**Everybody knows**

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Everybody knows that something is happening. Everybody knows we are all in the dark. Everybody knows that the show is over. Everybody knows that the hero was stabbed. Everybody knows that each breath is heavy. Everybody knows that it can’t be long. Everybody knows that the system is crumbling. Everybody knows that this can’t go on.

This suspended moment in time – this long and seemingly unending pause – that shades the strategic, economic, and political paradigm of Pakistan, is exhausting. On most days, this stretched out ego-political drama, is also depressing. The truth is that, in this moment of ominous uncertainty, each of us – across plush drawing rooms and rugged tea stalls of Pakistan – are asking each other a nauseatingly repetitive question: Mulk ich ki ho raya ay? (What the \*beep\* is happening in Pakistan?). And there is no real way to answer that question. Primarily because no matter what you say, everybody already knows.

[Nawaz Sharif calls for full court in Punjab, KP elections case](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/nawaz-sharif-calls-for-full-court-in-punjab-kp-elections-case)

This predicament reminds me of a poem/song by the incomparable Leonard Cohen titled “Everybody Knows”. It’s almost as though Mr. Cohen, writing in 1998, could glimpse the Pakistan of 2023 in his poetic sight. With due apologies to Mr. Cohen, here is how it goes.

Everybody knows that the dice are loaded

Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed

Everybody knows the war is over

Everybody knows the good guys lost

Everybody knows the fight was fixed

The poor stay poor, the rich get rich

That’s how it goes

Everybody knows

Everybody knows that Pakistan is in dire economic straits. Everybody knows who got us here. Everybody remembers the political project of 1985, which created the Sharifs/Zardaris/Altaf Hussain. Everybody knows that the 1985 political project has failed. Everybody knows that it had to die. Everybody knows the junta that looted our country. Everybody knows who set them free.

Everybody knows that the enemy is watching. Everybody knows he’s been waiting for this. Everybody knows who destroyed the havens of terror. Everybody knows who’s trying to build them again. Everybody knows that our borders are volatile. Everybody knows who’s trying to set them ablaze. Everybody knows what they are really after. Everybody knows that we are a nuclear state.

[KP caretaker govt appoints under inquiry officer as DG Health](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/kp-caretaker-govt-appoints-under-inquiry-officer-as-dg-health)

Everybody knows that the people are scared, their stomachs are empty and their bodies are bare. Everybody knows how the palace was built. Everybody gave all they could spare. Everybody knows about the palace of privilege. Everybody knows about the children of Thar. Everybody knows.

Everybody knows that the boat is leaking

Everybody knows that the captain lied

Everybody got this broken feeling

Like their father or their dog just died

Everybody talking to their pockets

Everybody wants a box of chocolates

And a long-stem rose

Everybody knows

Everybody knows that Ishaq Dar is a charlatan. Everybody knows how he got the job. Everybody knows how he left the country. Everybody knows who called him back. Everybody knows he is going to sink us. Everybody knows, and that’s a fact. Everybody knows that the IMF deal is no solution. Everybody knows that it’s just a trap. Everybody knows that we are almost bankrupt. Everybody knows there is no plan for coming back. Everybody knows.

[Minority-ruled benches will compound existing crisis, says Tarar](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/minority-ruled-benches-will-compound-existing-crisis-says-tarar)

Everybody knows that you love me baby

Everybody knows that you really do

Everybody knows that you’ve been faithful

Oh, give or take a night or two

Everybody knows you’ve been discreet

But there were so many people you just had to meet

Without your clothes

Everybody knows

Everybody knows that the State institutions – including, judiciary, legislature, and civil/khaki executive – love this country. Everybody knows that these illustrious institutions protect the people, territory and interests of Pakistan. Everybody knows that they have given blood for this country. Everybody knows the shahudah and their bravery. Everybody knows where they are buried and why. Everybody knows the battles for judicial independence, and the unspoken struggles continuing till day.

Everybody, however, also knows the doctrines of ‘necessity’ or ‘reconciliation’. Everybody knows how the judges are appointed. Everybody knows who the bar councils are. Everybody remembers the images from PIC. Everybody remembers these strikes of the bar. Everybody knows that the poor languish in jail for years, while courts open on midnight to provide justice to a few.

[Heart-wrenching quest for dole-outs snatches 11 lives in Karachi](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/heart-wrenching-quest-for-dole-outs-snatches-11-lives-in-karachi)

Everybody knows about military diplomacy. Everybody knows the important role that it plays. Everybody knows that from covid to floods to elections, our democracy can’t function without its khaki backbone. Everybody also knows the meetings in secret. Everybody knows the commitments made there. Everybody knows how the audio tapes are leaking. Everybody knows who to blame for the scare. Everybody knows.

And everybody knows that it’s now or never

Everybody knows that it’s me or you

And everybody knows that you live forever

When you’ve done a line or two

Everybody knows the deal is rotten

Old Black Joe’s still picking cotton

For your ribbons and bows

And everybody knows

Everybody knows that this is a nazuk morr. Everybody knows that we’ve been here before. Everybody knows who walked us here. Everybody knows who led the way. Everybody knows the flats in London, whose price we are all having to pay.

[LHC bars caretaker govt from handing over land for corporate farming](https://www.nation.com.pk/31-Mar-2023/lhc-bars-caretaker-govt-from-handing-over-land-for-corporate-farming)

Everybody knows the man in the centre. Everybody knows how he got there. Everybody knows it’s not his cross, which alone he is having to bare. Everybody knows his face from the TV. Everybody knows his name, and why. Everybody’s sure he’s up to something. Everybody’s scared that he’s just one guy.

Everybody knows that those after his life are the ones who perpetrated the Model Town Massacre, burned Baldia factory to the ground, conducted politics in the name of religion, sided with dictators, bled this country dry, were caught with their pants down in Avenfield and Surrey palace, and never visited the children of Thar. Everybody knows.

And everybody knows that you’re in trouble

Everybody knows what you’ve been through

From the bloody cross on top of Calvary

To the beach of Malibu

Everybody knows it’s coming apart

Take one last look at this Sacred Heart

Before it blows

Everybody knows

Everybody knows that society is on the brink. Everybody knows that it could blow any moment. Everybody knows that if comes apart, all the king’s horses and all the king’s men will not be able to put it back together again. Everybody knows that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Everybody knows it will burn the king.

Everybody knows that our man cannot stand forever. Everybody knows that, in the end, we will have to stand for ourselves. Everybody knows that if our man falls, so will we all. Everybody knows that there is no one else, in the wings, coming to save us. Everybody knows that if this man falls, we will all be faced with the most horrific images in the mirror. Everybody knows that its now on us. Everybody knows where to go. Everybody knows how to get there. Everybody knows what to do.

Sadly, everybody knows that we aren’t pushed enough to save ourselves. Everybody knows.