



A fine 才華洋溢 balance

Poet and businessman Nadir Godrej's range of talents span the intellectual and commercial worlds

Nadir Godrej身為詩人及企業家，在文學界及商界盡展所長

WHAT DO POETRY, business and animal feed have in common? The wide-ranging brilliance of Nadir Burjorji Godrej, the francophile managing director of US\$2.6 billion Godrej Industries.

A chemical engineer by training, with degrees from MIT, Stanford and Harvard, Godrej, 59, speaks six languages, thinks in French, plays competitive bridge, discusses mathematician Ramanujam's highly composite numbers with his son Hormazd and writes poetry, in French and English. His favourite poets encompass both serious ones such as Byron, Pushkin and Shelley, and clever ones like Lewis Carroll and Ogden Nash. Indian author Vikram Seth's novel in verse, *The Golden Gate*, also was an inspiration, he says, because it uses the Onegin stanza, a rhyme in iambic tetrameter made famous by Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

Godrej uses poetry not just for his own edification but also in business; his speeches at conferences are eagerly awaited, not just for the force and clarity of his views on subjects but for the poems that often open and close his address. Even staid bureaucrats have had to sit up and take notice when he breaks forth into verse: "The government should help the flow/Stamp duty and CESS must both go." (CESS is a Indian education tax.)

Poetry and literature run in his family. His grandmother was famous for her fiery poems about Indian nationalism; his mother was a lover of the works of Browning and other English poets. He courted his wife, Rati, a medical doctor, with stories about France and a copy of the *Michelin Guide*. As president of the Alliance Française in Mumbai, he is a major player in improving Indo-French relations, for which he was awarded the *Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur* and made a *Chevalier de L'Ordre National du Mérite*.

Godrej's Parsi forbearers were prolifically inventive and fiercely nationalistic. His great-uncle, Ardeshir, a lawyer turned inventor, began by designing surgical instruments of extremely high

quality, which he wished to market with a "Made in India" label. An Englishman who admired his products advised him not to put that stamp on his goods. Doing so, he said, would make marketing difficult and decrease sales.

Ardeshir walked out in a huff and with his brother Pirojsha he went on to develop patented spring-less locks, fire-proof safes (used even by Queen Mary on an official visit to India) and vegetable oil soaps that were happily used by millions of Indians, all products proudly "Made in India".

Ardeshir's nephew, Burjor Godrej (Nadir's father), completed a Ph.D. dissertation in occupied Berlin that was a technological breakthrough in a process to make soap from fatty acids. Nadir, in turn, used his inherited inventor streak to be the first to derive fatty alcohol from palm oil instead of petroleum. The company has gone from strength to strength: today, the Godrej Group's seven companies are involved in real estate, fast-moving consumer goods, appliances, furniture, security, IT logistics and agribusinesses, among others. *BusinessWeek* named the group one of the world's "25 Unsung Innovative Companies".

Godrej oversees the chemical and agribusiness companies within the conglomerate as well as serving on the boards of virtually every company of note in India. Something he is most excited about is the company's plan to commercially generate power from palm oil biomass, a move that is expected to boost India's green-energy production. "Big businesses ought to partner with small entrepreneurs," he says of this effort to encourage farmers to plant more oil palms on their land. Although much of his time is spent in meetings, Godrej is interested in both the research and development arm of the company and in sustainability initiatives. He bridges tradition and modernity, keeping his notes both on lined paper and an iPad.

Home for Godrej, his wife and three children is in a beautiful old house which was built by his

No one could ever describe Nadir Godrej as an under-achiever

Nadir Godrej取得的傑出成就乃無庸置疑



grandfather in the smart Malabar Hill area. One of its delights is the garden – a luxury in space-starved Mumbai.

