

LAMHON KA BAYAN

Scattered Leaves from a Life

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*From individual memories, a wider picture of institutions, politics,
governance and society.*



ENGLISH OVERVIEW

Lamhon Ka Bayan - Scattered Leaves from a Life

Lamhon Ka Bayan is not a book per say and not a conventional autobiography. It is a collection of moments, encounters and experiences from a life that moved through very different worlds - university student union politics, teaching, the civil service, Parliamentary Service, international assignments, media and communication, public advocacy and, eventually, independent social and intellectual initiatives.

The story begins with seemingly personal moments, but rarely remains personal. A university election in 1980, entry into public service, encounters with political leaders, years spent inside Parliament during some of the most eventful periods of Pakistan's recent political history, constitutional and institutional turning points, and voluntary work outside government all become windows into a much larger story: how institutions and leaders evolved, how decisions were made, how power operated, and how individuals navigated the system.

The book does not proceed as a continuous chronological memoir. Each episode grows around a particular incident, photograph, document, conversation or institutional moment. Many can be read independently. Taken together, however, they gradually form a wider picture of Pakistan's political, parliamentary, governmental and social journey.

"From individual memories, a wider picture of institutions, politics, governance and society."

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The Compilation at a Glance - Ten Recurring Themes

Themes only - chapter narratives, personalities and specific incidents follow later.

1. Parliament, Parliamentary Democracy & the Changing Balance of Power The rise of Parliament as an institution; the widening of its constitutional and political space; its defence in periods of confrontation; and the later struggle to retain that space as the balance of power began to shift again.	6. Media - From Electronic to Digital A journey alongside Pakistan's changing media landscape - from the emergence and expansion of private electronic media to today's digital and social-media world. Seminars, interaction with working journalists and direct experience provide glimpses of how media changed, and how its relationship with politics, democracy and society changed with it.
2. Political Leadership, Personalities & the Exercise of Power Close glimpses of Presidents, Prime Ministers and major political personalities at different stages of their journeys - revealing leadership, behaviour, authority, political character, rise and decline through moments rather than formal political profiles.	7. Universities, Teaching & Continuing Learning Teaching and engagement with universities at different stages of life - as teacher, practitioner and participant - alongside continuing study, intellectual exchange and the experience of bringing practical institutional knowledge into the classroom and taking new ideas back from it.
3. Contrasting Faces of Power Elected leaders versus appointed leaders; the locally rooted "desi" political mind versus the "pardesi" or foreign-influenced professional mind; the sharply changing fortunes of those in power; and, around them, the political "musical chairs" of the 1990s, with governments and assemblies repeatedly made, dismissed and reconstituted.	8. Democratic Awareness, Professionals & Citizen Participation AWAM, public dialogue, democratic and parliamentary awareness, political education and citizen participation - together with the recurring question of how professionals, specialists, educated citizens and younger people can find meaningful routes into politics and national decision-making.
4. Visible and Invisible Centres of Power The formal authority of elected institutions viewed alongside the less visible influences surrounding them - particularly the role of security and intelligence institutions, informal pressures and interventions, and the recurring question of where effective power and decision-making actually reside.	9. From National Questions to Action on the Ground The movement from national debate to direct social intervention: education for out-of-school children, work with women and girls, and community initiatives using personal and family resources - testing both the possibilities and the limits of voluntary action.

5. Learning Across Parliaments, Leaders & People

Observations and lessons gathered from regional and international parliaments and parliamentary practices; interactions with important parliamentary leaders; ideas encountered abroad and efforts to adapt some of them to Pakistan; and, equally, lessons drawn from ordinary people and everyday life.

10. Home, Village, Childhood & Family

The quieter personal landscape beneath the public journey - parents, childhood, the ancestral village, family and personal roots - and the return, towards the end, to where the journey began and to the questions that still remain.

