

Chaotic Atmosphere in Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*

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Abstract

The *Driver's Seat* by Muriel Spark is one of the most powerful exploration of the tragedy of modern man. It is a beautiful castigation of the modern version of tragedy. Moreover, it is full of sensation as well as hilarious elements in it. Muriel Spark has beautifully elaborated the concept of modern concept of tragedy through the central protagonist of the novel.

Paper

The Driver's Seat by Muriel Spark is a chilling and macabre story of a woman who is on the look out for her own murderer. This immensely gripping and absorbing novel is about something unusual in an individual's life. The events in the novel are sensational and the novel is also rich and can be read at various levels- to point out some of them social, psychological, philosophical and metaphysical ones. However, the elements in Muriel Spark's works defy any classification. That is why, Frederick calls her "light to the point of froth," Frank Kermode describes her as "obsessed with her medium, a difficult and important artist". How does then one reconcile the serious and frothy aspects of her works, while the light and fantastic elements give the impression of playfulness other side of her works is profound enough to fease anyone in thoughts. Certain

questions come naturally to one's mind that what drives Lise, the protagonist in *The Driver's seat*, to the desperate act of putting a talent end to her life. Why does she become an active participant in the pursuit of her own murder.

It is in the light of such questions that we come to face the chaotic scenes and incidents in the novel. In fact, there are some incidents in the text that make us sometimes gloomy and sad as Whittakar calls this novel ' a sad and nasty story". To some extent, the novel is a telling comment on the modern godless society.

Lise has been portrayed as a middle -aged intelligent woman who has been working in an accountant's office, surrounded with symmetry and regularity. In her office, she has hysterics against the dull precision of accountancy where even the staff is arranged in orderly figures around her: " she has five girls under her, two women and five men". No less rigid is her apartment where everything is in order, but there is a disorder in her mind. She starts shouting without any reason disturbing the whole office. Her behavior becomes odd and eccentric, and this dull and drab routine is taking its toll and Lise is on the verge of nervous breakdown.

Whenever she goes, she tries to disorder the pervading order and make the things

chaotic for others. At the very outset of the novel, we find her quarreling with sales girls and invites attention of the whole store. At the airport also, she tries to draw attention of her co- passengers and the author's declaration that " she will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab-wounds' makes the things more gloomy because after all, why an individual be stabbed.

Lise has already formed a dark, sinister and ominous design in her mind, and now, she is on the look out for someone who would help her carry out her plans. She has a vague notion of her kind of man. She can feel the presence of his absence. So, much has been absent from Lise's life like the omission of qualities of love, faith and human pity from her life become a reminder of their necessity. The world in which Lise inhabits is arid, motiveless and unloving for her.

Evil predominates of one kind or other moving under the impetus of their own obsession, traffic jams, the plastic horrors of aeroplane meal and the terrible lack of communication among people.

Wearing an orange mauve and blue skirt with a white striped coat, as if she were dressed for the carnival, Lise heads for airport. Loud colours become a standing advertisement for her presence. The people who would have remained indifferent to her misery, now take note of her. Lise soon spots out her murderer in a crowd with a weird and uncanny sense of judgement. Single minded in the pursuit of her dark

design that she has formed in her mind, Lise intuitively knows that Richard is the kind of man who can help her out to put an end to her life. The plane which Lise boards is full of abnormal persons- a woman who wants to be stabbed, a sexmaniac who is going to murder her, a man with his nonsensical yin and yang theories and a sick man who is afraid of Lise one cannot but note down the melancholia, the fever, and fret of world of large this is again represented in the students demonstration brutally scattered by the police Lise lives in such a word where people hear words but do not listen to what is being said, a world where book are bought because their covers match a colours scheme, where people are judged by their appearances viewed in this context Lise's pursuit of her own violent end does not appear all strangeness feels Bradbury, Lise's mania or oddity becomes itself a kind of sanity. Nothing makes sense in her life. Then , does death not become as nonsensical as life is.

When she meets Richard at hotel Jomson, Lise does not allow him to slip away. She grabs him and he follows her. In the park, he stabs her on her instructions and ultimately, Lise perceives how final was finality. The novelist omits emotional expression to save the readers from sentimental reaction to Lise's tragedy, from indecent exposure of fear and pity , pity and fear. But the very omission of pity and fear brings forth their relevance. To some extent we can apply Aristotelian formula to this novel that the novel is the tragedy of a woman whom isolation, alienation and boredom of life drive to desperate



measures. Spark's presentation of such a bleak world speaks of her concern for the need of love, faith and compassion in modern life. Therefore the question is that whether life in this world is better than death.

Spark has always been curious about the relation of an author to fiction and its agents. Bradbury puts it: "For Spark, the modernist view that the novelist must not intervene arbitrarily in the destinies of the characters is a matter of witty speculation". Both, God and artist create a world which they, then, people with characters simultaneously free and limited.

References :

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