With his ruffled hair and elegant demeanour, he looks the part of the MIT professor he might have become. Blessed with a near-genius IQ, a lively mind and a prodigious memory, Godrej's academic accomplishments are the stuff of legend. Friend and business associate Anand Mahindra, Managing Director of the Mahindra & Mahindra conglomerate, says the story goes that Godrej would finish preparing for the week's case studies the previous weekend so he could attend classical music concerts during the week in Boston. Godrej concurs with the story, except, he says, that he prepared ahead so he could play bridge during the week.

"Nadir has astonishing clarity of thought," says Mahindra. "None of his words are ever wasted; he cuts right to the heart of an issue and provides a perspective that he can defend with unassailable logic. He's an irreplaceable member of our board."

Nandan Nilekani, co-founder of Infosys and currently heading the Indian government's Unique ID project, recalls a story about Godrej's days in the elite Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), which he joined before leaving for MIT. "There was this legendary story – it happened before my time, so it was only the stuff of legends for me – where in an IIT quiz the question was to name all the kings

None of his words are ever wasted; he cuts right to the heart of an issue

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and queens of England – I guess starting from the Norman conquest in 1066. Nadir was reciting all of them and by the time he reached Queen Victoria, the whole hall erupted in a standing ovation."

While his intellect has served Godrej well, he wants different things for his children. "If there were three character traits that I would recommend my children to cultivate, they would be perseverance, logical thinking and empathy," he says. ■

Godrej is a board member of some of India's biggest companies, as well as running his own conglomerate

Godrej除了經營自己的企業集團，也是數家印度最大規模公司的董事局成員

才華洋溢

詩詞、營商和動物飼料三者有何共通點？答案與多才多藝的Nadir Burjorji Godrej有關。他是資產達26億美元的Godrej集團總裁。

現年59歲的Godrej是一位化學工程師，擁有麻省理工、史丹福大學及哈佛大學學位，能操六種語言；他以法文思考，喜愛寫法文和英文詩詞。身為孟買法國文化協會主席，Godrej在促進印法關係上扮演重要角色，更獲頒法國榮譽軍團勳章的騎士勳位。

Godrej來自詩人和文學世家，母親熱愛英文詩詞，祖母則是

著名詩人，她撰寫的詩詞頌讚印度民族主義，洋溢澎湃激情。

Godrej則把詩詞作為營商工具；每當他在研討會發表演說，出席者除細心聆聽其論述外，更期待他在開場及結尾時引用其創作的詩詞。

Godrej家族亦在科研領域擁有非凡成就，其曾伯父Ardeshir Godrej原是一名律師，後來成為發明家，設計了「印度製造」的手術器具、無彈簧的鎖、防火保險櫃及植物油肥皂等。

Godrej的父親則研發了以脂肪酸製造肥皂的方法。爾後，Godrej追隨父親的腳步，成為以

棕櫚油取代石油提煉脂肪醇的第一人。如今，Godrej集團旗下七間公司分別涉足房地產、農業、電器、家具及資訊科技等行業。

Godrej親掌集團的化學及農業公司業務，當中包括生產動物飼料。最令他感到雀躍的項目是公司開展以棕櫚油生物量為能源的商業發電計劃；他認為這項目可促進印度的綠色能源產量。

Godrej談吐溫文，看來像是一位麻省理工的教授；他的求學過程亦頗富傳奇色彩。在麻省理工讀書時，他於周末準備下一周的功課，以便於平日玩橋牌。在精英輩出的印度理工學院就讀時，

Godrej顯露其驚人記憶力，能背誦自1066年以來英國國王和王后的名字。

他的好友Anand Mahind (Mahindra & Mahindra企業集團的董事總經理)表示：「Nadir思路清晰；他的每一句話都是金玉良言，一針見血地指出問題所在。」

Godrej與太太和三個孩子住在豪華住宅區馬拉巴爾山一幢漂亮的古老公寓。他很注重子女的品格發展。他說：「如果品格可以選擇及刻意培養，我希望孩子們都能培養出鍥而不捨的性格、邏輯思維及同情心。」