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CHIEF EDITORIAL OFFICE

Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma

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Editor in Chief - SHODH SANCHAR BULLETIN

448 /119/76, KALYANPURI THAKURGANJ, CHOWK, LUCKNOW -226003 U.P.,

Cell.: 09415578129, 09415141368, 09161456922

E-mail : sanchar_bulletin@yahoo.com, dr.vinaysharma123@gmail.com

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UNMUTING THE MUFFLE : EMPOWERING THE VOICELESS DISABLED IN TERRY TRUEMAN'S STUCK IN NEUTRAL

□ R. Annapoorani*
Dr. S. Saira Banu**

ABSTRACT

In the literary arena, authors have utilized literature as a medium to voice out the tribulations of voiceless groups/individuals. Terry Trueman, an American novelist depicts the sufferings and challenges faced by a voiceless disabled boy in his novel *Stuck In Neutral*. The novel narrates the story of Shawn McDaniel who is affected with cerebral palsy. Due to the congenital disorder, he encountered numerous afflictions in expressing his ideas, talents, and emotions. In the pages of history, people with disability were turned into passive, voiceless, pathetic souls, who were deprived of rights because of their deformed bodies and mental illness. Disability Studies deals with impairment of mind and body on social and medical aspects. It unveils the untold stories of disabled people, who are unnoticed in society for centuries. It offers a new identity, hope, for the disabled voiceless victims to lead a normal life as any other person in a community. This paper propounds a new dimension on disability studies analysing the distress and misfortune of voiceless disabled people through the character of Shawn McDaniel and also makes an attempt to examine the nuances of the author in depicting their regained voices and identity through a unique approach towards life realising their potentials.

Keywords : Voiceless, Disabled People, Disability Studies, Cerebral Palsy, Congenital Disorder, Terry Trueman

American literature which flourished in seventeenth century marks an epoch in the literary cannon during which period of time there was an emergence of literary works that were an eye-opener among citizens and created an impact in the historical and literary era. Over a century, numerous movements, acts, and theories contributed new shade to the works of arts and uplifted the literature to a new notch in the artistic background. Many a times in the literary arena, authors have utilized literature as a medium to voice out the tribulations of voiceless groups/individuals.

The 1960s and 1970s are the significant centuries in the American literary background during which three major movements came into existence and modified the outlook of American history and literature. These movements discuss the issues of women's suffrage,

oppression and discrimination of African Americans, subjugation of disabled people in the society. Until 1960, these people were often tagged as voiceless groups by a larger community. The term 'voiceless' defines a community or an individual deprived of articulation or rights/power to express the thoughts and feelings. The lives of these voiceless people are miserable, as they are doubly/triply marginalized in the society. Especially the plights of voiceless disabled people are pitiable, as they lose voice, identity and become invisible creatures in a large community.

Disability rights arouse into a powerful movement in America during 1960s along with other civil rights movements. Though the traces of disability could be seen in the earlier works, it was often omitted by historians and writers. According to Baynton (2013) "Disability was a

*PhD Research Scholar - Fatima College, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

**Supervisor - Associate Professor, The Research Centre of English, Fatima College, Madurai.