

## **First Palaeopathological Example of Dental Abscess from Pre-historic Sri Lanka**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sri Lanka is an island off the tip of southeast of Indian subcontinent and possesses a pre-historic human skeletal record covering 34,000 years, which is inclusive of Meolithic period, Iron age and Historic period. Interestingly, the oldest skeletal remains of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* (37 000 BP) reported from the South Asian region were discovered from the cave site, *Fahien-lena*. The archaeological excavation of *Pallemalala shell midden* in the southern part of the island was conducted by the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya in 1997 and yielded six human skeletons, with additional fragments of human and faunal remains, together with stone implements belonging to the Mesolithic culture. Gross morphological analysis indicates abundant and well preserved dental evidences when compared to poor skeletal preservation. Among the collection, there is a left part of a mandible aged around 35-45 years of a male person with the evidence of a large dental abscess cavity associated with the antimortem tooth lost. The reports of palaeopathological conditions on skeletal materials are very rare and this finding highlights the very first dental abscess encountered in Pallemalala population who lived in 4500 BP in Sri Lanka. Since such dental pathology has the potential to provide insights into the composition of the diet, this will open a research path to determine disease progress with evolution.

*Keywords: Pathology, dental abscess, skeletal remains, Sri Lanka*

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