

# Understanding Cell from Different Perspectives and Its Implications for Leadership Process

Kul Prasad Khanal,  
Under Secretary, Education Review Office(ERO), Ministry of Education.

## Abstract

*The unit of human body is conceptualized in various ways. From spiritual perspective, this unit is honored as ultimate reality, the 'Brahma'; physical scientists regard it as the 'Nucleus' and similarly, biologically this unit is described as the term commonly known as 'Cell' itself. This tiniest amount of mass, in this sense, is the representative of body as it carries all the characteristics of the entire body. This obviously indicates that this tiny but essential mass provides direction to the big mass-the body. Drawing this metaphor to leadership process, a cell, though it is very small in size and shape, influences and determines the direction of the followers. We find several references of Brahma in the Upanishads that Brahma or Supreme Self is the most subtle entity and invisible form of energy as well. It symbolizes the unborn and the eternal energy of the Universe and is expressed in the form of syllable "OM". Leadership, in this way, is understood as an art of manipulating various cells (humans) for the benefit of institutions and the individuals. To understand cell with reference to leadership process, this paper deals with the cell from the vantage point of Marx's hunger thesis, John Holt's fear thesis, Freud's sex thesis and Omkarbadi's Brahmand thesis, thereby leading to the synthesized complementary scheme for reform in leadership process in education. Methodology used was basically content analysis and interaction with educational personnel in-charge of educational leadership in Nepal.*

## Key words

Brahma, Thesis, Sex, Hunger, Fear, OM, Upanishad, Cell, Leadership.

## Introduction

Human body is made up of infinite number of cells. When compared to the Brahma-the huge static cosmic energy- the human body is regarded as a part of this cosmos. In this vein, if the body is regarded as the huge cosmos, every tiny cell in the body constitutes the existence of whole body system. Cell as a minimum unit of the system, contributes to the functioning of the body. Modern science has proved that single cell can represent not only the whole body but the entire cultural and hereditary features of being. Such an essentially significant cell is viewed variedly by various philosophers and philosophical thoughts. Focus of Marxist's view is on earning daily bread and butter while Freud views the cell from the point of view of sex instincts. Similarly, John Holt gives emphasis on his thesis of fear in connection with the teaching and learning and Hindu Omkarwadi think the ultimate Brahma to the immediate necessities as the food in hunger time, respiration for life, happiness and self-satisfaction for wellbeing, appropriate knowledge against the ignorance and content and satisfaction gained from the task

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performed. When leadership is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2013), leadership role of the institution head seems crucial to align the differentiated cell of the followers to the achievement of desired results.

Leadership here is conceptualized as an art of manipulating various cells for the benefit of the institutions and the individuals as well. In this paper, I am going to unpack the understanding of human cell from Marx's hunger thesis, Freud's sex thesis, Jonh Holt's fear thesis, and Omkarbandis' Brahmanda thesis i.e. *annam branma, pranaum brahma, manam brahma, gyanm brahma, and anandam brahma* relation. At the end, on the basis of understanding reached, I attempted to develop a complementary theory that helps to converge different knowledge systems to address the fractured future of Nepal through leadership process. To come up with the synthesized view, I have reviewed the books, journals, newspaper articles and other related documents and made the content analysis using the qualitative methods of creating code categories and interpretation. To verify this theoretical perspectives, I created the focus group discussion points with school head teachers and teacher trainers working in the district.

### Understanding Cell from Marx's Hunger Thesis

Karl Marx saw capitalism as a setting that distorts humanity, whereas communism would be a setting in which humanness would be allowed to express itself (Ritzer, 2000). According to Marxist view, it is the capitalist economic system that creates alienation of human being resulting a revolt against those who have owned the property. Marxist's theory views that as long as the productivity of labor remains at a level where one man can only produce enough for his own subsistence, social division does not take place and any social differentiation within society is impossible. Under these conditions, all men are producers and they are all at the same economic level (Mandel, 2002). According to Marx, income inequality is inherent in the wages system. He argues that wages must cover not only basic subsistence to maintain the body but also some socially defined wants to keep the worker relatively content and to fuel economic growth (Peet, 1975). Marxists hold the view that unless a man is able to satisfy his hunger, he cannot think beyond it. Leadership consideration at this point needs to be ushered to understand the needs of the hungry cells –the followers. When human cells, the constituent parts, are nourished with enough food, then only the whole body which is made up of the cells can work and think creatively. Marxist view of hunger thesis can also be linked with Maslow's first hierarchy of needs-physiological needs (<http://www.abraham-maslow.com>). This theory maintains that human cell the representatives of the body and ultimately the entire cosmos-the Brahma, require the food as the basic need for its existence.

