

Sameer Yerawadekar

The Manifesto of the Short Man

WE ARE WITNESSING the Dawn of a New Age. It is an Age in which information is the most valuable commodity, and the expertise necessary for its collection, transmission, and retrieval the most valuable skill. In the New Age, the advantages of excess height will have been rendered obsolete. As democracy and meritocracy oversweep the face of the globe, the most numerous and meritorious figure in humanity, the Short Man, will rise from the shadows and assume his station as a leader among men. May the Dawn of the New Age unite all Short Men—the Tyranny of the Tall ends today!

Who is the Short Man? The all-pervading Western media portrays him as a lesser creature, a fast-talking, furtive, shifty-eyed penny-pincher, selfishly guarding his meager treasures while scrapping for insignificant quanta of money, power, and respect. This stereotypical Short Man is petty, cruel, ignoble, and ugly. He is properly classified as a subspecies of man, one who has fallen so far below the standards of Western Civilization that his taxonomic rank leaves him on par with the higher order of rodents. To the all-pervading Western Media, the Short Man is the Rat Man.

As with any stereotype, that of the Rat Man contains elements of truth. The physical dimensions of the Short Man's working environment force him to engage in calculations with which the Tall Man need not concern himself. The Short Man must walk quickly if he hopes to keep pace with the casual amblings of his tall street-mates. The Short Man must constantly shift his gaze if he wishes to avoid the oncoming shoulder-to-the-face or umbrella-in-the-eye. The Short Man must rush into any empty seat in a train or bus, even if it means wedging himself between

Monstrous Obesities, to avoid having to stand with his face pressed into the moist armpit of a Tall Man. The Short Man's logical reactions to his surroundings make him appear furtive, shifty-eyed, and selfish.

But the Short Man's greed, his lack of sympathy for others, and his acute awareness of his surroundings do not derive solely from his habituation in a landscape designed for larger people. Rather, they are symptomatic of life-long abuse, suffered at the hands of the Tall Man. This abuse breeds in the Short Man a sense of crisis, a sense that at any moment, a Tall Man may determine to beat him up. The victimization of the Short Man has been a constant feature in the history of Western Civilization, and is ingrained deeply into the modern psyche. The all-pervading Western Media portray the Short Man as the Rat Man because he lives his life in crisis, eyes peeled and ears perked, like the rat in the electrified maze. The sense of crisis that the Rat Man represents has ruined hundreds of millions of Short Men. But the crisis need not continue.

Before the Short Man can end his life of crisis and begin his push to glory, he must be made aware of the socio-psychological history that led to his current, pitiable condition. I begin with a summary of the relevant anthropology. Deep in the mists of pre-history, there existed an era in which human beings were little more than Ape Men. These Ape Men roamed the forests and steppes in hairy wretchedness, desperately seeking the merest specks of nourishment.

During this barbaric era, mankind was subjected to its first government. Not surprisingly, the governance of the Ape Men was a simple affair. The man who emitted the loudest grunt and wielded the hardest slap imposed his decisions upon his peers. The Short Ape Man could only watch from the margins of the Ape Man camp as some tall, self-satisfied brute issued vulgar pronouncements and called them "law." The Tall Tyrant's foolish rules were not questioned—his subjects feared him. But like all human beings, the brute was not content with being feared, and so his unexercised mind contrived a plan through which he could

earn respect. Using the only talents he possessed, his strength and speed, the Tall Tyrant earned his tribe's respect by hunting the Mighty Mammoth and slaying the fearsome Sabre-Tooth. In his quest for respect, the Tall Tyrant made his tribe dependent upon his skills for food and protection. The Tall Man's skills suited the needs of Ape Man society, and Tall Men succeeded other Tall Men as Tyrants of their tribe. The Tall Man had become the Leader. Thus began the Tyranny of the Tall.

