

In The Womb of the Past: A Bioarchaeological Study on the Health Profile of Children in Pre-historic and Proto-historic India

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Abstract: During the last few decades, bioarchaeological practitioners have been trying to get an integrated picture of the past by applying the biocultural model to study skeletal remains. Research endeavour on biocultural adaptation of the past, based on the adult skeletal remains gained significant recognition in the academia, but the sub-adult skeletal remains never received substantial attention. Other than estimation of age and sex, systematic examination of sub-adult skeletal remains can provide a complete picture of the morbidity pattern and their age-wise prevalence at the time of death of the children of past society. Thus, the interwoven nature of palaeopathology and palaeodemography has been useful for understanding the health profile of the ancient population. For example, pathological lesions like, Harris line, enamel hypoplasia (EH), porotic hyperostosis, periostitis, and so on that caused a detrimental effect on the health of the overall sub-adult population have made a significant appearance with the gradual emergence of agriculture. This research paper aims at providing an insight into the health profile of the children in the Indian archaeological context (up to Chalcolithic period) by using palaeopathological data as a primary tool. The entire work is based on secondary data i.e. published reports and monographs. During the course of this work, no attempt has been made to restudy any skeletal remain. Published work on well represented and well-documented sites like, Mesolithic (Damdama), Neolithic (Budihal), and Chalcolithic Deccan (Dimabad, Nevasa, Inamgaon, Walki, and Kaothe) has been compiled for this work. A gradual shift in the subsistence pattern has left a significant impact on the overall sub-adult population of the past in the form of different pathological lesions. The research involves an examination of the nature of pathological lesions found on the sub-adult skeletons, more precisely the emergence of pathological lesions and their probable biocultural connotation.

Key words : Bioarchaeology, palaeopathology, sub-adult, palaeodemography, Enamel hypoplasia, Harris line