax had this small business in the UK which was not doing well and we were sent there to turn it around. So it was in the UK where we actually became professional colleagues. We had already gotten married a year before that. While Pheroz managed sales, I took care of operations. However, being a small set-up with just six members in the team, we helped out with everything, from service to manufacturing, finance and administration while trying not to get in each other's hair in the process! The experience there was basically a trailer of how our He together was going to be in the future." Meher smiles.

The Pudumjees have wisely departmemalised their work in the compa-DV. however, there are still areas of commonality. Pheroz says, "After returning to India, I was involved with our international operations; while Meher worked in finance and in a few other divisions. Presently, both of us have assumed non-executive roles in the company. We are both on the strategy committee, the innovation council and being on the board of the parent company, we basically end up working together most of the times. The fact that they have some common and some different areas of expertise has only enhanced their professional relationship, "For instance, we both enjoy understanding how new technology works, but I like to interact with the HR aspect of the company more than Pheroz, who still takes a keen interest in overseeing the overseas operations of Thermax. Cliched as it may sound, we do complete each other," Meher says.

Running a conglomerate together means work is bound to seep into



their personal lives. Pheroz admits, 'Yes it does — we live, breathe, sleep the organization, so at times our kids get put off." Besides, there are the ideological clashes to deal with. "Pheroz is more direct in his approach as he does not mince words. On the other hand, I am more diplomatic. So we often disagree in our approach. That apart, he likes to take decisions with one or two trusted people, whereas I am more consultative which also leads to disagreements, which we usually talk out or sometimes vociferously argue out. We also use my mother, Anu or our MD, Unny as a sounding board," Meher chuckles,

Anu, they say, is still a big part of Thermax even af er her retirement.

"When mother retired, she always decided to be there for us. She has taught me humility, to have courage of one's conviction, the ability to confront any situation with equanimity, working hard as also playing my different roles with ease," Meher smiles. This reverence is shared by Pheroz, who tells us, "She can be extremely objective and takes very difficult and tough decisions, which I appreciate."

Working with your partner, the Pudumjees agree, has its set of pros and cons. A rather doting Pheroz says, "I consider my wife to be my best friend and therefore I can discuss issues, personal or professional, in great

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one can take liberty with the other's feelings. However, the flip-side of this openness is that we can tend to hurt each other at times." Besides, Meher says, working with your spouse is an inescapable 24/7 deal. She explains, "At times, I really need my space. But there's no denying that I need my husband at work. He has a keen sense of empathy, especially when there are challenges. Since we work together, he vibes with me on difficult issues and helps me to take decisions. In the end, despite all the trials and tribulations, working with Pheroz has only been a positive influence overall since we understand each other inside out and therefore, enjoy working together.'

depth and granularity, knowing that



tious beats are worth a listen.

COMPILED BY ASHWIN KHAN