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Closure Report for UGC-DEB Mini Project titled:

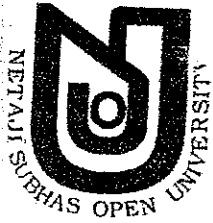
**Depictions of Womanhood in Victorian Literature:
Enriching the Post Graduate English ODL Curriculum**

FY 2015-2016

**Principal Investigator:
Dr Oindrila Ghosh
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY**

*Placed before:
The officer-in-charge
School of Humanities
For kind perusal.*

*Oghosh
08/03/17*



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY
School of Humanities

Established By Act (W.B. Act (XIX) of 1997 and Recognised by U.G.C.)

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Date: 08.03.2017

UGC-DEB Mini Project Titled: "Depictions of Womanhood in Victorian Literature: Enriching the Post Graduate English Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Curriculum", sanctioned vide Office order: AC/650 dated 03/03/2016.

Principal Investigator: Dr Oindrila Ghosh

Sanctioned Amount: 25,000/-

Duration of Research: Approximately Seven months

About the Research Project: The Project aimed for research and enhancement of scholarship in the active and burgeoning field of Victorian and Neo-Victorian studies, as well as incorporating its relevance to our own curriculum where the Victorian period and its literary pieces form a core section of the Post Graduate

English course. It thus aimed at providing greater scope for research in the segment to scholars interested in Victorian literature as well as for creating a readymade source of reference for the learners of this University.

Initial Objectives:

The objective of this research was to study the diverse and interesting portrayal of woman and womanhood in the entire gamut of Victorian literature; to analyze how far such depiction adhered to, endorsed or departed from Victorian generalizations about the role of women and to enquire after any attempt, in literature, by the writers of the age to treat women as human rather than simplifying and polarizing them into labels of the 'angel in the house', as popularized by Coventry Patmore, or the 'fallen woman', an image made popular by fiction and media, and to what success or under what opposition or censure. Though topical the project sought to be relevant to our present times where society still tries to construct and straitjacket womanhood through generalizations and one-dimensional labels. It is interesting to study the precarious position of the Victorian woman caught between the domestic space and public sphere. Victorian domesticity, marriage and child-rearing shrouded the values of female purity, corroborated by the biological implications of motherhood, stability and sanctity. On the extreme opposite pole were the public

spheres of street and brothel, the symbolic haunts of the 'fallen woman', whose fall however was of wider significance and resonances than the Original Fall of Man, as to the Victorian moral code it meant sexual activity out of wedlock and hence unpardonable. It aimed to be seminal for future studies locating the rise in literature, of the voice and image of the woman, so long repressed by patriarchal pronouncements and voyeurism. Of special significance would be the upcoming research on the later Victorian novelists such as Hardy, Moore, Gissing and others who contributed diversely to the looming 'Woman Question' and the rise of the 'New Woman'; also, the connections, if any, which the British writers at this time established with their American counterparts.

In actuality all this, and more, was achieved through research conducted at archival resources, inputs from senior academicians and fresh scholars researching in Victorian domains, through online and other digital resources. In addition to the emergent image of the British woman in socio-literary sources of Britain it was an additional achievement to be able to incorporate the status of British women in India under the colonial situation, through their letters, non-fictional and fictional accounts which are fundamental to our understanding of the nineteenth century woman in Britain and India.

Methodology Followed:**a) Archival Research:**

The research was conducted chiefly through archival work, on-line and digital resources, including physical visits to well-equipped libraries.

b) Interview and Interactions:

Apart from consultations of digital and printed sources, much of the research has also been undertaken through interviewing established scholars and teachers of Victorian studies, in order to work out the logistics of enriching and expanding a limited syllabus through discussions and opinions regarding the methodology of such enrichment and the nuances of theoretical studies on the area. Along with these I have been able to convince upcoming scholars to share their research with this project to eventually enrich the quality of the syllabus for Victorian literature and make it less traditional and more eclectic.

c) International Colloquium:

The Project also included the organisation of an International Colloquium on Nineteenth century Bengali Women and White Doctors in Colonial Bengal as part of the Project, with Professor Emerita of SUNY, USA, Geraldine Forbes sharing her extensive research on the subject. The colloquium, thus, further