

# Suharto, the Man Behind the Jakarta Summit; Memories of Another NAM Summit; and My Last Glimpse of Sheikh Mujib

THIS is, in effect, the Indonesia Week. To start with, we had the National Day of the Republic celebrated on the last day of August, setting the stage for the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), starting on the following day. As our weekend magazine, carrying this feature, goes to press, the largest non-UN gathering of nations from four continents, steadily moves towards the grand finale.

It is not just Indonesia which returns to the international stage with a bang. It is President Suharto who personally received every visiting head of government at the airport who captures the limelight.

The Indonesia leader has indeed come a long way, almost in every field, in giving the strife-torn republic both political stability and economic development, in playing a somewhat low-key but constructive role in regional co-operation and, finally, in making himself a little controversial in the foreign media. After all, any national leader who remains in power for nearly 25 years must surely pay a price for his durability in one form or another. As the saying goes, being indispensable involves a moral and political liability for the country, perhaps even on the national leader concerned.

Yet, some 25 years ago, the first authoritative biography on the Indonesian leader that hit the bookshelves in the region, was titled, "The Reluctant President." Written in English by a long-time resident in Jakarta, Dutch journalist Roeder, the book had brought into focus the hesitation, indecision and even slight nervousness of Suharto in taking power at the end of the abortive communist coup in 1965 that he had helped to crush.

Roeder's book purposely avoided mentioning all the gossips and stories, speculations and rumours which had been in circulation in Jakarta about Suharto's reluctance to take the presidency. One story was that he had visited his guru for advice and then gone to a river on a boat for meditation. Finally, when all other generals invited him for a meeting and asked him to take the presidency, he literally broke down and asked in a whisper, "Why me?"

A devout Muslim, Suharto's attachment to mysticism is said to remain as strong as it was during that fateful boat journey some 25 years ago, or as strong as it with some Indonesian friends I have known for decades. What precisely is its source? A combination of Sufism, Japanese mythology, the influence of Buddhism and Balinese Hinduism? One only hopes, it is strong enough to withstand the pressure from Islamic fundamentalism that is gaining ground in some parts of the archipelago.

Is the Suharto story a good one to tell in a country like Bangladesh where power grabbing, lacking in all subtleties, has become a deadly menace?

WITH the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 rightly regarded as the founding meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), one can say the Summit this week marks the return of

this unique movement to its birthplace more than 35 years later. There are all kinds of differences. While some 29 newly-independent countries from Asia and Africa attended the Bandung meeting, there are now over 104 heads of government and state present at the Jakarta Summit. From among the luminaries who came to Bandung, only Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia is still alive and present in Jakarta. A tired old man, with thinning grey hair, who has given the best years of his life to safeguard freedom in his country is now no more than a shadow of a young energetic Prince who walked up and down the conference hall in Bandung in 1955. Then, one also thinks of the difference between the flamboyant visionary Sukarno who organised the Bandung meeting and his successor, cool, pragmatic Suharto, the host of the Jakarta Summit. One other difference should be recorded in history. In 1955, it was India,

leaders of such diverse backgrounds and temperaments, as an withdrawn King Faisal and an anti-monarchist Gamal Nasser, an articulate Nehru and a cautious Chou, a Buddhist monk-like figure of U Nu and highly-westernised John Kottlewalla of what was then Ceylon without setting the stage for some hidden tension and under-currents of personal rivalry among the luminaries.

It was the powerful presence of Pandit Nehru that got the limelight at the Bandung conference. However, what the Indian leader often failed to understand was how to be a dominant figure without being domineering. So, he ran into problems which were noted by astute observers from the sidelines.

It is said that the Indian leader was thoroughly displeased with the pro-western speech delivered by Kottlewalla. When the Ceylonese leader returned to his seat, Nehru whispered to him with a visible show of anger, "You did

## MY WORLD

S. M. Ali

under Pandit Nehru, which met most of the expenses of the Bandung meeting, approximately \$2 million, and probably felt the pinch. For the Jakarta Summit, the resource-rich Indonesia has reportedly spend \$200 million, without a second thought.

Well, one can go on and on.

