Soul under the sole

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These days one is reminded of Imelda Marcos, widow of former Philippine president-dictator Ferdinand Marcos. For a while she mesmerised all, well most, with her beauty and gait. Through her husband's mountain-size corruption, the 'steel butterfly' amassed power and wealth, and was a representative in the Philippine House of Representatives. After her husband became president in 1965, ambitious Imelda Marcos defied convention to get involved in politics to ultimately become a governor and a minister. Towards the end of Ferdinand Marcos's notorious era, Imelda emulated her husband to become perhaps a greater tyrant to the Filipinas and exerted control over the government by manipulation.



Their extravagant lifestyle was in far contrast to that of their poverty-laden electorate. The infamous couple robbed millions of foreign aid, took cuts from businesses without being stakeholders, and built an empire out of 'democracy'. Among her acquisitions in Manhattan were the $51-million Crown Building and the $60-million Herald Centre. It is reported she refused to purchase the Empire State Building for $750m as she considered it "too ostentatious". After their *dhawppash* from such heights, her New York real estate was seized and sold, along with much of her jewels and most of her 175 piece art collection, which included works by Michelangelo.

Of interest in this week's expose is what the former First Lady held down with her feet. Among other stuff the poor people's politician drew worldwide public attention and simultaneous *dhikkar* for having a collection of 15 mink coats, 508 gowns and 888 handbags and, would you believe, 1060 pairs of shoes. The despotic Marcoses got more pairs from the public when they resorted to widespread fraud in the 1986 elections to cling to power. Naturally, there was a people's uprising and the Marcoses fled the country after a misrule of 14 years.

Despite her husband's *behayapana* and she being an able accomplice their popularity had seemingly not receded among their party and to some extent the general voters, going to show that come what may there will be people streaming behind fraudulent leaders till they find someone better because that too is a way of life. They continue to throng the meetings of these sort of shady leaders not because they consider them great, nor their activities commendable, but this public showing is out of fear and loyalty, a means to save their own souls because they too were abettors in the crime and/or got a part of the booty.

From another perspective, this empty slogan 'Leader, leader go ahead, we have not gone to bed' could be a form of 'no' vote against their opposition whom these blindfolded partisans hate for reasons varying from not getting nomination to not liking the very disposition of rival leaders. Such sightless devotion to mortals can lead a nation to destruction, nay self-destruction.

Talking of shoes, Muslims and journalists of all faiths will be expected to remove their shoes, whatever the size, at any gathering of imperialist heads of states. Actually, frankly speaking, it would be far easier to remove such heads. But the ducking target has no *lajja* whatsoever, no human understanding why even Americans have been shoe-stomping outside the *Sawfed Bhaban*, as the poisonous shrub (read also bush) said to troops in Iraq, who are expected to die because of his weird policies, that the shoes thrown at him were size 10 and that he had thought of asking before the meeting if everyone had removed their shoes. Hah! Hah! Ouch!

To counter the shoe-removing security exercise, numerous kickboxing clubs are opening across the globe so that journalists can, if intimidated, deliver the punches directly with their feet, one after the other. Hoping that socks will be allowed as safe apparel, some Chinese entrepreneurs are also considering manufacturing hard socks, so that they can be thrown as hate missiles, but unfortunately they have been till date unable to convince any animal worth its heart to donate their skin, rather the poor creatures have gone into hiding. As a result, linguists from across the globe are now thronging to China, as they believe they have finally discovered the origin of the phrase, 'hide and skin'.

In the proverbial land and en route, they may also find some of our fallen leaders, who have gone into hiding since 1/11 to save their skin. It is said that to compensate the misdeeds committed by our politicians, businesspeople and bureaucracy over the years, they have decided to donate part of their skin to the Chinese socks makers, as in shedding to join a party of the opposite camp. The linguists could not be happier, as they have for long been also wondering whether the words 'socks' is plural of 'sock', meaning punch.

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