PEOPLE'S AWARENESS TOWARDS SOCIAL ISSUE AND ITS IMPACT ON ACTUAL CHANGES IN SOCIETY

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Abstract - This study is conducted in order to find out how people's rising awareness towards certain social issue or matter affects the actual change in social structure or its society by changing the laws or regulations. In order to find the relationship between the amount of people's awareness towards social issue or matter and the following changes in society, the study looks at the correlation between British women's suffrage movement, which is well-known for developing people's awareness towards women's rights and has happened throughout 19th and 20th century, and the British government's response to the prostitution in British society in terms of laws and regulations at that time

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

Beginning from the 19th century, people started to become aware of women's rights as women's rights movement arose, and this awareness of women's rights led to the feminist movement in the 20th century. As a result, women's rights has shown great improvement since the 19th century. The most distinct event that shows the improvement of awareness towards women's rights is women's suffrage movement, which was the movement that was the first stepping stone towards the development of women's rights, and regulation of prostitution which assures the protection of the most unprotected women in the society at that time. Since protection towards prostitutes could also represent how increasing awareness towards women's rights had actually come into action, this study is conducted in order to find the relationship between women's suffrage movement and the response of government towards prostitution, which could also represent the relationship between the rise of awareness towards women's rights and its impact on the society. By this study, the conductor of study is looking forward to finding how people's awareness of certain concept could actually lead to an actual change in society, such as legislation of the law or a certain movement.

B. Scope of study

Women's suffrage movement was most active in Britain, so the main focus of the study will be Britain. The study of women's suffrage in United Kingdom will cover the time starting from around 1832 when the first reform act was enacted, until 1928 when the Conservative government gave the right to vote to all women over the age of 21 on equal terms with men by passing the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, and the study of the response of government towards prostitution will cover the time period similar to that of timeline of women's suffrage movement since the purpose of studying this is to find the relationship between the Women's suffrage movement in Britain and the response of government towards prostitution.

II. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

A. Status of women's rights at that time

During the Victorian period, roles between men and women were very distinct, and that there was this inequality between them, there is no reasonable doubt. A woman of the highest faculties is, of course, superior to a man of the lowest, but she never attains to anything like the powers of a man of the highest ability. [1] The Victorian period was marked with extreme diversities with the industrial reforms, cultural progress, scientific advancement, but also poverty and wars. At this time, social classes were identified and became part of the social structure, but the status of women and the duty given to them remained unchanged. They lived a highly restricted life, and the only duty cast upon them was to keep her husband happy and raise her children well. In earlier centuries women helped the family business, but from the 1830s, as high-class women adopted the crinoline [2], they were virtually impossible to do any work since it would make them tumble over. So, wives, daughters, and sisters were mostly staying in their home, overseeing the domestic duties that were increasingly carried out by servants.

Victorians perceived that the two sexes inhabited in different spheres and that they only came together at the dining table. This idea of Separate Spheres was based on a definition of different natural characteristics of men and women. Women were considered to have weaker physical aspects compared to men, implicating that they were suited better to the domestic sphere, while men suited better to the more public sphere where they labored all day. Women had a great influence at home, and this later became an argument that supported the people who were against women's suffrage.

Women couldn't have their abilities respected. A poem written at that time says: "The right to be a comforter … The right to cheer the drooping heart … The right to train the infant mind … The right to guide the tiny feet … The right to solace the distressed … The right to shelter the oppressed …

The right to be a bright sunbeam … The right to smile with loving gleam … The right to fan the fevered brow … Such are the noblest woman's rights, The rights which God hath given, the right to comfort man on earth and smooth his path to heaven."[3]

This poem shows how most of the people at that time believed that the only place for women was home, not to further studies or government positions, and how women were perceived as people who exist for the men. The best place for them was their family, doing domestic works, raising a family, and supporting their husband. Another lecture that was delivered on December 14, 1864, and published in 1865, also supports this idea by stating that: "woman's power is for rule, not for battle, -and her intellect is not of invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision … The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial: -to him, therefore, the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded, or subdued, often misled, and always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her."[4]

So from the documents that directly came from this time period, the fact that women were considered only to stay in their home doing domestic work has been proved, and it could be inferred that this was the status of women at that time: they couldn't do anything outside and speak up for themselves, they had to stay in their home and support her husband and her family.

B. Basic timeline of Women's suffrage movement

It is difficult to trace the history of a certain social movement pointing out to one particular date and say that the movement began on this day, so this timeline will begin from the time when the claim of women for education, their right to speak up for themselves, freedom, political rights and basic rights began being mentioned among people.