**"The only NAM meeting I attended was the Summit in Algiers in 1973. This is where Bangladesh became a member of NAM but, sadly enough, this is where I had the last glimpse of Sheikh Mujib ..."**

I missed the Bandung conference. It was not that I missed the air connection or failed to get the hotel booking. I was then too inexperienced a journalist to be assigned by my newspaper to a historic conference which, among other things, marked the entry of Premier Chou En-lai of China into the international stage and helped in raising the status of Pandit Nehru among Afro-Asian nations, eventually making him one of the three founding fathers — Tito and Nasser being the other two — of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

All this is history, recorded in some books and probably preserved in the memories of some Indonesians.

What went on behind the scene, unrecorded in most books on the subject, was another matter. One could not bring together

not show me your speech before delivering it." The reply from Kottlewalla was prompt, "You did not show me yours."

A well-meaning Nehru took great pains in introducing Chou En-lai to other heads of government, often with somewhat flattering complimentary remarks about the Chinese leader. This was the time of "India-China Bhai Bhai."

Years later, Chou told a visiting delegation of journalists that he thought Nehru's attitude at Bandung was most patronising. "Do you think that the Prime Minister of China needed an introduction from the Prime Minister of India?" he asked.

"Certainly not," said a member of the delegation, rather vigorously. The visitors — yes, you have probably guessed it — were from Pakistan. By now, it was the beginning of the China-Pakistan friendship era.

After all these years, South Asians — especially Indians but not excluding Bangladeshis and Pakistanis — seem to be unaware of the problem they create at international conferences, particularly those held in Southeast Asia: How to draw the line between being articulate and being talkative, how to explain a viewpoint in short precise sentences without giving a lecture and, finally, how to make your presence felt without being domineering.

That's a subject worth writing about, in details, another time, hopefully with some embarrassing examples, if I can pick up the courage to do so.

