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Sub :- English [B.A (Part-II) Paper - VI]

Topic :- "Heart of the Matter" - Graham Greene

\* Critical appreciation of the leading character of 'The Heart of the Matter,' Major Henry Scobie written by Graham Greene.

= Graham Greene was born on October 2, 1902. He is one of the greatest novelist of the modern age. Greene has written novel on a number of themes but he is predominantly a religious writer. Green believes in the original sin of man. As a catholic he is of the opinion that man has a natural tendency to fall to the path of evil. Therefore he makes a clear distinction between virtue and vice. It is rightly said that Greene's novel deal not only with man in relation to society and to himself but fundamentally in relation to God. Therefore, Green preoccupies himself with man's innate Sinfulness, his awareness of his sinfulness and his consequent search of God's mercy and salvation. It is clearly illustrated in the case of Major Henry

Scobie in "The Heart of the Matter".

Major Henry Scobie is the central character of the novel. During world war I, he fought scobie but now during the world war II, he is working as the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the West African Colony. He has been working here for the last fifteen years. He is married to a Roman Catholic woman named Louise and he has also accepted Roman Catholic church. The whole novel is woven round his relationship with three important persons, 1st his wife Louise, 2nd his mistress Helen Rolt and the most important relation he has, is with God himself. Though he has been dealing with Wilson and Yusuf and other characters of the outer world also, but he has emotional war going inside him with these three important persons in his life. The mental struggle of Scobie keeps the readers attention gripped from the beginning to the end.

Throughout the novel the interior monologue of Scobie are highly revealing. Some of the important aspects of his character are :-

#### \* A Sincere and Honest officer:

Henry Scobie is popular as an honest and sincere police officer. The commissioner of police is highly pleased with his work. He never takes a bribe even when he is badly in need of

money to send Louise to South Africa, he refused the bribe offered to him by the captain of the ship. He neither accepts the bribe of hundred pound nor creates any trouble to him after reading the emotional letter of the Captain to his daughter. He even threw away the diamond given to him as a bribe from Yusuf. He ~~is~~ has taken loan from Yusuf on a ~~rate~~ four percent rate of interest. However Yusuf has blackmailed him to do some favour to him but he never did any such thing for money. Still we find a tragic flaw in the story that due to some bad rumours about him he ~~is~~ is not promoted to the post of the Police commissioner and this causes a chain of negative events in his life.

\* A dedicated and caring Husband:

We find that Scobie ~~to~~ cares about the happiness of his wife a lot, they have fourteen years married life but in the long period gradually his love for his wife diminished due to various reason. First the death of their only daughter has upset the mood of Louise and Scobie both. Scobie was happy with whatever he has and all he needed was peace while his wife Louise is highly ambitious and she was very upset that when she comes to know that Scobie is not promoted as Commissioner. She declares that she is



not able to bear this place anymore and wants to go to South Africa. This trip was costly and Scobie's financial condition is not ~~sufficient~~ sufficient to manage such trip. Scobie as a Roman Catholic considers it his duty to keep his wife happy, so in order to manage the trip, he has taken money from Yusef, which he doesn't like at all, as an honest police officer. This event put him in the hand of Yusef's trap, which finally cost him a lot. He is so conscious of her happiness that when Louise informs him that she is coming back, he cries "O God give me ~~death~~ death before I gave them unhappiness".

Louise absence and Helen's pitiable condition has developed into adulterous affairs with Helen. But till the end we find him taking care of Louise happiness a lot. He goes to church to attend the Mass and Communion, which morally he doesn't want to do.

Even when he decides to commit suicide he shows it a natural death to keep her free from any moral guilt and also to get the insurance claim easily. He even ~~goes~~ to allow Wilson to give her company so that she should not feel alone, however he knows the intention and nature of Wilson very well.