By contrast, in these early days, the Short Ape Man could offer his society little. He represented but one more mouth to feed. Because he possessed none of the strength and speed of the Tall Ape Man, he concentrated his efforts on developing his mind, but Ape Man society did not require the exercise of finely wrought mental powers. Because intelligence did not meet the needs of his era, his fellow Ape Men shunned him. Ape Man society did not respect the Short Ape Man—it thought him better off dead.

And so it remained. When the Ape Men developed language, they memorialized their respect for the Tall Man and their contempt for the Short. The anti-short bias is especially prevalent in Western languages, for variations in height are most common among Western societies. Friedrich Nietzsche, the bombastic philosopher, explored in *The Genealogy of Morals* the etymologies of the German words for good and bad, *gut* and *schlecht*. Nietzsche found that the word *gut* was derived from other words which meant big, strong, and great, all positive properties associated with the Tall Man. By contrast, the word *schlecht* was derived from words meaning low, small, and weak, all negative qualities associated with the Short Man.

German is not alone in its veneration of excess height. The Latin motto *Excelsior*, a description of the Olympic ideal and the official motto of New York State, means “higher, faster, stronger,” symbolizing the societal urge to attain the ideal that the Tall Man represents. Although the English spoken today has lost many of its anthropomorphic descriptive terms due to its contact with French, it continues to disparage shortness while idolizing excess height. If one is asked to fill a tall order, he is

being challenged. If one hears a tall tale, he is being told a story that can scarcely be explained without reference to the supernatural. On the other hand, if one has gotten the short end of the stick, or drawn the short straw, one has simply gotten screwed. The Ape Man mentality has become encoded in the modern idiom of the Western World.

The childhood of today's Short Man is no different from the Short Ape Man's early years. A ready-made victim for the schoolyard bully, today's Short Man is beaten up at recess, repeatedly shoved into lockers, and made to endure endless wedgies. His fellow students, his pool of prospective friends, abandon him to a life of loneliness. His attempts to compensate for his lack of physical might through excellence at study only prompt further beatings. So, much as Pavlov's dog slobbers on hearing bells, the Short Man reacts to the presence of other people warily. He lives his entire life on the verge of all-out panic, as if the Tall Man were waiting to pounce upon him. Just as the Short Ape Man lived oh so long ago.

But human civilization has advanced since the Ape Man era. By the time the first cities began to dot the landscape, mankind had regularized the mechanisms of agriculture, thus assuring the survival of the species. People began to aspire to greater achievements. Planning, coordination, calculation, wizardry, and wit were required. These the Short Man could provide. As affected by testosterone-fueled ambition as the Tall Man, the Short Man had always attempted to compensate for the Tall Man's capacity to brutalize by engaging his mind in creative pursuits. With the rise of civilization, the Short Man's talents became useful.

Though the advent of civilization gave the Short Man a station in society, it only allowed him to rise so high. Civilization may have relied upon the Short Man for his cerebrations, but it would not permit him to lead. Although civilized leaders did not need to possess personal physical strength, civilization rejected the notion that it could be led by the Short Man. Particularly in the West, citizens wanted to literally "look up to" their leaders. This they could not do if their leaders were short.

The Short Man has yet to overcome civilization's bias for tall

leaders. Today, the Short Man cannot become President of the United States. Very rarely does the shorter major-party nominee win an election. Poor Michael Dukakis lost his opportunity to ascend to the presidency because a photograph of him riding in a tank revealed that he was only a small man in a big helmet. Short Men can only serve as king-makers, not kings.

As with all rules of history, this rule is riddled with exceptions. The exceptions are the Men of Crisis. Because the Short Man lives his life in crisis, he is particularly adept at leading others when they experience crises, to which they are unaccustomed. The most astute Short Men who find themselves leading societies during great upheavals, when the Tall Men have fled, have recognized that to continue in their positions, they must constantly manufacture crises. So, they go to war.

