PREFACE

In our country, vitiligo is one of the major dermatological problems because of its higher incidence, conspicuously visible, cosmetic disfigurements, tremendous psychological sufferings and complex social stigma arising out of various erroneous notions about it. From humanitarian point of view also, this emotionally painful malady although physically benign is a matter of concern for the society at large and the bio psychosocial community in particular. Attention was drawn in one of his speeches by no less a person than our Late Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru in no uncertain terms specifying Leucoderma as one of the three important diseases in India, the two others being tuberculosis and leprosy.

The disease “vitiligo” captured my attention when few years back I had the chance to go through a book entitled “Vitiligo: Neural and Immunologic Linkages” written by Dr. A.K. Dutta, M.D., PhD., M.A.M.S., D.T.M., & H.D. DERMAT, F.I.M.S.A.

All aspects of the problems related to vitiligo have been viewed and analysed in the book from a basic biological point of view: not just vitiligo but as far as possible the why and how of its manifestations have been discussed. The study of the book inspired me to carry on research work on the vitiligo patients from psychosocial point of view since the book though it discussed biological aspects in detail but it seemed to me that psycho-social aspects of vitiligo associated with the disease were not discussed vividly.

When I expressed my idea to some of my friends and teachers, all of them were impressed and not only this, a few of them
encouraged me to carry on the study with the promise that they would render every possible help to complete it.

When I accepted the assignment, to my utter surprise, I was cautioned by some of my friends to not to touch the patients while collecting data. According to them, I might get contaminated with the disease, but somehow I managed to convince them that the disease was not contagious and hence was able to surmount the obstacles erected by some of them.

I have had the unique opportunity to be associated with the prestigious National Medical College, Kolkata and vividly remember the experience of the first day of collecting data from the indoor and outdoor patients and interact with them and their staff on a personal basis. It was then that I witnessed the psychological turmoil of a good number of vitiligo patients undergoing treatment in the hospital. The patients stared at me with wistful eyes, as if I was the saviour of them, as if I could emancipate them from the bondage of all curses, social repression and ostracization. I was amazed at this sight and took a firm resolution to resolve their problems, atleast to some extent, through the findings of this research work and their subsequent application.

It was the same at the R.G.Kar Medical College, Kolkata. As I went on collecting data, I became more and more acquainted with the sorry plight of the patients groaning under the heavy burden of severe mental agony as a result of poor interpersonal relationships with their families due to prejudiced mind of the common people about these patients (who were termed in some cases as “cursed souls”) and being totally rejected by the family members sometimes
leading to deep-rooted feelings of loneliness, helplessness and hopelessness. Not only this, the cosmetic disfigurements in some patients caused them to express their anxiety about marriage prospects. Diminished self-concept, anxiety, depression and aggression towards self and society were also expressed to me by these wretched individuals which further prompted me to assess the attitude of the people towards them. However, the cycle did not end there; the spouses, siblings and children of these patients also suffered from anxiety and depression and moreover their spouses exhibited some level of difficulty in adjusting to the new body image of the patient (especially in case of female patients, they become wary of a real fear of rejection) and these factors lead to excessive worry, "avoidable discomfort and even inappropriate self-medication on the part of the patient. Hence, the need for timely and appropriate counseling of these patients is undeniable.

In course of my research, I had consulted many books on the subject of vitiligo and these books discussed the biological aspects of the disease in great detail but, surprisingly, did not touch on the indelible psychological aspects associated with the disease. Therefore, I directly approached some Dermatologists to ascertain how far my present topic of research ( "Self-Concept, Anxiety and Depression of Vitiligo Cases and People's Attitude towards them") would be of use in throwing some light on the psychological needs of patients undergoing treatment. All of them emphatically agreed and encouraged me to proceed with the research work with the hope that the findings would enhance their understanding of the patients counseling needs in the course of the treatment.
I remember how much encouragement I received from the Director, Head of the Departments and other personnels of National Medical College, Kolkata and R.G.Kar Medical College, Kolkata when I approached them and explained to them the aims and objectives of the study. All of them with strong conviction endorsed the need for such a study in our country. In this context I must express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sukumar Jana- H.O.D. Department of Dermatology, National Medical College and H.O.D. of R.G.Kar Medical College Kolkata for rendering me every kind of help needed for collection of data from the patients.

For framing the outline plan of the present research work and subsequent guidance and supervision I must not fail to express my gratitude to my research guide Prof. Dipesh Chandra Nath (Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Kolkata). This major task would not have been undertaken if I was not highly charged and inspired by my guide.

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To complete my research work during these years under different circumstances I had to consult with the Faculties of Department of Applied Psychology and Department of Psychology on different occasions.
I also acknowledge the help of the librarians of Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta and National Library, Kolkata for providing me with valuable books and journals, as and when sought for and use them till the time I required.

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encouraging and standing by me through every step in conducting this research work.

As this study is a venture on my part, hence there might have remained some lacunae in the study; therefore, without any tall claim, I would request my learned examiners to point out all those for the perfection of the study in future.

Department of Applied Psychology
University of Calcutta
92, A.P.C. Road
Kolkata-700009
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Rituparna Ghosh
Research student
Calcutta University