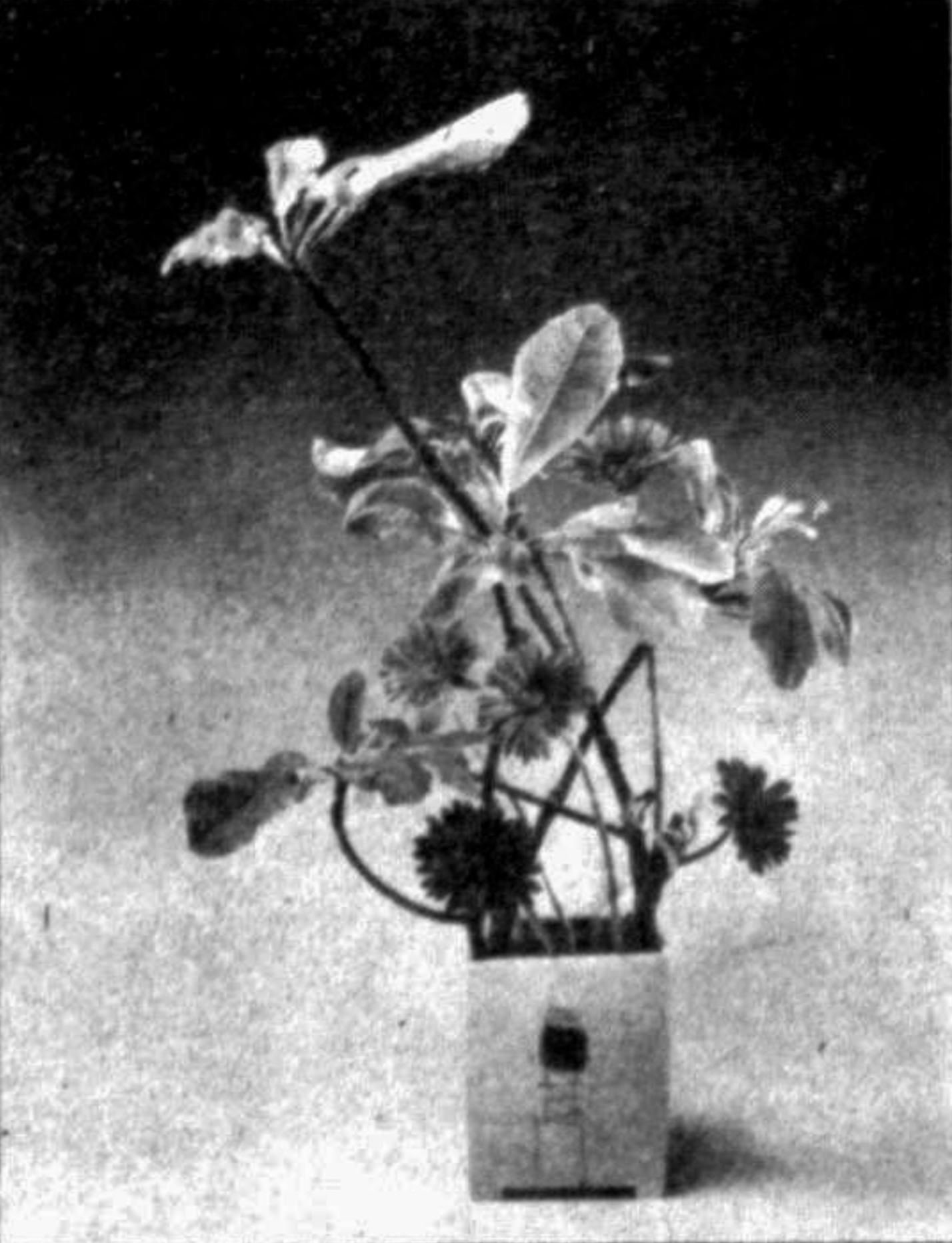
# Flowers for Pure Joy

by a Guest Columnist

Every time I see the pink flower I remember, dear girl, The beauty of your radiant smile.

S O said the Japanese poet Otomo Yakamochi. How true! Flowers do offer opportunity for radiance. This wonderful gift of nature holds the appeal that outlives time and the 'thing of beauty' has indeed become 'a joy for ever.' One need not be a connoisseur to appreciate this flowery beauty, nor is any special skill necessary to admire flowers.

ters of the art. It is this beauty charged yearning that made the IKEBANA flower arrangement an art. An art that requires years of perseverance to acquire perfection. "If you study Ikebana, I am sure you find soul satisfying peace in creating an arrangement of your own. For me Ikebana is a kind of therapy to obtain peace of mind," said Mrs Kaeko Nakashima, former



Ikebana pot excellence

That is why we see scores of florists with decorated shops vending fresh flowers in the metropolis. The practice of floral gift and decoration has an air of aristocracy about it. Not many of us, however, know the delicate art of flower arrangement. Knowing that appropriate decor and assortment adds to the charm of flowers, we do nourish an yearning to be mas-

president of Ikebana International.

Mrs Kazuyo Zoha, the famous and the only teacher of Ikebana flower arrangement in Dhaka, has earned acclaim for her enchanting flower arrangement skills. Urbane Dhakaites turn to her for those special occasions which they would like others to remember for a long time. Seeing her flower arrangements, one feels a sense of nostalgia which is difficult to express in words.

Encouraged by friends and well wishers, Mrs Kazuyo Zoha decided to open an outlet where people could come to buy her collections. Two of her floraphile friends are also there in the fray.

Ikebana flower collection shop at the crossing of Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi 6, was formally opened by Mrs Kumi Saiki, wife of the Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh, recently. We would now have a chance to have "Friendship through Flowers."

# Round the Bend on Wheels

by Sabir Mustafa

INVENTOR of the wheel be damned! Today, the whole country is held hostage by wheels.

Crazy kids on two wheels; lungi-clad harakiri fanatics on three; homicidal maniacs on four (large-bodied) and office-drivers, a breed possibly not covered by any definition under the general heading The Human Race, on small-bodied fours.

Then there is the other one, called Wheel, which is not a wheel at all, but rather a square and pronounced Hoo-eel.

"Bouma, aren't you using Hoo-eel?" a satanic mother-in-law shrills on a TV ad.

"No mother, I'm not using Hoo-eel", coos a cute but idiot-looking daughter-in-law, full of embarrassed apology.

It must've been an ad for a new birth control pill.

Judging by the amount of baby clothes hanging on the forest of washing lines among which the secret conversation was taking place, it was clear the pea-brain daughter-in-law had given birth to enough brats to warrant a demand for explanation.