All the great conquerors have been short. Alexander the Great was short. Julius Caesar was described by his contemporaries as short, though later hagiographers naturally elevated him to the saintly status of tall. Attila the Hun was short. Charlemagne was exceptionally tall, but his father, who deposed the Merovingian dynasty and secured his succession, was called Pepin the Short. Genghis Khan was short. Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco were short. Stalin was also short, and had several painters shot for accurately depicting his height.

The story of Napoleon, the archetype of the short conqueror, is especially instructive for its tragedy. Knowing that his rule would grow unacceptable had he ended his conquests and turned his considerable intellect to the civil administration of Europe, he rushed wearily into a disastrous campaign against Russia and upon defeat ended his days as an exile, in frustration. Even Napoleon, an acknowledged genius and a brilliant leader, could not survive in the face of the Tyranny of the Tall.

The Tyranny of the Tall deprives the Short Man of many things, but the most painful assault on his psyche surely results from the Tall Man's monopoly over the affections of women. This monopoly is strongly supported by the all-pervading Western Media. At the same time that the all-pervading Western

Media perpetuate the Rat Man stereotype, they glorifies the Tall Man. Nearly every single major male media figure is tall. As already explained, every political leader is tall. In addition, because excess height grants the Tall Man speed and strength, most athletes are tall. Most actors are tall, and those who are not go to great lengths to appear tall on camera. Tom Cruise refused to appear in public with Nicole Kidman if she insisted on wearing high heels. Alan Ladd, the actor who played Shane, demanded that taller leading ladies walk beside him in trenches dug for that purpose. Even news anchors, who sit behind desks on television, are tall. From all appearances, the Tall Men are the men of consequence. They are the men of action and of purpose. These are the men that women want.

But women's anti-short bias is not a product of the modern era—it merely reflects a time-honored Western tradition. Under the Tyranny of the Tall, women have been taught for the past few thousand years that their spouses are to be taller than they. The wax man on the wedding cake maintains a tasteful height differential over his blushing bride. In the Western patriarchal tradition, the husband leads his family, and as we know, leaders must be tall.

And then there is the unfortunate fact that people tend to be proportional. Much has been said about men with big feet. To these observations I will add the following—men with big feet tend to be tall. So long as “size matters,” women, notwithstanding any claims that they “don't care,” will seek out the Tall Man for their romantic misadventures.

Capitalism permits the following conclusion: a Short Man can make himself attractive to women by attaining success in the professional world. The Tyranny of the Tall has, however, rendered that conclusion sadly inaccurate. Napoleon, that tragic figure, may have conquered half of the world for her, but Josephine, his Empress, nevertheless exploited his long absences on the battlefield to take Tall Men to her bed. Not surprisingly, the marriage between Napoleon and Josephine ended in divorce. The Emperor of the World could not keep his one true love, because he was a Short Man.

It is possible that the Short Man could avoid a lonely fate by adopting a homosexual lifestyle. However, it is just as possible that the Tyranny of the Tall operates with equal force among homosexuals. An exploration of that subject is beyond the scope of this Manifesto.

While the Tyranny of the Tall may or may not oppress male homosexuals, it definitively does not oppress members of the female sex. The blushing bride on the wedding cake is shorter than her wax groom, and, accordingly, the Tall Man has never shied away from coupling with the Short Woman. Rather than being victimized by the Tyranny of the Tall, Short Women have been complicit in it. Short Women have, throughout recorded history and no doubt in the Ape Man era that preceded it, excluded the Short Man from their affections. No, Short Women are not oppressed, they are not shunned—Fat Women are. It is the Fat Woman, not the Short Woman, who is the Short Man of the Female Sex. Equally valid is the assertion that the Short Man is nothing more than the Fat Woman of the Male Sex.

Such is the level of indignity that the Tyranny of the Tall forces the Short Man to endure. If the Short Man is not a Rat Man, then he is a Fat Woman. Shall the Short Man permit such rank perfidy to continue?