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What the Titles Do Not Tell You — The Narrative Behind the Episodes

What the Titles Do Not Tell You

At first glance, many chapter titles appear personal, anecdotal, even casual. They do not announce themselves as chapters on constitutionalism, democratic development, civil-military relations, leadership, institutional decline, political representation or governance.

Those subjects emerge indirectly.

A brief meeting may reveal a political personality. A ceremonial photograph may mark the end of an institutional era. A conversation in an office may raise a constitutional principle. An apparently light incident at an airport, a gate or a corridor may illuminate the difference between elected and unelected authority.

The episode is often only the visible story; the deeper subject lies underneath it.

The narration can therefore appear scattered, occasionally inconclusive and sometimes deliberately light. These are moments from life rather than parts of a continuously constructed academic argument. Not every episode ends with a formal conclusion. Some lessons are stated; many are left for the reader to discover by connecting the dots.

The accompanying digital narrations and additional material help bring some of those larger connections into sharper focus.

PART II

Paas Paas, Door Door — Close By, Yet at a Distance

Chronologically speaking, many of the earlier encounters belong to “Paas Paas, Door Door,” although the compilation itself is arranged differently. These were the years of unusual proximity to Presidents, Prime Ministers, ministers and other centres of power while still a young CSS officer in the Information Service.

They provide close glimpses of personalities, behaviour and the workings of government, but from outside the actual process of decision-making: close enough to observe power, but not yet part of its exercise.

Benazir Bhutto

Benazir Bhutto — from watching her historic return in 1986 from a top-floor window of WAPDA House, Lahore, to working directly with her as Pakistan’s first woman Prime Minister; glimpses of the extraordinary challenges faced by a young woman at the highest level of political power, and of a liberal democratic voice struggling for space in an establishment-dominated era.

The 1989 no-confidence motion offers a revealing glimpse of her politics — and, in retrospect, of the politics of the later Zardari years. Confronted with the pressures of securing her own party’s MNAs, her instinctive questions were: Why should we pay them? Where would we get that kind of money from?

Questions from one political moment acquire an interesting resonance when viewed against the politics of later years.

Asif Ali Zardari

Asif Ali Zardari — from entering the Prime Minister House in Rawalpindi as Benazir Bhutto’s shy young husband to becoming one of the country’s most consequential political figures; a transformation seen through scattered encounters, culminating in slogans echoing through the Senate Hall on the day of the Chairman Senate election in 2018: “Ek Zardari Sab Pe Bhari.”

Zia-ul-Haq — Two Faces, Two Perspectives

A young officer working around Army House, Rawalpindi, and Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad, encountered two strikingly different public and official faces of General Zia-ul-Haq: the smiling, laughing and unusually affable figure familiar before cameras and visitors, and the stern, commanding and sometimes visibly angry head of state encountered in official surroundings.

With the passage of time, another contrast emerged: within Pakistan, Zia increasingly came to be viewed through the consequences associated with his era, while internationally the same period appeared within the wider Cold War setting. The episode neither defends nor condemns; it records the difficulty of reducing a historical personality and period to a single frame.

Muhammad Khan Junejo

The same period brings into view the comparatively little-discussed Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo — serious, grounded and understated, gradually asserting the authority of an elected civilian Prime Minister. The Geneva Accords, the Ojhri Camp crisis and his eventual dismissal form part of a wider story of an elected government increasingly asserting itself within a difficult balance of power.

The Unelected, the Caretakers — and Those Who Had a Constituency Behind Them

Encounters with caretaker and unelected figures are placed alongside politicians who repeatedly went back to their constituencies and returned through the electoral process — among them Chaudhry Akhtar Viruo, Faisal Saleh Hayat, Makhdoom Amin Fahim and Yousaf Raza Gilani.

The contrast was often visible not merely in constitutional status but in confidence, behaviour and the manner in which authority was carried. Those who had faced voters repeatedly — winning, losing and returning again — seemed to possess a different kind of assurance: the confidence of having a constituency and a political base of their own.

