

‘India Can Make It’

Vrunda Pathare captures the story behind the manufacture of the first truly indigenous Indian typewriter by Godrej.

Manufacturing the All-Indian typewriter

The year 1955 made India the first country in Asia to manufacture its own manual typewriter thereby finding her a place among few industrialized countries of Europe and America in the field of typewriter manufacturing. It was indeed an achievement for a young industrial India as this first Manual Typewriter was exclusively designed and executed by Indian engineers alone.

Here is the story of the first all-Indian typewriter and the company that made this possible...Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd.

In the year 1947, India embarked on a journey towards economic independence, a natural successor to the recently achieved political freedom. To achieve this, our leadership believed

in ‘technology and progress’, and in ‘industrialisation and machines’. The need was felt that for sustained progress, India must itself manufacture what it needs.

The typewriter was one such product, the market for which was completely dominated by the foreign brands like Remington, Olivetti and Underwood. The idea of manufacturing typewriters was first mooted as early as 1948. When Naval Godrej discussed the idea with his father, Pirojsha Godrej got quite excited and pointed it out to Naval that if Godrej did successfully undertake typewriter manufacture, they would be the first in Asia to do so, for even a more advanced country like Japan had not undertaken typewriter



Dr. Rajendra Prasad

The need was felt that for sustained progress, India must itself manufacture what it needs



Pt. Nehru examining the Godrej typewriter during his visit to an industrial exhibition in Madras.

Here is the story of the first All-Indian typewriter and the company that made this possible – Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. Ltd.

Bought All-Indian Typewriter

“It is a matter of gratification that Indian concerns have made such headway in the manufacture of products for which till recently we had to rely purely on imports from foreign countries. Godrej, like several other firms, have been known for their initiative and enterprise in fostering purely Indian industries and it is creditable that hardly any of the 1,800 component parts of their Typewriter have been imported. Offered at prices cheaper than the foreign machines, it has a bright future if it maintains good quality and ensures endurance of performance.

The Bombay Legislature Congress Party has recently bought a Godrej Typewriter and I am glad to say from reports I have from the Party Secretary that it is giving satisfactory service so far.”

MORARJI DESAI
Chief Minister, Bombay.

Pioneers In Swadeshi

“It gives me great pleasure to send you my best wishes for the future and congratulations on the past achievements of your Company in pioneering Swadeshi manufacture.”

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI



From the special supplement brought out to launch the first manual typewriter, 1955

manufacture. Their enthusiasm was matched by a sponsorship by the Government of India to undertake the manufacture of typewriters. However, this wasn't an easy job.

In 1950s, the demand for typewriters in India was very small and restricted. Statistics from the Office Equipment

and Stationery Annual of India (1952) published by Excels Ltd. recorded that “at no time during the last ten years total imports of typewriters of all kinds exceeded 14,345 machines and that the average annual reports during the last ten years come to about 7,456 typewriters of all kinds.” Because of

The late Dr Hathi in his oral history interview to the Archives recalls typewriter manufacturing in the following words;

“Typewriters came in the year 1955. But we were working on typewriters for many years. We were also at that time trying to get the collaboration and in those days the American typewriter called Royal was supposed to be very good. Remington was already importing here. Remington had a branch in India. But the Americans, even after the world war, would not agree to join or collaborate. They were not interested. We wrote at that time but could not get collaboration. Then we started developing ourselves. There was a model called Woodstock - American Woodstock (as it had not been patented). We copied

that part to part except the spring which we had to import. Everything else was made by us but it took a long time. Then first typewriter we presented to Jawaharlal Nehru.

At that time I was already a branch manager in Delhi. I went along with SP Godrej to his house at Teen Murti Marg and presented (the typewriter) to him. We took an appointment. He gave us about a half an hour. He came exactly in time and exactly left on dot.”

the small demand and the intricacy and complexity involved in the manufacture of typewriter, the well known foreign firms in India contented themselves by merely selling imported machines or partially assembling some of the parts and never thought of manufacturing in India.

In spite of this, Godrej took up the challenge of manufacturing such an intricate and complex machine. The job of manufacturing manual typewriter involved in addition to the turning, grilling, tapping, riveting & punching, the making of over 150 varieties of screws with special threads, not to mention the whole series of specialised jobs like die-casting, spring-coiling, rack-cutting, gang milling and heat treating.

'These specialised processes called for highly specialised machines like special milling machines for type-bar segment, carriage, guides & mounting frames, die casting machines for main frames, top plates & spool covers; automatic rack cutting machines for bars; multi spindle drilling & tapping machines for key-lever mounting, carriage & plates & other components which require precision drilling.' It was no doubt a difficult endeavour!

Therefore, before getting into actual production, a profound study was undertaken to understand the intricacies of the processes of typewriter manufacture and the assembly. It was decided to follow the model of the Woodstock typewriter as it had not been patented. The Tool Room started working on manufacturing machine tools i.e. machines to make machines. Special machines were ordered as early as 1947 & 1948. However, the work of manufacturing typewriters was kept on hold in face of a new order for manufacturing ballot boxes for the first general election of Independent India and it wasn't until 1950 that the work of typewriter manufacturing got momentum.

A small-design section was established at Lalbaug under engineer KNV Vasan. PM Bhada and KB Gupte were associated with the manufacturing side

and Morwalla was in charge of the all-important basic toolings. By 1952, 200 dies and punches for blanking, 18 bending dies, 12 die-casting dies were ready. Special cams and innumerable jigs & fixtures were designed for producing 350 automat items.

Out of 1,800 component pieces in a typewriter, only the types, key tops, rubber plates and one spring – of the value of Rs 30 in all were imported, making it truly an all-Indian typewriter.

In 1955 the first All-Indian Godrej Typewriter was ready for launch.

Vrunda Pathare
Godrej Archives

Ad from Industrial India, 1956



Equipped with the confidence, resources and experience gained from 59 years of pioneering achievement, Godrej present for the first time a Typewriter made in India, at a very remarkably low price.

The all-Indian Typewriter embodies the latest advances in typewriter engineering to ensure ease of operation and efficient performance.

Of the 1,800 components only 4 items: the types, key tops, rubber platen and one spring are imported, costing a negligible Rs. 30. All other parts are manufactured from the very best materials available.

The Godrej Typewriter will, in due course, be available in Hindi also.



Standard
Brief Size
Rs. **630**
Service
after Sales
Guaranteed

Godrej
Reg.

the finest value in Typewriters

For descriptive folder write to our offices at:
BOMBAY - CALCUTTA - DELHI - MADRAS - KANPUR - HYDERABAD