The origin, development and advancement of human civilization have been uniquely influenced by science. From the time immemorial mankind has tried to develop knowledge about the management of bodily discomfort. This knowledge was an essential part of his struggle for existence. The seminal role of medicine in engendering progress of the human civilization is undeniable. India was inhabited by mankind from its early days of prehistoric period and its scientific heritage dates back to antiquity. It witnessed the life at Indus Valley Civilization at a period of history when very few countries in this world had such an advanced state of civilized society. This Indus Valley Civilization was a result of ages of experience and formed the cradle of the modern Indian civilization which we see at present. The famous historian Sir V. Gordon Childe has aptly mentioned that the Indus Valley Civilization represented 'a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort .......It is specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture.'

The wise men of ancient India developed the faculty of observation and speculation that led not only to the beginning of theology and primitive religion, but also laid the foundation of the scientific thinking. They not only excelled in sciences like Astronomy, Mathematics, Geometry and Chemistry but also developed Ayurveda--a very well systematized system of thinking on aetiology, diagnoses, management and prognoses of diseases. The application of the advanced conception of hygiene in the planning of the cities of the Indus Valley Civilization is an example of developed scientific vision of the ancient Indians. In the later days of Aryan period they not only observed keenly the movement of the heavenly bodies or offered the concept which explained that sound and light were only two different manifestation of the same energy, but also they listed a number of herbs and organic and inorganic substances for the treatment of various diseases of human being as well as animals around their household.
India has a glorious past of advanced scientific knowledge but the history of science has remained a neglected field of study. It has been rightly observed by eminent historian Dr. Kalidas Nag that in our country very few historians have studied science and very few scientists have cared for the history of science. The same story holds well in case of the medical science. Very little work has been done on the history of medicine of the magnificent past of this country and more so in case of dermatology as no organized study has been undertaken on this subject so far.

When we go through the ancient medical texts we find the fascinating mention of the classification of leprosy, the treatment of leucoderma with psoralens in *Bakuchi*, the plastic reconstruction of the injured and deformed nose by grafting and many other interesting matters. The subject was not only confined to the treatment of diseases but also took equal care for the aesthetic aspect which was evidenced in the description of treatment of gray hairs as well as dying of it. The subject of *Dinacharya* was an exhaustive description of daily activities to maintain a sound and perfect health.

This present work is engaged with the study of dermatology in India since the ancient period. The subject of dermatology has remained mostly a part of internal medicine though many a time we see a significant mention of various dermatological disorders in surgical literatures of the past. Therefore a brief history of general medicine and surgery could not be avoided and included where it was relevant. The development and decline of science, arts, religion etc. are intimately related to the socio-economic and political situation of the country or region and as this is a study of history and evolution of dermatological science, sometimes references to the history of the contemporary period was mentioned.

This work records the history and evolution of ‘Dermatology’ as a specialty of medicine in India. The history of any subject is a study of the journey from its beginning up to the attainment of the present state. This present work is a compilation and study of the emergence and development of dermatology to the greatly advanced shape of the present time. The first chapter of section –A of this study discusses about the definition, brief comments on evolution, present scenario and future prospect of dermatology; the second chapter of same section analyses about the necessity of the knowledge of history of a subject and goes through a brief discussion of dermatology in different countries in
present and past. The content of the section-B deals with dermatology of prehistoric era and evolution of the subject in Vedic literatures and literatures of the post-Vedic period. This portion also goes through the dermatology in the light of Siddha system of medicine that evolved to a great peak with a different philosophy in the southern part of the country. The next section is engaged with the discourses on the state of Ayurveda in the medieval period and sees how Unani ---an entirely new system of medicine from foreign land entered and flourished in this country. The section-D is associated with history of dermatology in this country in the last three hundred years. This period witnessed the entry of the Europeans along with a new culture from a distant land. They introduced Allopathic system of medicine which in the course of time had grown into the main mode of treatment of present day. This section also discusses about other systems of medicine like Homoeopathy and various other alternative systems of medicine that are practiced far and wide in this country for the alleviation of agony of the ailing people. The next section has undertaken the task of discussion and concluding remarks of this study.

This study has tried to enumerate the important land marks in the history of dermatology, some important books that may be of immense help in this form of study in future, though the list is far from exhaustive. An entire section has been devoted to botanical names of the herbs mentioned in this study that may be helpful for the identification of the herbs which bear multiple names in different language and culture. In this modern era of world-wide-web and e-connectivity different web sites pour us with innumerable information on any and every subject, therefore a small list of various web sites and e-addresses are included in a different section that may be found helpful in the study of history of dermatology.

The diacritical marks and transliteration have been avoided for the convenience of printing as well as reading of the study. Finally the very purpose of this study was not only confined with the compilation of the evolution of dermatology in this country but also to evoke critical thinking on the history of medicine that would encourage scholastic studies on the subject further.