1792: Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Women," one of the earliest works of feminist philosophy, was published. [5]

1810: Sydney Smith's essay urging the claim of women to a sound literary education was published. [6]

1818: Jeremy Bentham advocated female suffrage in his book "A Plan for Parliamentary Reform." The Vestries Act 1818 allowed some single women to vote in parish vestry elections. [7]

1832: Great Reform Act specified male voting rights, and a few women were able to vote in parliamentary elections through property ownership, but this case was still rare. [8] This act confirmed the exclusion of women from the electorate.

1851: The Sheffield Female Political Association was founded and submitted a petition calling for women's suffrage to the House of Lords.

1867: Second Reform Act was passed, extending the male franchise to 2.5 million. Also, Lilly Maxwell, as a shop owner who met the property qualifications that otherwise would have made her eligible to vote had she been male, made a high-profile vote in Britain. In error, however, her name had been added to the election register and on that basis, she succeeded in voting in a by-election – her vote, however, was later declared illegal by the Court of Common Pleas. [9]

1869: Municipal Franchise Act was passed, giving single women ratepayers the right to vote in local elections. [10]

1872: National Society for Women's Suffrage was formed, and this enabled the women's suffrage movement to become a national movement.

1883: Conservative Primrose League, which was the first political organization to give women the same status and responsibilities as men, was formed.

1884: Third Reform Act was passed, increasing Male electorate to 5 million.

1889: Women's Franchise League, which was created by the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst together with her husband Richard to secure the vote for women in local elections, was established.

1894: Local Government Act enabled women who owned property to vote in local elections, become Poor Law Guardians, and act on School Boards.

1897: Led by Millicent Fawcett, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies NUWSS was formed.

1903: Led by Emmeline Pankhurst, Women's Social and Political Union WSPU was formed.

1904: Militancy began with Emmeline Pankhurst interrupting a Liberal Party meeting. [11]

1907: The Artists' Suffrage League, a suffrage society which was responsible for the creation of a large number of posters, Christmas cards, postcards and banners designed by artists, was founded

1907: The Women's Freedom League, which was created by the former members of WSPU who disagreed with Christabel Pankhurst's announcement, was founded. They opposed to violence and published weekly The Vote newspaper from 1909-1933. [12]

1908: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, a member of the small municipal borough of Aldeburgh, Suffolk, was selected as mayor of that town, being the first woman to so serve.

October 1909: The Women's Tax Resistance League, which was a group associated with the Women's Freedom League that used tax resistance to protest against the disenfranchisement of women, was founded.

November 1910: Black Friday. Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) sent a delegation of around 300 women to protest against the Conciliation Bill, and 200 were assaulted when they attempted to run past the police.

October 1912: George Lansbury, who was a labour MP, resigned his seat in support of women's suffrage.

April 1913: Cat and Mouse Act was passed, allowing hunger-striking prisoners to be released when their health was threatened and then re-arrested when they

had recovered.

June 1913: Emily Davison walked in front of, and was subsequently trampled and killed by, the King's Horse at the Epsom Derby.

March 1914: Mary Richardson slashed the Rokeby Venus painted by Diego Velázquez in the National Gallery, protesting that she was maiming a beautiful woman just as the government was maiming Emmeline Pankhurst with force feeding.

August 1914: World War was declared in Britain, and WSPU activity had been immediately ceased. Meanwhile, NUWSS activity continued peacefully – the Birmingham branch of the organization continued to lobby Parliament and write letters to MPs.

1918: The Representation of the People Act of 1918 was passed, enfranchising women over the age of 30 who were either a member or married to a member of the Local Government Register. After this act, about 8.4 million women gained the vote. [13] [14]

November 1918: the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918 was passed, allowing women to be elected to Parliament. [15]

1928: Women received the vote on the same terms as men (over the age of 21) as a result of the Representation of the People Act 1928. [16]

C. Suffragettes

Suffragettes were members of women's organizations in the late-19th and early-20th centuries who advocated the extension of the right to vote in public elections to women. They were mostly upper and middle class women, with frustration towards their social and economic situation and how they were treated by the society. Even though 'suffragist' is a more general term for the people who participated in the suffrage movement, since the term 'suffragette' is the term that is particularly associated with activists who were the members of Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the conductor thought that 'suffragette' was the more appropriate term to represent the actual active suffrage movement. The term 'suffragette' was first used by the journalist Charles E. of The Daily Mail to describe activists in the movement for women's suffrage, in particular members of the WSPU. [17]

There was also an earlier organization called The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, which formed from local suffrage societies and was led by Millicent Fawcett, but since its campaigns had little effect, most of the people started to become aware of the movement after the WSPU appeared in front of the society. The WSPU was founded by Emmeline Pankhurst, whose husband, Dr. Pankhurst was also an advocate for women's suffrage. She thought the movement would have to become radical and militant if it was going to be effective. Some radical techniques used by the suffragettes, especially hunger strikes, were learned from Russian exiles from tsarism who had escaped to England. [18]

