

UGC Approved Journal No – 49297  
(IIJIF) Impact Factor - 5.262

Regd. No. : 1687-2006-2007

ISSN 2231-4113

# *Śodha Pravāha*

*(A Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Refereed Research Journal)*

*Editor : S. B. Poddar*

**VOL. 15**

**ISSUE I**

**JANUARY  
2025**

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# Review of Eckart Voland and Wulf Schiefenhövel, *The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior*

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*Eckart Voland and Wulf Schiefenhövel have provided in “The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior” an inter disciplinary approach of the biological antecedents to religiousness. The written material investigates cognitive, neurological, and sociobiological paradigms as a means to provide a non-pathological explanation of religious activity. This book review summarizes ideas presented in the text, evaluates the role of that text within the context of evolutionary anthropology, and discusses further research prospects.*

**Keywords:** Human Evolution; Anthropology; Faith; Cognition; Biosociology; Adjustment.

## Introduction

The book gives the readers an account of the biological and evolutionary factors that delineated religious conduct. It does this by posing a threat to plausible authoritative paradigms by examining the role that natural selection played in the continuation of religiousness. The editors’ work offers articles from various fields, from evolutionary psychology to neurobiology, and should be considered essential for anyone studying religion from a scientific perspective.

## Key Themes

1. **Adaptation and Function:** Religiousness may be viewed as a survival advantage that helped humans to survive, according to the authors. Some chapters talk of how spirituality helps in coping with the general anxiety in life and creates unity in the group.
2. **Cognitive Foundations:** The book explores cognitive intuitions including agency detection, intuitive theologizing, and teleological cognition suggesting that such advantages make up religion.
3. **Social Bonding:** It is demonstrated that rituals and common religious activities contribute to better interpersonal relations and successful group functioning in the conditions of intergroup conflict.
4. **Neurobiological Correlates:** Outcomes focus on how religious phenomena relate to synaptic mechanisms and systems such as dopamine modulation and bilateral asymmetry in the brain.
5. **Evolutionary Perspectives:** The contributors argue that religious behavior emerged either as an adaptation or as a side effect of other adaptive adaptations which leads to the discussions regarding the nature of religious evolution.

## Methodological Strengths

1. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The work itself is a synthesis of anthropological, psychological and neuroscientific approaches to the study of religious beliefs and their evolution.
2. **Empirical Insights:** Neuroimaging results, cross cultural analysis, and behavioral tests give strong support to the evolutionary theories found earlier.
3. **Theoretical Innovations:** There are new concepts developed in the book — for instance,

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the connection between shamanistic activities and afflictive diseases that contributed to enhancing the understanding of religion's positive roles for human addictiveness.

Future Research Directions

1. Comparative Studies: Perhaps, similar comparisons with other existing species may more uncover early developments of spirituality in the species.
2. Integration with Cognitive Science: The book creates a foundation on which evolutionary anthropology and cognitive science could work together in the study of consciousness and belief.
3. Technological Implications: It may provide valuable information about the nature of religious cognition and how to use it to design better interaction between computers and people.

**Conclusion**

The book, "The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior" presents a view on the evolutionary origin of religiousness. Voland and Schiefenhövel, building on empirical evidence and theoretical contributions, contribute to the understanding of religion as the natural human practice. It should make fascinating and required reading for those in evolutionary anthropology, cognitive science, and philosophy.

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