### Understanding Cell from Freud's Sex Thesis

Freud claims that sexuality goes to the heart of human being. He treats sexuality as a drive and instinct which is in the service of this deeper and more encompassing force in human being (Jonathon, 2005). Freud's libido theory saw sexual impulses as instinctive drives which built up and demanded expression and relief-the pleasure principle, but which were kept in check by the ego, which inhibited relief when it conflicted with the need for survival-the reality principle (Goodwach, 2005). Freud elaborated the theory that the mind is a complex energy-system. He articulated and refined the concepts of the unconscious, of infantile sexuality, of

repression, and proposed a tripartite (*id*, *ego*, and *super-ego*) account of the mind's structure (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/freud/>). And even more important influence on Freud, however, came from the field of physics (Beeley, 1931). This principle states, in effect, that the total amount of energy in any given physical system is always constant, that energy can be changed but not removed, and consequently when energy is moved from one part of the system it must reappear in another part. It means that all living organisms, including the humans, are essentially the energy systems. Freud effectively redefined it in the form of sex instinct which can be derived from the body (Golding, 1982). In this way, Freud maintained that human life is the dance between death and love instincts. Viewing present life as just equilibrium between Eros and Thanatos (Manish, 1993), leadership behaviors also need a balance of creative tension created between two extremes of life and death.

Discussing on the major contributions of critical theory from subjectivity perspectives in sociology Ritzer (2005) examines that although people are controlled, imbued with false needs and anesthetized, in Freudian terms they are also endowed with a libido (broadly conceived as sexual energy), which provides the basic source of energy for creative action oriented towards the overthrow of the major forms of domination. Here the sex instinct has been regarded by the critical theorists as a driving force or energy to maintain the social harmony in the society. From this perspectives human cell is found full of energy in the form of sex instincts which could be metaphorically used by even the sociologist in matters of social adjustment. Linked with Freud's sex thesis is the psychodynamic approach to leadership. An important underlying assumption in the psychodynamic approach is that the personality characteristics of individuals, being deeply ingrained, are very difficult to change in any significant way. The key is to accept one's own personality characteristics and quirks, understand the effect they have on followers, and accept the features and idiosyncrasies of followers (Northouse, 2013). When this characteristic of cell is identified by both by the followers and the leaders could be developed in a more harmonious manner.

## 1. Understanding cell from John Holt's Fear Thesis

John Holt held the view that the primary reason children did not learn in schools was fear: fear of getting the wrong answers, fear of being ridiculed by the teacher and classmates, fear of not being good enough. He maintained that this was made worse by children being forced to study things that they were not necessarily interested in. Furthermore, Holt argues that children fail primarily 'because they are afraid, bored, and confused.' This combined with misguided teaching strategies and a school environment that is disconnected from reality and 'real learning', results in a school system that kills children's innate desire to learn (Holt, 1964). At the end John Holt reached the conclusion stating that, 'The most important thing any teacher has to learn can be expressed in seven words: *Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners.* Cell here is also recognized as self-identity of a personality which always wants to be liberated and engaged in a fearless environment. Creating free and fearless environment for this cell of students or subordinates in the educational intuitions can create a positive energy that ultimately leads to the success of both individual and institutions.