Suffragettes wanted the vote because they looked upon it as a symbol of citizenship – in other words, a latchkey, which will open a very big door (towards additional reforms that are of vital importance to women). [19]

III. Prostitution in Britain

1. Prostitution in Britain

The earliest European laws related to prostitution were legislated in Henry II's parliament of England in 1161 to regulate conduct in brothels in the Bankside district of London. So this was the first official record of prostitution in England at that time. Before the legislation, there was no punishment for forced prostitution, and they lived at the brothels. Prostitutes were not allowed to be married, and they were required to spend a full night with their clients. [20]

In the 17th and 18th centuries, The Wandering Whore was published during the Restoration period, and listed streets where prostitutes might be found and the location of brothels. [21] Then, Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies, which described the physical appearance and sexual specialities of about 120-190 prostitutes who worked in and around Covent Garden with their addresses and prices, was published during the second half of the 18th century as a pocketbook. [22] Prostitution in 18th century Britain was something that was available for all men in any social classes, and it was an economic necessity for women who couldn't sustain their life on their own. It was tolerable in the society at that time. But towards the end of the 18th century, people began to be aware of the problem of the sex trade, and the reformers petitioned the authorities to take action.

Beginning from the 19th century, people started to denounce prostitutes, their clients, and society that was tolerating it. [23] Then the Vagrancy Act that was legislated in 1824 mentioned the term "common prostitute" for the first time and criminalized prostitutes. It also prohibited men to live on the earnings of a prostitute.

During the Victorian period, prostitution was considered a terrible evil. The Town Police Clauses Act 1847 made it an offence for common prostitutes to assemble at any "place of public resort." [24] Nevertheless, prostitution was a working class occupation, and for many women, their being involved in prostitution was one of circumstance. The rise of the middle class during the 19th century made it harder for women to obtain work, causing an increase in occupations with long hours and low pay. As a result, a considerable number of women had to resort to prostitution for their living. After this social problem, the concern regarding infested and diseased prostitutes started to emerge with the book Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, which was written by William

Acton in 1857. Prostitutes found work within the army, and since it was overcrowded and lacked sanitation, prostitution in the army did a big role in spreading the high level of venereal disease in its armed forces. [25] So the Contagious Diseases Acts were legislated in the 1860s, and the government adopted the French system of licensed prostitution in order to minimize the spread of venereal disease. Prostitutes had to get compulsory checks, and if infected or diseased, imprisoned until cured. Then, there was a nationwide crusade that was led by Josephine Butler, and it did a big role in stopping legalized prostitution. Following the crusade, The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 criminalized the act of procuring girls for prostitution, suppressed brothels and raised the age of consent for young women from 12 to 16.

In the 20th century, several attempts were made to reduce prostitution, such as the Sexual Offences Act in 1956, and the Street Offences Act in 1959. As a result, many prostitutes left the street since they feared being imprisoned.

2. Basic timeline of legislation against prostitution in Britain

The main purpose of making this timeline is to compare the timeline in section II-2 of this study, so this timeline will begin from the time close to the point where the timeline in section II-2 begins.

1751: A ban on brothel-keeping was included in the Disorderly Houses Act as part of legislation against a public nuisance.

1824: The term "common prostitute" was introduced in the Vagrancy Act, and it criminalized prostitutes and men living on the earnings of a prostitute. They punished prostitutes up to one month hard labor. [26]

1847: The Town Police Clauses Act made it an offence for common prostitutes to assemble at any "place of public resort." [27]

1857: William Acton raised public concerns that the city was the center of moral decay in Britain and was infested and diseased by prostitutes by publishing his book: Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects.

1864: The Contagious Diseases Acts were first passed, and adopted the French system of licensed prostitution, with the goal of minimizing venereal disease.

1885: The Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalized the act of procuring girls for prostitution, suppressed brothels, and raised the age of consent for young women from 12 to 16.

1956: The Sexual Offences Act made brothel keeping an offence.

1959: The Street Offences Act added new restrictions to reduce street prostitution by stating that: "It shall be an offence for a common prostitute to loiter or solicit in a street or public lace for the purpose of prostitution."