But the magical wheel does not only control birth, it can also have de-controlling effect on life itself.

Take the three-wheel thing, for instance.

How is it like to put your life in somebody else's hands? Not advisable at all, but ...

Unwittingly, we do just that every day. It has to be unwittingly, because we wouldn't do it in the first place if we had our wits about us. (And no, I'm not talking about our destiny being in God's hands).

Whenever you board a rickshaw, everybody else around thinks, "Ah, that fellow is getting on a rickshaw". Nothing extraordinary in that, as you are never prepared, first thing in the morning, to differentiate between a straight-forward observation and a warning of impending doom.

Neither are you in the frame of mind to look at a rickshaw as anything other than what it obviously is — a little, innocent rickshaw with three wheels.

But that wonderful feeling of peace, tranquility and general satisfaction with the way the world is structured — Europe at the top, Australia at the bottom and you in the middle — lasts for about a minute and half.

Suddenly the rickshaw-puller wakes up and finds himself riding on the far left-hand,



meaning the correct, side of the road (how disgusting); he sees he is also keeping at least 10 yards distance from the vehicle in front (the guy must be out of his head); and he is still managing to keep his tricycle on all three wheels (a sure candidate for the lunatic asylum).

But the rickshawallah doesn't want to go to a lunatic asylum, does he? No, he would much rather go to Heaven instead.

Thoroughly disgusted, he mends his misguided ways without further ado, and swings into the wrong side of the road with a brilliant manoeuvre of the handle-bar ("That's right, keep going!", he yells to himself in feverish excitement).

Then his front-wheel makes valiant attempts to get underneath the front of a minibus driven by a psychopath and navigated by a demented drunkard ("You are doing brilliantly, you jewel of Noakhali!", bellows the rickshaw fellow, recalling his ancestry for good measure).

Suddenly, his tricycle rickshaw becomes a bicycle with a serious tilt ("Tilt away, you fabulous freaster of Fenil!", screams the wallah in a chequered lungi with an equally chequered career as a rickshaw-peddler).

While the rickshawpuller goes boldly forward to where other rickshawpullers have gone quite frequently in a bid to become ex-rickshawpullers, it is time for you to wake up.

"Ah, that fellow is getting

X, Y or Z, when all you want and need to do is go to B.

You may wish to tell the rickshaw guy to go to hell and stay there, but that is one thing you would be well-advised not to do.

With time ticking away and rickshaw rates going up faster than the decline in the prospects of H.M. Ershad getting the Ekushey Padak for poetry, the last thing you want to do is tell the man where to go.

Even if agrees to take you to B, he may still decide on a detour through G or H, just so he can wash his dirty wheels in the even-dirtier puddles of water by the roadside.

In that case, all you should do is smile and agree wholeheartedly.

"Cleanliness is part of Faith", you should tell the wallah appreciatively, preferably with a finger pointing to the sky to indicate the unimpeachable source to which the quote could be attributed.

It's not for you to complain about your brilliant white pyjamas getting splashed with dirty, muddy waters.

After all, your wife, Mrs. Farida Hekmatyar of Dhaka, uses Hoo-eel.

"I use Hoo-eel because my hubby's clothes are always muddy from out the outside, and full of sweat from inside. My hubby always gets sweaty out of right when he travels on three wheels, so I rely on a fourth wheel to get it all clean", Mrs. Farida Hekmatyar of Dhaka told Mohammad Jahangir in a recent BTV programme.

The programme might have been Sanglap or Ohhmat. It looked suspiciously like a commercial, it couldn't have been because, M. Jahangir with a microphone in his hands, looked as if he was presenting one of his TV shows.

"Now I'm in Khulna", declares the same M. Jahangir, as he wheels around to face the camera.

And the same goes for the delicious-looking Mrs. Selina Gamsakhurdia of Khulna.

"Hoo-eel is my hope", honey drips from Mrs. Selina Gamsakhurdia of Khulna's lips as she continues, "My mother always relied on Hoo-eel. So did my father, infact he was widely-known in our street as a wheeler-dealer. He dealt in wheels, you see, big deals with big wheels. Anything I need to clean — from my Indian cotton sarees to my reputation — I do it with Hoo-eel. It leaves my fingers all soft and nimble, ready to do you-know-what."