This state of affairs is intolerable. The Tyranny of the Tall attacks the Short Man's dignity, his very soul. Such bigotry cannot and must not stand. We, the Short Men, must act. With the Dawn of the New Age, we can be confident that our actions will have the desired effect.

Ambition has turned the Short Man against his own kind. We do not recognize our collective plight. We fight each other for the scraps thrown our way by the Tall Man. Much as Karl Marx exhorted proletarians to end the ruinous competition between them and stand together against the bourgeoisie, I exhort Short Men to unite against the Tyranny of the Tall.

There are those among us who would succumb to the temptation offered by the pharmaceutical industry. These are the Short Men who once relied upon the false promise of lifts and

thick-soled shoes. These are the Short Men who today would have their sons ingest unnatural doses of Human Growth Hormone to overcome the “handicap” of shortness. Recipients of these chemicals have reported “excellent” results. They say things such as “you don’t feel like a man trapped in a boy’s body anymore” and “I can buy clothes in the men’s section now.” These are the sentiments of cowards, weak-willed lemmings eagerly co-opted by Tall Propaganda, unable to withstand the pressures of their natural height. We must reject our designation as disabled and must refuse to bow under the weight of the Rat Man, for we are not Rats. We are Men!

The Dawn of the New Age presents us with the moment to topple our oppressors. Hollywood and its collaborators in the athletics industry continue their pointless fetishization of excess height. Yet that fetishization reveals that excess height only remains valuable within the confines of entertainment. If anything, the Short Man fits more easily into today’s increasingly crowded world. Reflect, for instance, on coach seating.

Much more importantly, however, the Short Man’s skill set is cerebral. The Tall Man may possess above average strength and speed, but in these he is far surpassed by even the most rudimentary machines. Only the Short Man spent his childhood developing the intellectual wherewithal to navigate today’s computerized world of data networks and twenty-four hour news cycles. The triumph of the Short Man will ensure the progress of civilization. The Tall Man is obsolete; the Age of the Short Man has arrived.

In the Age of the Short Man, the psychological torture that the Short Man endures under the Tyranny of the Tall will be a memory. No longer will every waking moment represent a battle for survival. No longer will every step be taken in avoidance of crisis. The end of the Short Man’s crisis will further free his mind, enabling him and the civilization he will lead to reach heights of creativity unimaginable under the dull and stifling stewardship of the Tall Man. With the removal of his psychological trauma, the Short Man will no longer be motivated to indulge in the vengeful violence in which the Men of Crisis engaged. The

Short Man, the man whose skills meet the needs of the New Age, would finally be free to be fully human.

The Dawn of the New Age brings the advent of global democracy. The high valuation of the Short Man's skills coincides with the growth of his political power. Short Men, the majority of the global male population, have begun receiving the message of the all-pervading Western Media. Some non-Western governmental institutions have already been co-opted by the all-pervading Western Media's Tall Propaganda: the bureaucratic regime of the People's Republic of China has adopted a program of denying shorter candidates government posts. With the strength of numbers, we Short Men are poised to answer back. Voting with our wallets, we will stamp out the anti-short bias in the Western Media! Voting at the ballot box, we will oust the Tall Tyrants from leadership forever!

Without the cultural brain-washing of Tall Propaganda, women will awake from their millennia-long delirium. With civilization firmly under the control of Short Men, the wax figures atop the wedding cake will assume more varied relative heights. Women would be free to bestow their favors upon the Short Man. The Tall Man's theory that "size matters" would finally be subject to widespread and repeated testing.

Let us not eradicate the Short Man by chemical suicide—let us embrace him as our Ideal Type. Let all the Short Men of the world rebel from the crushing psychological weight imposed upon them by the all-pervading Western Media. Let us meet our calling and take up the reins of a civilization whose needs meet our abilities. Let us suffer the Tyranny of the Tall not one moment longer! Short Men of all nations, Unite!