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT AND PROSTITUTION IN BRITAIN

1. Events with similar time period

For the events with the similar time period that will prove how the suffrage movement and government's response towards prostitution affected each other, the deepest correlation was found in the time period beginning from 1883 to 1889. In 1883, Conservative Primrose League, the first political organization to give women the same status and responsibilities as men, was formed. The members actively supported the league, and to keep up interest, a program of social events was organized for the membership "of which the Primrose summer fête, often held in the grounds of stately homes opened for the first time for this purpose, provided the grand annual climax." Following this event, in 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalized the act of procuring girls for prostitution, suppressed brothels, and raised the age of consent for young women from 12 to 16. This was a big change for the prostitutes, and actually, with these law amendments, prostitutes' rights were better protected. The conductor of the study sees this as a result of a change in social perception towards women's rights, as we can see from the founding of Conservative Primrose league. Finally, resulting from the changed social atmosphere in 1889, Women's Franchise League, was created by the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst to secure the vote for women ina local election. The similar time period of these three events does not seem to be a simple coincidence: it is a result of a change in social atmosphere, and the former events actually affected the following events whether the effects were direct or indirect.

2. Effects of women's suffrage movement

Looking at the social aspects, the women's suffrage movement created higher expectations for women and became the first stepping stone for the development of feminism in Britain. After the Representation of the People Act in 1928, men and women were able to have equal suffrage, and this shifted the socioeconomic makeup of the electorate towards the working class, where they favored Labor Party, which was more sympathetic to women's issues.

Men and women's equal suffrage also allowed women to run for Parliament. So after the women's suffrage movement succeeded, in 1919 and 1920, both Lady Astor and Margaret Wintringham won seats for the Conservatives and Liberals. However, the political change did not immediately bring social reforms. Women were still the most vulnerable sector of the workforce, and some women had to forfeit their jobs to returning soldiers from the war, and others were excessed. However, since they had the

experience of fighting, they were able to create new organizations such as the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship [28] and advocate for equality in social and economic areas.

Also, legislative reform was sought for discriminatory laws such as some family laws and laws related to prostitution and also over the differences between equality and equity, the accommodations that would allow women to overcome barriers to fulfillment. [29] In 1919, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act opened professions to women, and in 1924, the Labor government's social reforms created a formal split, as a splinter group of strict egalitarians formed the Open Door Council in May 1926. [30] This became an international movement and continued until 1965.

3. Effects of prostitution in Britain

Prostitution did a big role in emphasizing the unbalanced power relations between men and women in British society. The power relations continue to affect men and women's sexuality and perpetuate images of buying sex from women. Therefore, prostitution is not only seen as reinforcing gender stereotypes: it is also an expression of the idea of men's unlimited access to women's bodies and sexuality in accordance with their economic power. [31]

4. How women's suffrage movement and prostitution in Britain affected each other

The women's suffrage movement represented the amount of awareness towards women's rights at that time, and it actually did a big role in increasing people's interest towards women's rights. On the other hand, prostitution is one of the darkest sides of the society, and the government's response to the prostitution could represent how much the women's rights are actually protected in the society. As we saw in the section IV-1, women's suffrage movement effectively raised people's awareness towards women's rights, and following that rising awareness, the government actually created legislations that protected prostitutes and suppressed them at the same time.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Yonge, 1876, pg. 2
[2] Crinoline is a stiffened or structured petticoat designed to hold out a woman's skirt.
[3] Poem: Women's rights, Oxford Museum Association.
[4] Ruskin, 1865, pg. 147
[5] Stanton, 1884, pg. 4
[6] See note 5
[7] Johnston, 2013, pg. 37-39
[8] Heater, 2006, pg. 107
[9] Pugh, 2000, pg. 21
[10] Heater, 2006, pg. 136
[11] United Kingdom National Archives-Timeline of women suffrage movement
[12] The Publishers Weekly, 1909, Volume 76, Pg. 1922
[13] Fawcett, 2011, pg. 170
[14] Butler, 1954, pg. 7-12
[15] See note 13
[16] Butler, 1954, pg. 15-38
[17] Crawford, 1999, pg. 452
[18] Grant, 2011, pg. 113-143
[19] Roberts, 1910, pg. 3
[20] Evans, 1979, pg. 60–61
[21] Fraser, 1984, pg. 413–414
[22] Thomas, 1969, pg. 120
[23] Bullough, 1985, pg. 61-74
[24] Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, legislation.gov.uk
[25] Sigworth & Wyke, 1980, pg. 88-89
[26] An Act for the Punishment of idle and disorderly Persons and Rogues and Vagabonds, in that Part of Great Britain called England, pg. 698, point III
[27] See note 24
[28] The Women's Library of London School of Economics, Strand 2: Women's Suffrage Societies (2NSE Records of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship).
[29] Offen, 1995, pg. 145–151
[30] The Women's Library of London School of Economics, Strand 5: (5ODC Campaigning Organisations Records of the Open Door Council).
[31] De Miguel, A, 2012, pg. 58

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