Brief encounters away from formal offices — at an airport abroad, elsewhere during travel and even at the gates of Parliament House — make the contrast still more revealing.

Underlying these scattered moments is a larger question:

What difference does an electoral mandate — and the knowledge that one must repeatedly return to one's constituents — make to the confidence, independence and behaviour of a political representative?

Foreign-Influenced Brains and Locally Grounded Political Understanding

The comparison moves further — from elected and unelected authority to another recurring Pakistani dilemma: the contrast between foreign-influenced brains and locally grounded political representatives.

Dr Mahbub ul Haq's international professional background is viewed alongside the very different kind of political understanding represented by Mian Yasin Wattoo as Finance Minister — knowledge rooted in local realities, constituency politics and direct contact with ordinary people.

Although separated by a gap of several decades, another comparison involving Naseem Ahir and Mohsin Naqvi as Interior Minister brings out much the same issue in a different setting.

Across different periods, the encounters raise a deeper question:

How differently do ministers and political leaders behave when their primary responsibility is to the local populace — the people among whom they live and to whom they must ultimately return — compared with those whose choices are influenced by, or seek the approval of, other centres of power within the country or abroad?

PART I

From Proximity to Participation — Parliament

Proximity gives way to participation; observation to responsibility in this part.

The parliamentary years — particularly those in the Senate of Pakistan — bring the narrative inside the decision-making process and, increasingly, into positions of institutional leadership.

The events and questions are no longer being observed from nearby. They are being encountered from within Parliament itself, with direct professional involvement in the processes and decisions being described.

Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif

From Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif's youth and beginnings in politics to their subsequent rise and fall — with the personalities and defining characteristics of the two brothers revealed through two brief encounters, lasting barely a few minutes.

Final Glow and Glimpses of a Fading Candle

“Final Glow and Glimpses of a Fading Candle” does not attempt to narrate the much wider work then taking place in the Senate, its House and committees.

It selects only two glimpses from the Committee of the Whole House — the arrival of the Chief Justice of Pakistan and, separately, the arrival of the Chief of the Air Staff — to show the institutional pedestal at which the Senate was operating at the time.

A brief description of how the Secretary Senate, himself a Grade 22 officer, received and escorted another Grade 22 officer — the Chief of the Air Staff — to appear before the Committee of the Whole House adds a small but telling illustration of the institutional standing Parliament had acquired shortly before that phase began to fade in 2018.

“Anokhi Rukhsati”

“Anokhi Rukhsati” begins with a personal and memorable moment — a farewell before time in the Senate in March 2018.

What appears initially as a personal episode also captures the beginning of the end of an institutional and political era. Amid the warmth of the occasion, a remark by the late Senator Rehman Malik reads, in retrospect, almost as a forewarning of what was to follow.

Imran Khan — “Tabdeeli Aa Gayi Hai”

The transition of 2018 is seen through another series of small moments surrounding Imran Khan.

A brief meeting near the beginning of his period in power reveals an early preoccupation with selling state assets, curbing privilege and taking those seen as corrupt to task. The later years brought the harder realities of governing.

Subsequent reflections — including the need for greater preparation before assuming office and, later, a stronger emphasis on wealth creation and economic growth — reveal an evolution in political understanding.

The episode does not seek either endorsement or condemnation. It follows the changing relationship between charisma, expectations, the exercise of power and the resilience displayed after leaving office.

The Parliamentary Decade

The narrative then steps back to tell the larger story of a parliamentary decade — the rise, testing and gradual loss of political and parliamentary space.

Beginning in the spirit of the Charter of Democracy and the constitutional rebalancing associated with the Eighteenth Amendment, Parliament increasingly began to act with a confidence that had often been absent in earlier periods.

The first major test came in 2014.

