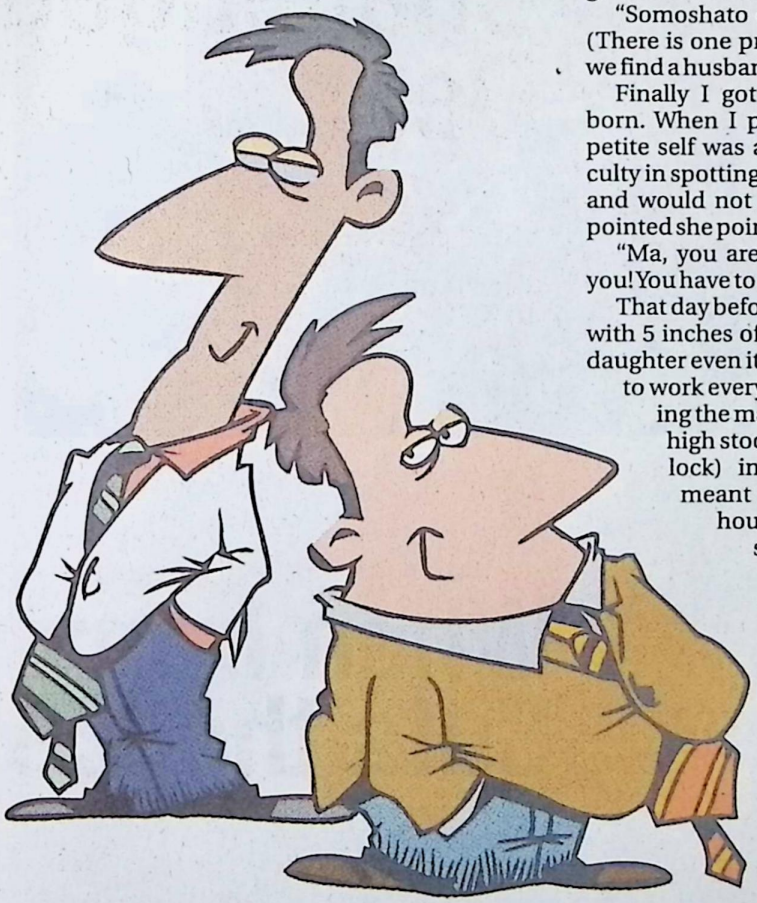
fancy just did not go with my small frame! Vertical stripes, small motifs and light colours were the designated lines for me. Hair was mostly tied high up into a ponytail for it was supposed to give that "up-lifted" look!

Finding shoes was a real test! The height problem was not only from the head to toe but had manifested itself in giving me tiny feet as well! I read about how ancient Chinese women used to bind their feet to keep them small and wondered if



this shortness of height and tiny feet came from Chinese ancestors! I would often find myself,(still do) in the children's section for a pair of right size shoes.

For makeup I would walk miles to buy the lighter shades of eye shadow or lipstick. Even perfume was to be of a light fragrance to suit my appearance! How I envied tall girls who wore dark colours on lips and wore bright big floral dresses! Forbidden fruits are sweeter!

"Weight Watchers' Diet" was my guru. I simply could not afford to put on weight! I did once and my college buddies started calling me "Potato". Eating the latest blend of smoothies, ice-cream would be like punishing my aesthetic being that watched out for my looks. No matter how hungry I was, eating had to be cut short to keep weight at bay!

In the spring of life again height shadowed all dreams. Young men who caught my fancy seemed to be after tall girls. Often I had to be an OSLA member (one sided lovers' association) and hope for a prince charming who would see me beyond my short height! I often eavesdropped and heard my guardian's concerns of finding me a husband.

"Somoshato ektai, eto khato jamai pabo koi?" (There is one problem, she is so short where can we find a husband?)

Finally I got married and my daughter was born. When I put her in school once again my petite self was a problem! Her teacher had difficulty in spotting me among other waiting mothers and would not let her out. Seeming very disappointed she pointed out,

"Ma, you are so short my teacher cannot see you! You have to stand in the front!"

That day before going home I bought new shoes with 5 inches of heels! I could not disappoint my daughter even it meant breaking my ankles! Going to work every day one great obstacle was opening the main door. I had to bring the two feet high stool to reach the "chitkani" (a type of lock) in our ancestral home and that meant losing five minutes in the rush hour! At the school where I taught, my students never failed to draw my heels showing beneath the sari when they wrote anything that referred to their teacher!

Height stature is debated according to different regions of the world. However it is comforting to know that great men like Yuri Gagarin, first person to travel to space was only 5ft 2 inches tall. Being a writer my beacon of light comes from Voltaire, French writer and philosopher who was 5ft. 3 inches. My favorite German composer Beethoven was 5ft 3inches. And to add to my delight Pablo Picasso, the celebrated artist was 5ft 4 inches! They were all considered short considering the average height of their lands.

Height of a person is not supposed to be a hindrance to success in life. However, the rollercoaster ride on my height is worth the experience so far! "Veni, Vidi, Vici", I whispered happily the other day when the physiotherapist helping me with the exercises remarked happily, "Well dear, I will have an easy time with you, you are one pint of a size!" ■