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## 2. Understanding Cell from Omkarbadi's Brahmand Thesis (annam brahma, pranaum brahma, manam brahma, gyanm brahma, and anandam brahma relation)

Found first in the Vedic scriptures of Hinduism, *Aum* (ॐ) has been seen as the first manifestation of the un-manifested Brahman-the single Divine Ground of Hinduism that resulted in the phenomenal universe ( [www.hindujagruti.org](http://www.hindujagruti.org) ). Essentially, it is all the cosmos stems from the vibration of the *Om* sound '*Aum*' in Hindu cosmology. Indeed, the word is so sacred that it is prefixed and suffixed to all Hindu mantras and incantations. It is undoubtedly the most representative symbol of Hinduism. Gods and Goddesses are sometimes referred to as *Aumkar*, which means Form of *Aum*, thus implying that who are limitless, the 'vibrational' whole of the cosmos. In Hindu metaphysics, it is proposed that the manifested cosmos has name and form (*nama-rupa*), and that the closest approximation to the name and form of the universe is *Aum*, since all existence is fundamentally composed of vibration. This concept of describing reality as vibrations, or rhythmic waves, can also be found in quantum physics and super string theory, which describe the universe in terms of vibrating fields or strings ([www.hindujagruti.org](http://www.hindujagruti.org) ). In Advaita Vedanta, in essence, *Aum* is the signifier of the ultimate truth that all is one. Dvaita (*Vaishnava*) philosophies teach that '*Aum*' is an impersonal sound representation of Vishnu/Krishna while *Hari Nama* is the personal sound representation. We find the reference in Hindu scriptures that '*A*' represents Krishna, '*U*' *Radha* and '*M*' *jivas*. The *prana* has five parts: A, U, M, the nasal *bindu* and the reverberation (*nada*). It is said to be the most perfect 'approximation' of the cosmic existence within time and space, and therefore the sound closest to Truth. In this way the *Om* is seen as a part and parcel of human body and existence from Omkarbadi perspectives.

Food is regarded itself as Brahman (*annam* Brahman) in Hinduism. The whole universe originates from, sustains on, and merges in to Brahman. Similarly all living beings originate from and survive on and merge into food. In the Vishnu *Sahasranam*, food (*bhojan* and *bhokta*) as well as its consumers are respected as Lord Vishnu. -ef]hgfo gdM, ef]Qmfo gdM\_ ' Food is regarded as a vehicle for the subtle body (*linga deha*). In the cycle of life and death, an individual is reborn on the earth after experiencing the results of his good deeds in heaven. The *Chhandyogya* Upanishad states, 'That which gives strength is superior to strength, and it is metaphorically called here *anna*, food (Gita Press, 2071). The millions of cells in the body are formed from food and food provides the energy required for functioning of the body. Hence the *Taittiriya* Upanishad as cited in ([www.hindujagruti.org](http://www.hindujagruti.org) ) mentions the body as '*annamaya kosha*', the sheath derived from food. *Charakacharya* states that a body is derived from food (b]xf] cxf/;+ej\_ We find that all the substances in the universe are directly or indirectly the food of another, e.g. plants prepare foods from the five cosmic elements (*panchamahabhutas*), namely earth (*prithivi*), water (*apa*), fire (*tej*), air (*vayu*) and ether (*akash*). Plants constitute food from animal and human beings. The human body is formed from food. After death the body merges into five cosmic elements, i.e the body becomes food for the five cosmic elements. Thus the cycle continues. All living beings are formed from food. They sustain and grow on food. Thus food is indispensable for living creatures. Hence, *Taittiriya* Upanishad mentions that food (*anna*) itself is Brahman ([www.hindujagruti.org](http://www.hindujagruti.org) ).

*Anandam* (happiness or contentment) remains the single most pursuit of human beings. Everyone seeks it but no one knows where to find it. Happiness is the undying quest of life, the unquenchable thirst and the insatiable hunger of all human kind. Happiness is what we all

seek for, what we long for. But can such bliss be nothing but an elusive state of mind, which is here one moment and gone the next, or is such a positive outlook attainable for a lifetime? Perhaps it is, it just is. In *Yoga (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali)*, movement or positions, breathing practices, and concentration, as well as the *yamas* and *niyamas*, can contribute to a physical state of contentment (*santosh*). <http://en.wikipedia.org> . So long as we are content with what we do leads to the *ananda* or happiness in life. Here the human cell, identity of personal being is understood as having *ananda* or happiness is the ultimate reality - the *Brahma*.

