

CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF PROSTITUTION IN VICTORIAN ERA

This chapter aims to provide the relevant history of prostitution during Victorian period. Therefore, there are several aspects represented here are relevant to the analysis of Mrs. Warren in undergoing her life as a prostitute portrayed in Shaw's play. This chapter first of all provides the brief image about the prostitute in Victorian period, then the causes of women prostitute themselves, the consequences of prostitution on women, and the last is the prevention and the reform toward prostitution.

3.1 Prostitution in Victorian Era

Victorian era simply referred to the historical period in England led by the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901 (Abrams 328). The name of Victorian in English period derived from Queen Victoria who her full name was Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise, a daughter of Edward Augustus or Prince Edward and Marie Luise Victoire or Princess Victoria. Queen Victoria was carried her command in England around sixty four years and it was a long Britain period that brought the great changes for British society. It was a time of rapid wrenching economic and social changes during nineteenth century (329). One of economic changes was emerged the factory systems and many people left their village in the hope to find job opportunities in the cities.

We can conclude that Victorian era in English period gave many change for the society.

During the 19th century, England was marked by the drift of a great part of its rural population towards towns and cities, where many jobs could be found and by the 1850s, the census showed there were more people in the cities than in rural areas (Kathleen 7). One of social changes appeared during Victorian period was the increase of people population in the cities than in the rural area. Kathleen further stated that this social phenomenon led to a huge growth of the London population from 900 000 inhabitants in 1801 to 5 million in 1881 (7). Based on the amount of population above, it seemed that the increase of population on British society was not spread balance between people in the cities and the rural areas because people could be found many jobs in the cities than in the rural areas.

However, the increase of population during Victorian era impacted on the spread of poverty and prostitution in some areas. The exact numbers of prostitutes in London were remained an enigma or was an approximation amount. In the 1840s, the City Authorities made an estimation of 80,000 prostitutes whereas the Metropolitan Police stated there were about 7 000 of them in London (Kathleen 8). The majority of London prostitutes were young girls who came from the working-class. Police authorities and other had recorded the estimate amount of prostitutes in London that there were 8,000 or 10,000 women who as the most part forced to gain a livelihood by choosing work as prostitutes (Russel 4). She further wrote that large portion of

them were under twenty one years of age, in addition the majority of victims had been started to enter the occupation at an early age, but few of them from the upper classes (4). They contained a number of young women came from circumstance similarly and had usual to undergo this unfortunate condition and pretend as “the daughters of crime”, whereas they generally were the children of misfortune (5).

There were some thousands houses rented by the house-keeper for the purpose of prostitution in which these young female became the victims frequently. The brothel-keepers applied the young prostitutes in their houses through an agency called procurer (Russel 2). It was a pander which provided many young females who sold to the brothel-keepers. Therefore, procurer was considered as a danger for young girls. Indeed, they seemed to be one of the biggest traps for young women in London, for every observer exposed them as one of the main causes of prostitution (Kathleen 18). In looking for the victims, the brothel-keeper also looked for the young prostitutes by going to the town then they gave the work offer to the girls, it frequently with the consent from their parents, under pretense of procuring for them some respectable service of occupation in London. On their arrival in town they were taken to the house of the brothel, where they impossible to come back home.

Susan Kingsley Kent stated that there were only two possible images for women during Victorian era; respectable wife and mother from high class lady or contemptible women or prostitute from middle and lower classes background or called as the “fallen women” (61). She further stated that “they might be either the

idealized wife and mother, the angel in their houses, or the debased, depraved, corrupt prostitute (61). Nevertheless, the distinction between respectable and fallen women made the feminists refused those terms and insisted that women from respectable classes and prostitutes should be received the very same treatment from men (62). The fact, the existence of prostitutes pretend as the resort for men who wanted to satisfy their sexual desires and also to keep the pure of respectable women for men who wanted to rape them.

The natural of sexual desire from respectable women was the motherhood buried in themselves and it was more dominant than their sexual desire, whereas the natural desire dominated by men (62). The nature of female sexuality were their loves of household for instance managed home, cared of their children and another duties which as usual done by most of mothers or wives. William Acton wrote about pure women in his book, he stated that many mothers, wives who know little or careless about sexual indulgences instead love of home, of children, and of domestic duties are the only passions they feel (qtd. in Kent 62). Acton further stated that although nineteenth-century physicians preached the desirability of restricting or controlling the expenditure of male sexual energies, they believed the male sex drive to be “innate” (63). The natural of female sexual was the motherhood included the pure feeling of caring children, loving home and proud being housewife, whereas the male sexual desire is naturally innate.

