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An Evolutionary Perspective of Darwinism!

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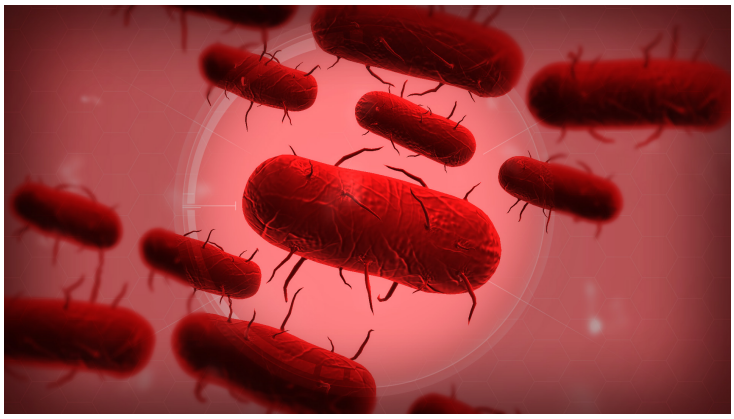

Union minister of state for human resource development, Satyapal Singh had stated last month that the Darwin's theory of evolution was scientifically wrong and proposed to drop it from the school and college curriculum. This compelled the scientific community to raise their voices against political interference in the field of science.

To remove the doubts being planted in the minds of the common people about the theory of evolution, and demonstrate with evidence how humans evolved from apes, scientists from across the country celebrated 'Darwin Week' from Feb 12- 18, 2018. It was organised by The India March for Science Organising Committee and the Breakthrough Science Society.

During the week, scientists initiated a special drive to reach out to the people to disseminate Darwin's theory of organic evolution through natural selection, which states that life evolved from single-celled organisms over a course of millions of years.

Through a series of workshops and seminars, scientists asserted that Darwin's theory of evolution offers the correct explanation of the observed evolution in nature and is no longer a subject of debate within the scientific community.

Born on February 12 in 1809, Charles Darwin is best known for his contributions to the science of evolution. He established that all species of life have descended over time from common ancestors, which means that humans and monkeys had a common ancestor at some point in history.

"The Theory of Evolution, in the most straightforward definition, explains the descent of single-cell organisms into complex beings through periodic genetic mutations that help it adapt to its surroundings better. Any organism we see around us, from the smallest of ticks to the largest of trees and whales, have all evolved from single-celled organisms", shares Dr Soumitro Banerjee, Associate Professor, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, Kolkata.

Evolutionary biology is not a branch of biology the way immunology or biochemistry are. Rather, it is a unifying conceptual framework within which facts from all of biology get coherently arranged. Biology without evolution would be like chemistry

without the knowledge of the periodic table and reaction mechanisms: an arbitrary collection of facts.

“An evolutionary perspective sheds light on issues of great societal relevance like why and how we age, how epidemics spread and new pathogenic strains arise, how to improve crops and domesticated animals, how to tackle the evolution of multi-drug resistance in bacteria, why the sudden explosion of the so-called lifestyle diseases, to cite just a few examples”, points out Dr Amitabh Joshi, Professor, Evolutionary Biology, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru.

Promising modern biological approaches like marker-assisted selection, biomedical genomics, epidemiology, and bioinformatics are all based upon a strong underlying foundation of (Darwinian) evolutionary theory.