

Nature vs nurture in early human development

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Most attributes of human beings, like emotional stability, sociability, and psychiatric illnesses are a result of interaction between genetic and environmental factors. Experts are of the opinion that even innate biological attributes are modifiable by environmental factors. A good example of this is the development of congenital anomalies and other problems in the fetus consequent to exposure to infectious diseases, maternal malnutrition, maternal smoking, and maternal alcoholism. Similarly, while the development of milestones is programmed genetically and all children go through similar milestones at similar ages, some research has shown that achievement of milestones, to some extent depends on the stimulation. Similar features were noted in speech development. While newborns are born with functioning sensory, the development of the sensory systems depends on environmental stimulation. For example, at birth newborns watch only flashing lights or ridges and movements of the head. They however gradually learn to recognize faces and identify them. Newborns start at loud noises and turn their heads towards the sound. But this disappears at 6 weeks and reemerges at 3-4 months age when the infant even turns the eyes towards the source of the sound. Speech development occurs based on the perception of sounds. Babies also have taste sensation and touch sensation and have a preference for sweet taste and different types of touch. Their expressions of different tastes are different. They also have good olfactory sensation and behave differently with different types of odors. Thus, it can be said that though the biological development of human beings is based on heredity, interactions with the environment are also a major factor in the development, and human beings are equipped with sensory perception right from birth to be subjected to environmental

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stimulation.

Conclusion

Since time immemorial, the debate as to whether human development is based on nature or nurture is an interesting topic. However, recent researchers are of the opinion that both nature and nurture are essential for human development and in fact various attributes in the development of newborn towards adulthood is based on the interaction between the two with newborns being equipped with all sensory systems to perceive environmental stimulation.