The male sexual desire could be controlled as what William Acton stated above but it was not entirely repressed, because the repression of male sexual energy could be quite dangerous for them. Paula Bartley also stated that sexual desire in men was considered to be overpowering whereas women was passive and controllable (6). The protecting toward the pure of female sexually which more dominant to the motherhood made men satisfied their sexual desire by masturbation, however masturbation thought will give bad impact, so that the only recourse for men was by forming another class of women which called as prostitution. These women were usually classed as prostitutes and considered as the protection of female and to avoid men to rape them (Kent 63). This is aimed for the protecting of the nature female sexuality from who otherwise wanted to rape them.

The two different images of women during Victorian era; pure referred to respectable wives and impure that closely related with prostitutes made a clear distinction among them. The respectable women carried a full control in caring their household such caring children and another domestic duties as the respect to their husbands they had to focused to manage their household. According to Victorian standards, a respectable woman had supposedly no sexual drives and was allowed, on a few occasions, to have sexual intercourse with her husband for the unique purposes of reproducing the lineage and pleasing her husband (Kathleen 49). Respectable Victorian wives were they who able to manage their household without having another sexual intercourse except with their husbands as their respects and to born

good lineage. Whereas impure women called prostitutes undergone daily life in bad circumstance, where they usual to face sexual or physical violence and the unfair they accepted from government by the exist of the Contagious Disease Acts that seemed to blame prostitutes as the cause of venereal diseases spread among the sailors and soldiers.

3.2 The Causes of Prostitution

Historians's recent studies had designated women's difficult social and economic positions as the main causes of Victorian prostitution (Kathleen 19). Victorian women who had difficulty in their economic had to look for another alternative for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, many working-class girls had to accepted the few alternative offered around them because most opportunities attainable and opened mainly for men. At that time, the opportunities seemed scarce in an area dominated by iron, shipbuilding, steel or coal mining (20). Hence, part of them worked as domestic servants, cheap tailors, pastry-cook, cigar-shops, and bazaar or as ballet-girl. Moreover soon they confronted the economic problem where their wages could not suffice their living conditions with their small earnings.

The low wage of working-class women considered to be the general factor of women entered into prostitution. As Paula Bartley stated that prostitution occurred because of the inadequacy of women's wage in relation to their needs (Bartley 7). Some of poorly paid of employments; dressmaking, shop work, unskilled farm work,

public bar work and domestic service. In addition to the low wage they accepted, they also had to obey some harsh regulations and long hours in their works. Shop girl was considered to be at risk for women because of some reasons; the low wages, worked in long hours, and the harsh of regulations such as the necessity for keep up appearances, the general physical, and the health of moral and mental. The cause of the low wage for dressmaking laborers was rise of technological inventions. The increasingly the popular sewing machine threatened for those in sewing industry by lowering their wages and decrease the job opportunity (8). The agricultural laborers who had no good skills and for those who worked in cruel place would pay them low. Agriculture laborers particularly those who worked in the notorious 'gang system' considered to be at risk (8). Barmaid was considering being at risk for women because their works often related to the sexual harassment. The risks and the low wage from some occupations above were influenced women in Victorian to enter into prostitution.

Poverty may have the overwhelming reason for prostitute but inadequate wages did not necessarily drive some women into the prostitution (9). Even though worked as a prostitute was more profitable than worked in the some occupations that it gave risks for working-class women and the low paid they accepted, in fact, not all women in this case drove themselves into prostitution. Other poorly paid women who worked as home workers, shirt makers and matchbox makers were declined to be prostitutes for their honors or another reasons even though they had the chances to be the

prostitutes. Fur pullers and elderly women were also rarely to become prostitute. Fur pullers decided to work in the dirty place, smell and the labors susceptible to get asthma. They prefer to get low paid and life in poverty than worked as prostitutes for their honors. As Bartley stated that elderly women, desperately poor in this period, rarely became prostitutes, nor did sweated workers like fur pullers, however low their wages might sink (9). They were single, homeless, and without families or friends who generally drove their selves into prostitution. From the explanation above, not all low wage women drove their selves into prostitution.

The second cause was the seduction from the brothel keeper. Another cause for women entered into prostitution was because they especially young girl seduced by the brothel keeper who under covered as a gentleman by offering them a good occupation until they were interested. On their arrival, they even entered into prostitution and stayed in brothel. The brothel keeper looked for their prey by coming closely to every innocent girl who appeared in the street without a protector. She would be persuaded under some plausible pretext and with an abode (Russell 3). In that house, she dresses up and with gaudy decked then compelled to walk on the street to get the customers. Paula Bartley stated that a fifth of the 5,000 prostitutes entered the occupation because seduced by 'gentlemen', moreover only 5000 out of 16,000 said that they forced to get this livelihood (5). She further stated that most of prostitute also persuaded by other girls to sell their bodies for money (5). In addition

to be seduced by the brothel keeper, there were many of women who persuaded by other prostitutes to sell their bodies for money.