“Aamne Saamne — Tasadum Se Pehle Ki Nishaniyan” records a series of seemingly disconnected signs before the confrontation — unusual activity around Parliament, questions surrounding its security cordon and other moments that only later appeared to form part of a larger pattern.

“Aamne Saamne — Parliament Under Siege” then follows the crisis to Parliament’s very gates: an extraordinary protest encampment outside, uncertainty and pressure inside, and political parties — government and opposition alike — coming together in defence of Parliament and the elected constitutional order.

In that first major confrontation, Parliament held its ground.

What followed was perhaps even more significant.

In “Ab Nizam Chalne Laga”, the confidence regained in 2014 begins to translate into policy and statecraft. The Yemen joint sitting, the unusual interest of Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif in Parliament’s likely decision, and soon afterwards Xi Jinping’s historic address to Parliament illustrate a legislature no longer confined to reacting to events, but increasingly claiming a role in shaping foreign, security and national policy.

Yet the later chapter, “Nai Naveli, Bholi Siyasi-o-Parliamentary Establishment”, adds the warning beneath that achievement.

Political and parliamentary leadership had acquired considerable power — in constitutional matters, legislation, foreign and security policy and in defending the democratic order — but had not developed equally strong institutional mechanisms to preserve that space.

The weakness was not individual inexperience; it was collective and institutional.

Parliament had learned how to gain power, but not yet how to secure it permanently.

When Parliament’s Central Pillar Fell

The crisis of 2017 brought that vulnerability into sharper focus.

The Panama proceedings, JIT process and eventual disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did not immediately bring Parliament or government to a halt. A new Prime Minister was elected; government continued and Parliament continued.

Yet something fundamental had shifted.

When the question arose whether the political response should move through the motorway or the GT Road, the instinctive parliamentary answer was:

Neither motorway nor GT Road — Parliament House.

The episode records a central paradox: the constitutional structure continued to function, but one of the principal political pillars supporting the parliamentary balance had fallen.

“Saji Sajai Reh Gayi”

A seemingly small incident in August 2017 becomes symbolic.

The Yadgar-e-Jamhooriyat had been prepared for inauguration. Heavy rain came. Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi did not.

What remained was a carefully prepared parliamentary space awaiting political leadership — a small image of the distance that was beginning to grow between the political executive and Parliament itself.

“Bulandi Ki Meraj, Zawal Ka Aaghaz”

By 2017–18, Senate reforms, Dastoor Gali, Yadgar-e-Jamhooriyat and other institutional initiatives appeared to mark a high point.

But the very height of institutional confidence carried a warning: building institutional capital was not enough; it also had to be protected, embedded and sustained.

A Changing Chessboard

“Misaq-e-Jamhooriyat Ka Janaza”

The Chairman Senate election of 12 March 2018 becomes a defining institutional moment.

The joint support of the PPP, PTI and allied parties for Sadiq Sanjrani, rather than a consensus around Mian Raza Rabbani, is treated symbolically as the burial of the political accommodation that had grown from the Charter of Democracy.

Before the vote, Hasil Bizenjo expressed unease. The apparent numbers pointed in one direction, while the result was being discussed elsewhere as though already known.

The parliamentary assurance remained simple: the votes would be counted exactly as cast.

But the deeper concern was no longer the counting process. It was the changing political landscape around it.

“Tabdeeli Ke Asaar”

On the evening before that election, another small incident acquired meaning only later.

A request came that the then DG ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, wished to meet Chairman Senate Mian Raza Rabbani. Rabbani preferred that regrets be conveyed.

At the time it was simply another interaction. In retrospect, it became one of the signs of a changing chessboard.

“Faiz-e-Aam”

Other chapters record attempts to influence or remove sensitive matters from parliamentary committee agendas. A direct call by Gen Faiz Hameed.

One Day, Many Tests

“Ek Din, Kai Imtihan” — “One Day, Many Tests” recalls 22 September 2017 as one of the most difficult and unsettling days of an entire working life — across government, Parliament, international organisations and later work on the ground in the non-governmental and social sector.

