ABSTRACT

Katherine Anne Porter is a conscious literary artist in the tradition of Henry James and James Joyce. In her fiction she argues strongly in favour of a positive relationship between the individual and the society and exposes the human tendency to put one’s self above all else, which causes confusion and suffering. Though the materials she has dealt with are of chiefly European and American origin there are many elements which have a universal appeal. The aim of the researcher is to make an indepth study of the fiction of Miss Porter and arrive at conclusions regarding her approach to Love, Family, Nation and Race in the Twentieth Century context.

Chapter I is an introduction with a general appraisal of the Miss Porter’s short stories, Short novels and magnum opus Ship of Fools. The statement of the aim of study is clearly spelt out, ie. to delineate how the fiction of Miss Porter demonstrates the individual’s experience and perception of self, society and existence with specific reference to love, family, nation and race which act as influencing and determining factors.
Chapter II is about her treatment of "Love". She concludes that love between man and woman fails in our society mainly because of selfishness. Her view that only in "faith and love can man live", is substantiated in this chapter. Special mention is made of the effective use of Animal imagery by the author. For a purposeful analysis of Man - Woman relationship in Ship of Fools love relationships are categorised into Marital relationships and Extra - Marital relationships. Some pre-Marital relationships are also described.

Chapter III entitled "Family" assesses the individual in relation to Family. In this chapter, an attempt is made to prove that though Miss Porter had faith in the family as a strong unit for healthy social living, she could not see such a condition any where. The relationship between the members of the family is always under strain. Childless couples and their miseries also are viewed from a critical angle in this chapter.

Chapter IV "Nation" deals with the evil influence of narrow minded nationalism of individuals. As an eye witness to the happenings in different parts of the world, she knew how the nationalistic spirit of the people was being exploited by the powers that be for their selfish ends. She always defended the freedom of the nations but she could not endorse the hatred campaign indulged in especially in a country like Germany, under the guise of nationalism.
Chapter V is entitled "Race" and deals with Miss Porter's attitude to the Aryan superiority myth, propagated by Hitler and his admirers. This was one of the major causes for the Second World War. It is in Ship of Fools that she brings to focus how the racial criterion brings in a lot of unhappiness to humanity. Miss Porter plays no national favourite in this regard.

Chapter VI "Conclusion" sums up the findings of the present study. Though Love, Family, Nation and Race do affect the individual's life in its various aspects, they are not totally extraneous factors, for in the final analysis it is the collective individual will that gives shape and form to these. The fiction of Miss Porter underlines the fact that any change for the better should have its origin at the level of the individuals.