The third cause was the neglect of parent and family. The neglect of parent to their children was one of causes someone prostitute themselves. According to the secretary of the Society for the Protection of Young Females, J. B. Talbot, said that there were from twelve to fourteen thousand young girls in London who had become prostitutes because of their parents or guardians neglect (qtd. in Kathleen 11). Lack of parental affection against children effected on the change of their daily behavior because the affection was the most basic psychological need for children. Even though the calculation of young prostitutes above showed only twelve from fourteen thousand girls who had become prostitutes caused by the neglect of their parents, but it proved us that the lack of parental affection would influence children behavior. According Mr. Acton who was one of observers, he revealed the fact that in 1843, some mothers were thought to encourage their daughters to prostitute themselves in order to contribute financially to the family's income (qtd. in Kathleen 11). The condition of family's finance sometime forced them to do the bad action including sent their children into prostitution to help their income.

The fourth cause was surplus women. Victorian era had a phenomena of surplus women which most appeared in London (21). According to modern historian Pat Hudson, the number of these surplus women represented 365,159 of the British population in the 1850s (qtd. in Kathleen 21). The amount of women population in

England was high and unbalanced with men population. As stated by Bracebridge Hemyng that “105 women in England and Wales were born to every 100 males” (21). From that unbalanced, it seemed that the lack of men led the British women citizens were single and as the consequence, many spinsters had to look for their livelihood by their selves without the help of a husband. The number of women who looked for the jobs made they forced to work in low paid jobs. The low paid jobs were not eternally able to help their incomes, so they found the difficulty of economic conditions and thought that prostitution was the only last resort from their problem. Hemyng further said he once met a woman had been working as a hat-binder but lost her job, then she found herself in a difficult economic situation as she had to take care of her father, who had been injured at work. She was unable to find a new employment and was driven onto the streets as a last resort (Kathleen 21).

The fifth cause was born to become prostitute. For children who lived in the brothel because their mothers worked as prostitutes, most of them would be followed their mother’s trace. It was presumed that these girls, who lived in the brothels where their mothers worked as harlots, were most likely to become sex workers themselves (Kathleen 12). These young girls then care by the brothel keeper until they reached teen-aged and sold to customer. Kathleen further wrote that some keepers ‘bred’ these children until they were twelve or thirteen, then they became merchantable and were sold as virgins to supply males demand (12). According to the Committee of the Society that made list of cases of parents prostituting their daughters mentioned that a

woman named Leah Davis who was a brothel keeper in London who had thirteen daughters and they became prostitutes or brothel keeper in various parts of London (qtd. in Kathleen 13).

The final cause was alcohol addictive. According to Paula Bartley, she stated that drink was closely associated with prostitution (6). Alcohol was thought to stimulate lowering human's moral so that for those who drinks alcohol too much will do anything and usually they are unconscious. Alcohol changed human behavior, from drinking until consumed drugs and affected to promiscuity such as sexual intercourse. Bartley further stated that it was rare to find a sober prostitute since ever the increasing amounts of alcohol and narcotics were thought necessary in order for women to prostitute themselves (6). The increasing amounts of alcoholic in Victorians were also influenced women to enter into prostitution, because alcohol can make worse human moral and change their behaviors. Love of drink was one of entrances to know drugs and became one of the major causes both of teen and adult criminalities (Purwandi 14).

3.3 The Consequences On Prostitutes

Venereal disease was the biggest consequence from the overwhelming of prostitution, because venereal diseases or VD was closely related for those who often did the exchanged sexual intercourse. The venereal diseases which spread were such as Syphilis and Gonorrhoea were indeed a pestilence in Victorian Great Britain (Jang

1). Syphilis was one of venereal diseases caused by the bacterium *treponema pallidum* which transmitted through the sexual contact. Whereas, gonorrhea was sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium [*Neisseria gonorrhoeae*](#), it transmitted from one person to another through vaginal. Jang further stated that the spread of these venereal diseases were not only among the prostitutes and men who purchased their services, but also it spread to their wives and children afterward (2). The spread of those sexual illness was extend among society who often did sexual intercourse with prostitution and it increase to their wives and children. However, the rise of venereal diseases among Victorian society as a result of moral decay.