#### \* His relation with Helen:

Helen Rolt is a

turning point of this novel. After meeting her, Henry Scobie's character was dynamically changed. After she has been rescued from an English torpedoed ship, she get shelter in Nissen Huts. She is only nineteen years old but Scobie was forty nine still they get attracted towards each other. Graham Greene has thrown light on this; He was more than thirty years the older; his body in the climate had lost the sense of lust; he watched her with sadness and affection and enormous pity, because a time would come when he couldn't show her around in a world where she was at sea.

These lines show that not out of lust but out of pity, he ~~ever~~ get involved in this relationship. However his passion for Helen was too strong and he doesn't want to desert her also. So when Helen tells her to leave her for his own sake, ~~so~~ he is not able to be selfish enough to do so.

#### \* Roman Catholicism, God and Scobie:

As we know that ~~Roman~~ religion is one of the important ingredient of Greene's novel, so is found in the character of Scobie also. Henry Scobie's understanding for Roman Catholicism values plays an important role in bringing about his tragedy. However he is blamed by Louise and Helen equally that his love for Roman Catholicism is not sincere and Helen finds

it begins also. He even himself accepted before Father Rance states, "The priest : "I feel tired of my religion. It seems to mean nothing to me, I've tried to love God but I'm not sure that I even believe".

But whatever type of belief he has, it is true that his moral responsibility makes him feel guilty after having relations with Helen. As a Roman Catholic he tries to fulfill his duty towards Louise. When out of his deep passion for Helen he writes that he loves her more than God. He rebukes himself for this act and says, "O' God, I have deserted you, Do not desert me." He even doesn't want to attend the church just to his feeling of guilt as a Roman Catholic. Later on when he decides to commit suicide, his Catholicism compels him to think that it is a worst crime a Catholic could do. Even in his mind always a moral conflict was going on the God voice of God tries to dissuade him from committing suicide but his Conscience says, "I won't go on insulting you in your own altar. You see it's an impasse, God, an impasse. Throughout the novel His Sense of Responsibility towards Catholicism is found and finally it is well defined in the words of Father Rank. When Louise informs Father Rank that actually Scobie has committed Suicide and express her horror and fear. Rank satisfies

cher by saying that, "the church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart." Finally, Father Rank says, "It may seem an odd thing to say - when a man's as wrong as he was - but I think, from what I saw of him that he really loved God."

\* His sense of Pity and Introspective Nature:

Throughout the novel we find that ~~Scobie~~ Pity is the dominating feature of his nature. He is a man of introvert nature who is always meditating on various issue. Pity ~~may~~ and his moral responsibility may be regarded as the tragic flaw in his character. In relation with every other character in the novel, Scobie is seen to show pity in some degree. He is sympathetic towards local people, he hears their case patiently. He ~~helped~~ does not put any charges against the Captain and burns the letter. It is again his sense of pity that brings him close to Helen. But above all he is showing pity to his wife. If he was a bit tough he could not have sent Louise ~~but~~ taking money from Yusuf and then he has been saved from so many troubles.

\* His relation with other characters:

Among other characters his relation with Yusuf harms him a lot, he has given him loan and trapped

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him in his trap. Yusuf given him wrong information about Talit ship, which diminished his reputation as an officer, later on he forced him to do a favor by blackmailing with the letter. Again when he seeked help from him from Ali; Yusuf get him killed, all these actions of Yusuf tortured him a lot and make his condition bad to worse.

Collison too is against Scobie and he even tries to get his wife Steve and attention. He not only tries to defame him but at the end he won the attention of Louise by revealing Scobie's suicide before her. However Scobie even knowing his intention never harms him.

Thus in Scobie we find an honest, sincere police man, A Caring and attentive husband, a passionate lover but above all a conscious Roman Catholic. Therefore in this novel we find that Greene has explicitly expressed his religious views. Closely related to sinfulness is the theme of salvation and damnation. The chief characters in Green's novel are tormented with the thought of damnation after their act of sin. They are in search of salvation. In 'The Heart of the Matter' Scobie knows about damnation. And Above all, his suicide completes his eternal damnation.