An exceptionally difficult day of electoral legislation in the Senate — involving extremely close votes, unusual procedural questions and provisions that were soon to have major political and religious consequences — was only the beginning.

The real test came afterwards, in the Secretary Senate’s own office.

What began with questions about how a crucial amendment had passed soon became a demand to identify individual votes, confronting the Secretary with a simple but fundamental choice:

How far could knowledge acquired from the Secretary’s Table be shared beyond Parliament’s official record?

The answer — and the pressure under which it had to be given — forms the real story of the episode.

“Saayon Ka Taaqub” — Chasing Shadows

One of the lighter-looking chapters records a physical search through floors, galleries, rooms, rooftops and even an old broadcasting area of Parliament House for a supposed hidden centre of influence.

The search ended with a simple Punjabi question:

“Kuch labhya?” — Did you find anything?

The deeper point was less amusing.

While people were chasing shadows inside the building, the real contest over power lay elsewhere.

The Parliamentary Story Remains Unfinished

Towards the end of the parliamentary section comes “Adhuri Parliamentary Kahani” — “The Unfinished Parliamentary Story.”

Despite the depth and detail of the preceding chapters, they are not presented as the final or complete account of Pakistan’s parliamentary decade or of what followed it.

The chapter deliberately places before the reader further electoral figures, events and apparent contradictions — beginning with the Chairman Senate election of 2018 and extending into later Senate developments — without attempting to pronounce a final verdict.

The reason is equally important.

Further evidence remains to be examined. Some connections between events may become clearer with time. Other incidents, rulings, records and observations remain outside the present volume.

The parliamentary story therefore pauses here.

It does not end here.

Disillusionment with the Parliamentary Democracy Champions — Differences over Constitutional Interpretation and Some Parliamentary Rulings

A later group of chapters records a growing disillusionment — not with parliamentary democracy itself, but with some of its leading champions and with the way constitutional and parliamentary principles came to be interpreted and applied.

Differences arose over members’ resignations, requisitioned sessions and, more fundamentally, the elections to the dissolved Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. The concern throughout was whether political expediency was beginning to prevail over elected representation, Parliament’s ability to resolve its own affairs and express constitutional requirements.

The March 2023 BBC Urdu interview placed the constitutional position on record, including the disagreement over Article 254. The larger question remains whether constitutional principles continue to bind when they become politically inconvenient — and where the line is drawn once expediency is accepted as sufficient reason to move beyond an express requirement.

PART III

Beyond the Official Sphere — Thought, Action and the Question Ahead

Beyond Government — Voluntary Interventions

Towards the end, the narrative moves from formal institutions to two voluntary interventions: AWAM, centred on democratic awareness, electoral participation, public dialogue and political education; and a free school for out-of-school children, together with related community and skills initiatives.

AWAM sought to put the democratic record before citizens and encourage participation rather than spectatorship. The school tested what limited family and voluntary resources could achieve on the ground, helping successive batches of children enter classrooms and move forward.

The later demolition of the school building brought that institutional effort to a painful end, but not the underlying question: what can voluntary action achieve when the larger system does not provide continuity?

The Questions That Remain

The two experiences bring the narrative back to enduring questions: how much confidence remains in the vote and democratic process; how educated and professional Pakistanis can enter political and national decision-

making; how effective local government can bring governance closer to citizens; and whether new technology can better connect knowledge, experience and human capability.

The questions first asked through AWAM nearly twenty-five years ago have not disappeared. Some have become more urgent. The book reaches its end, but the questions do not.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Beyond the Printed Pages

For those who wish to know where this thinking stands today, what questions are now being explored, what the continuing research is suggesting, and in which direction the discussion may move next, the journey continues beyond these printed pages through the accompanying social and digital platforms.

Some of this material is already available, while further narrations, documents, videos, discussions, podcasts and elaborations will continue to be added over time.

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