For Gonorrhea's sufferers, the symptom was light, instead most women sufferers had no symptoms. The common symptom was the emergence of heat or painful when they were pee. If this venereal disease had no cured, it would be caused a serious health problem as severe pelvic inflammation and sterility for men and women. Judith Walkowitz stated that in the outer physical appearance, women with this disease seemed healthy, but the doctors were unaware of the affect it had on the uterus and fallopian tubes, often, if untreated, leading to sterility and severe pelvic inflammation (qtd. in Jang 3). Victorian's doctors seemed to be underestimated of this problem, and pretend that the sufferers would be okay as seem in their physical appearance. The fact, it would be caused the sterility men and women.

In 1864, Parliament of the United Kingdom passed a law about a venereal disease caused by the prostitutes. It applied to decrease the venereal disease among

soldiers and sailors in some ports such as Portsmouth, Plymouth, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Aldershot, Colchester and Shorncliffe and in garrison towns (Kent 65). This action was named The Contagious Diseases Acts also known as the CD Acts. Under these acts, police were given powers to arrest prostitutes operated in some ports and army towns. These women ordered to undergo an internal examination for venereal disease at a certificated hospital, if they found to be infected, these women must stay for three months in a Lock Hospital or until they were deemed to be disease-free and got a certificate that verifying their status. For those who refused to be examined, they would be led them to be imprisonment (66).

In the early of the CD Acts, the original acts was only in a few selected naval ports and army towns such as Portsmouth, Plymouth, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Aldershot, Colchester and Shorncliffe and in garrison towns, but after 1866, proposals were introduced to extend the acts to the north of England and to the civilian population. In 1869, the acts had been extended to be in operation in eighteen districts (66).

The Contagious Diseases Acts had created a controversy surrounding within Victorian society (Kent 67). It caused by government's injustice for women who came from lower class background worked as prostitute. Men who wanted to satisfy their sexual desires by coming to prostitution, but only women had to endure humiliating personal medical examinations and be contained in locked hospitals if found to be infected that venereal diseases. The rise of a vigorous campaign

movement to repeal the Acts emerged which Josephine Elizabeth Butler as a pioneer (Bartley 12). Eventually, after many years sent the petitioning, leafleting, held meetings and wrote articles for the purpose of repealing the CD Acts, finally they were repealed it in 1886. Susan Kent stated that Butler led the long campaign for the repeal of the [Contagious Diseases Acts](#) both in Britain from 1869 to 1886 (65).

The next consequence was became alcohol addictive. According to general observations, young kept prostitutes gradually became addicted to alcohol and remained in a life of prostitution until disease or death caught them (qtd. in Kathleen 38). Alcohol was either to be one of causes prostitution and the consequence for those who prostitute themselves. After entered into prostitution, usually women's moral and behavior would be changed because the influence from their around circumstances. The alcohol addictive would be caused the illness such as tuberculosis for those who drank over, so it would corrupted their lives. The life of women who prostitute themselves was deplorable, finally they regretted the live they had chosen. They drink to set their minds which called as ardent spirit. Arden spirit was a kind of cheap beer which had gotten the license production by the government in England. In her article *Prostitution of Young Female in London*, Russel wrote that the condition of these young women was deplorable, they almost brought themselves to drink ardent spirit as their only relief, and they totally became insensible to their own interests (1). Russel further stated that it had been usual to regard these young women as the daughter of misfortune (2).

3.4 The Prevention and Reform of Prostitution

There were many institutions founded by the reformers to improve the moral of prostitutes, ranging from large penitentiaries and asylums to smaller homes, aimed to rehabilitate prostitutes and make them respectable once more (Bartley 25). The institution appeared in every city and town dedicated it for the reform of female prostitutes. The reformers generally were the people who had time, desire or consciousness, social connections and money for the purpose of reforming and educating prostitutes and made them respectable (25). It means that people involved in these institutions were they who had high consciousness and desires, who wanted to spend their times and contributed their money to improve society moral around them.

In *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England*, Bartley stated " in 1860 there was a prevention done to eradicate prostitution from English society, the attempts of preventions were through discussion of attempts in reforming moral, the campaign of the social purists, and also through a close study of the Ladies Association which tried to educate society morally" (6). There was also a social organization established in 1837 and exclusively devoted themselves to the reclamation of young females that have fallen into prostitution, or been exposed to it, by closing down the places where the young females had been encouraged to sin and degradation. Another was an institution that active in children education named *nursery governesses* (Russel 2). It was responsible for the education of both boys and

girls until they reached the age of eight. Some duties of *nursery governesses* were the teaching of reading and writing. The attempts had done by some organization to prevent prostitution above; it proved us that people try to improve society moral and rid prostitution from England society. They revealed that prostitution is not a good profession for women and wanted to save children from sexual abuse.