



Same-Sex Behavior in Rhesus Macaques

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Why in News?

A recent study conducted by researchers from Imperial College London, titled "**Genetics, Social Environment and Evolution of Male Same-Sex Behavior in Rhesus Macaques**," has challenged conventional beliefs about **same-sex behaviour (SSB) in animals**.

- The engagement of animals in SSB has been considered a '**Darwinian paradox**': **if reproduction is critical to evolution, then SSB - which is non-reproductive - should have ceased to exist.**
- This recent study found that **male SSB in rhesus macaques is very common** and doesn't harm evolution.

What are the Key Findings from the Study?

- **Male Same-Sex Behavior (SSB) in Monkeys:**
 - The study focuses on **male same-sex** mounting behaviour observed in **rhesus macaques, a common monkey model, in Cayo Santiago, an island east of Puerto Rico.**
 - 72% of observed male rhesus macaques engaged in same-sex mounting.
 - Only 46% participated in different-sex mounting.
 - It challenges the notion that SSB contradicts principles of evolution due to its non-reproductive nature.
- **Role of Non-Genetic Factors:**
 - The study considers external factors like **social interactions** and the environment.
 - These non-genetic elements contribute to the expression of SSB behaviour in male rhesus macaques.
 - SSB-engaging monkeys form coalitions against common enemies.
 - Male SSB could serve as a form of emotional communication and regulation.
- **No Trade-off with Reproductive Fitness:**
 - The study disputes the assumption that **SSB reduces reproductive opportunities, as sexually active males engage in both SSB and different-sex sexual behaviour (DSB).**
 - **There is no direct correlation between SSB engagement and reduced offspring count in the macaque population.**
- **Future Research:**
 - Female SSB and other monkey species require further investigation to broaden understanding.
 - The findings cannot be directly extrapolated to humans due to cultural and social influences.

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