Since the universe is composed of five cosmic elements- earth, water, fire, air and ether, all these elements are indispensable for living beings. *Prana* (the air) is essential for breathing. *Prana shakti* or energy is the life energy. Prana is dealt as Paramatma (the great Brahman) in *Agnihotriopanishad*. The Prana is pervasive in each and every cell of the human body. This abundant power source of *prana* is the life force of all being and cause of the creation of the universe (Bhandari, retrieved from [www.gorkhapatra.org.np](http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np) ). Without breathing we cannot imagine the life. So in Upanishads regarded *prana* as Brahman. Discussing on the three centers of the human body, Osho publication (1997) gives account of the significance of three letters of 'AUM'. The author explains that 'A' 'U' and 'M' are the indication of the head, heart and navel centre respectively. He argues that as the navel is the centre of life energy, the deeper the breath, the more harmonious, the more in tune it becomes, the more the life energy within you will start arising. And it will start radiating from the navel. Our navel will become an alive center. So *prana* (breath) is the life force. That's why, Omkarbadis maintains that *pranam* Brahman-the ultimate reality.

Similarly, the inner desire and curiosity which is based on firm determination leads one to the truth. Whatever is determined as truth is Brahman. So the *mana* in this sense is regarded as Brahman. Likewise, without proper knowledge human beings cannot reach the ultimate reality. Gyana leads to the ultimate reality. It is the hunger and thirst for obtaining knowledge. Buddha went in quest of *gyana* and reached the reality of Nirvana concluding that nothing other than the material world is real. Similarly, other great philosophers and scientists of the world such as Galilio Galili, Albert Eienstein, Plato and eastern sages spent their life in search of the truth and came up with the reality ( <http://www.dnsharma.com/detail.php> ) . This gives the evidence that when human cell is full of curiosity for knowledge, it has no barrier to reach the ultimate reality- the Brahman. It is the type of proper knowledge (gyana) that one finds him/herself as the part of this universe thereby leading to the closeness of cosmic 'I'. Hence, the right knowledge is here regarded as Brahman. In the Upanishads we find the references on the prayer on *gyana*-the knowledge as *aX d gGbd k/d ;'vbd, s]jnd 1fg d"lt{d, âGâtLtd uug ;b[Zod, tTjd c:olb nIfd, Psd lgTod ljdndfhnd, j{wL ;fIfL e"td, eljtd lqu'Of /lxt d, ;b\u'?Tjd gdf dL 'Brahma nandam parama sukhadam, Kevalam jnayana murtim, Dvandvateetam gagana sadrisham, Tatvamasyadi lakshyam, Ekam nityam vimalamachalam, Sarvadhee sakshi bhutam, Bhava-teetam triguna-rahitam, Sadgurum tam namami(* <http://gyana.wordpress.com/>). In this way seeking new knowledge is the way of attaining the Brahman. The cell is the basic point of the physical body for the realization of this ultimate reality- the Brahman.

### 3. Commonalities and Reflection

The entire cosmos is represented by the cells of the living organism. That is, human being has its dual identity, namely, individual 'I' and 'cosmic I'. Again the individual 'I' is the reflection