Cultural function is a must in celebrating an occasion: Child and adult artistes performing at the Eid Reunion of Swarupkati Samity, Dhaka held late recently at the Engineers Institute.



WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

I liked your answer to the woman whose husband was being unfaithful to her. Sometimes women just ask to be treated badly. I have a neighbour who has a similar story. She has been advised by friends and family to leave her husband but she just will not listen. What is the reason for such behaviour, can you explain?

Samira, Eskaton, Dhaka.

Dear Samira,

The reasons for such behaviour are many and often valid. Financial dependency is the most important one but so is emotional dependency. Then there is always the hope that "he might change". These women don't want to face reality and prefer to live in a make-believe world. Most will jump to defend their husbands at the slightest hint of criticism. What they need to come out of such a situation is support from family and friends. Not just advice to leave but support in terms of confidence building, career building, emotional independence and finally, financial independence. Then only she can take the step of leaving.

Dear Mita,

I did not agree with your advice to the woman whose husband has been having relationships with other women. How can you ask a woman with children to leave her husband? Where is she supposed to go? And what is she supposed to do? To her father's house? And then become dependent on her father, or brothers? It is better to tolerate the humiliation of the husband than to hear the taunts of a brother's wife. Also the social stigma is strong against leaving the home. Your ideas are too Western for our society. That is why you give such advice.

Rima, Zhegalola, Dhaka.

Dear Rima,

I don't disagree with most of your points. This is the reality. But we know it is unfair and unjust. So what should we do about it? Should women in similar situation continue to suffer in silence or try to change the situation? I am certainly not advocating leaving home no matter what. This is a major decision for a woman and she has to consider all possible options before she finally decides to leave. There are a number of preparations and steps she has to take before taking the final one and the first one is the decision not to allow herself to be humiliated any longer, to once and for all draw the line and say "so far and no more".

Dear Mita,

I am writing regarding your response to the second letter published in your column on the 28 August 1992.

My initial reaction to your response was, "... now that was unlike Mita." Though I share to some extent your frustrations about the circumstances described and the candour in your

advice, I also realize it is perhaps realistic to assume that, "he will never change."

I do not know whether the anonymous writer will be able to provide an answer to your question, "Why have you allowed yourself to be treated this way?" Or, indeed, why did she subject herself to the humiliations and did not do anything about it?

This is how I appreciate her problem. No relationship is static and should not be taken for granted. Every relationship should involve a continuous process of defining needs and expectations by the parties from their respective positions. To a large extent this process determines changes, growth or decline in relationships. Hence it would be ideal if parties maintained emotional, physical and financial independence as much as possible. However emotional and financial independence alone, without being aware of this process, does not necessarily achieve anything. Rather the conscious participation in this process helps define the need, nature and extent of independence necessary, for a fruitful relationship, in the minds of the parties themselves.

It is this process that the anonymous writer has perhaps not been conscious of. Not due to any fault of hers. Because we are conditioned to perceive ourselves as passive recipients in relationships rather than as active partners.

The letter of the anonymous writer bears signs of the beginning of such a process of rationalization and it is never too late. She needs empathy and support to continue it till she is able to define her own needs and expectations out of the relationship. Only then she will find the answers, more importantly answers acceptable to herself.

Tahmina Rahman, Shyamoli, Dhaka.

Dear Tahmina,

Although your letter does not seek advice, I am printing it because it is so well written and aptly captures the essence of what a healthy relationship should be.

Dear Mita,

I am a university student of 20. About five years back, I was enticed by a young pretty looking lady. She always made me very good with her charm. But finally I have unearthed her motive of cheating me. Please help me, advising in regard to the solution of this problem. Because I am suffering.

Mr Kamal Hossain, Ghatail, Tangail.

Dear Kamal,

If you are 20 now, then five years ago you must have been 15. Let me tell you at that age whatever you felt was not love. Moreover, you seem to have solved the problem, by "unearthing her motive". Please don't suffer any longer. You are only 20 and have your whole life in front. This is the time to develop your personality and career. So put your mind to that instead of lamenting over something that occurred five years ago.