of the cell. In this way the tiny cell is the Brahman of the universe. The logical path leading to the ultimate reality from individual 'I' to cosmic 'I' or from *koham* to *soham* is the recognition of this essential cell. Marx's hunger thesis regards the emancipation of this cell by fulfilling its basic requirement as hunger whereas John Holt's fear thesis tends to liberate the cell keeping it away from the environment of fear and insecurity. Similarly *Omkarbadi* philosophy finds the existence of the cell with *anna*, *paran*, *mana* and *annandam*. The syllable 'Om' may be vibration of the energy that creates awareness to make the world perceptible (Pillai, 2005). According to concept of Hinduism, our body is thought to be composed of five different koshas (cells) known as *panchkoshas*; they are: *annamaya kosh*, *manmaya kosh*, *pranamaya kosh*, *chinnamaya kosh*, *gyanmaya* and *anandamaya kosh*. In this context, Pant (2062) giving the reference of the Vedas maintains that the Brahma is omnipresent: *pragyanam* Brahman-knowledge is the Brahma (Rig Veda); *aham bramasmī*-I am Brahmasmi (Yajur Veda); *tatwa masi*-you are the Brahma (Sama Veda); *ayaatma* Brahma- this soul is the Brahma (Atharwa Veda). We can find several linkage of the interpretation of this cell with several other knowledge systems; such as Marx's hunger thesis has the linkage with Maslow's first hierarchy-the physiological needs; the fact that energy is always neutral, there is only a change of direction (Osho, 1997) has the linkage with the Freud's sex thesis. Similarly, we can make a sense relationship of Omkarvadi's *annam* Brahma, *pranam* Brahma, *manam* Brahma, *gyanam* Brahma and *anandam* Brahma with that of Maslow's theory of motivation's hierarchies physiological, safety, social, self esteem and self actualization respectively; and even Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory in a practical sense.

Various knowledge systems find a converging point that the cell is the representation of the ultimate reality-the Brahman and it can be understood variously. To liberate this cell is eventually a path to attain the fullness of human soul through individual 'I' to the cosmic 'I' or from *koham* to *soham* implying that leadership roles need to be directed to this direction. It is the point where leadership can liberate this cell of oneself as well as his/her followers from all misconceptions, hunger (needs), fear of failure. This concept is in consistent with the concept of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2013) where leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower.

#### 4. Implication for Leadership Process

In the light of above understanding, a complementary scheme that helps converge different knowledge systems to address the fractured future of Nepal through leadership process could be developed as follows:

Distribution of power proportionately leads the nation to equality. Power holders have a vested interest in preserving social inequality (Peet, 1975). Transforming the country's current economic structure from capitalist to more liberal one could be a way out for the people to earn their bread and butter. Marxist theory thus forecasts that the unfettered growth of capitalism generates a mass of unemployed workers, and will eventually lead to widespread detachment of workers from the mechanized means of producing income, an event which will create the necessary conditions for social revolution (Peet, 1975). A system which helps hungry people make both ends meet is the need of the day in Nepal. True social equality can be achieved only by changing the generating forces of inequality by way of an ethical and transformative leadership behavior. Motivating people by identifying and encouraging the depressed cells,

hungry cells and feared cells can help develop the leadership skills in the leaders. Understanding the subordinates' problems and needs will help people engage in earning daily livelihood as well as social skills that would address the hungry cell's basic requirement.

John Holt's fear thesis maintains that fear of failure, punishment and disgrace along with the anxiety of constant judgment without support drive the teachers and students away from being productive. Self confidence is the key to learning. Overbearing teachers and parents, coercive institutional management, the rote all serve to create a sense of anxiety, of crushing curiosity are making working environment a painful rather than a natural and pleasurable act. In the face of such situation, following the deconstruction theory, the multiple mode of teaching learning situation at school as well as alternative strategies of designing work situation, supervision and follow of support to teachers need to be devised. Moreover, love is the way to tune the strings of the heart (Osho, 1997). The fear thesis, at this moment, has the implication that a loving and caring environment in the learning situation can cultivate the fullest capabilities of a child-producing music out of *veena* of learner's heart.

The *Omkarbadi* thesis indicates that whatever at the moment of necessity helps to fulfill immediate needs is the ultimate truth of the human cell. Considering this thesis, all leadership process including the teacher training and follow up support need to be designed and delivered in such a way that the learners can meet their immediate needs at the earliest time possible. Relating the *Omkarbadi*'s concept with the motivational theory of Herzberg task/job enrichment is required for intrinsic motivation as a continuous process of management for teaching and learning. Likewise, translating Herzberg's concept of motivation into the leadership education we can find the idea that the job should have sufficient challenge to utilize the full ability of the learner; learners' who demonstrate increasing level of ability should be given increasing levels of responsibility. Similarly, designing of learning task as per the ability and skills of the followers is a must. If in this context a person cannot be fully utilized, then there is a motivational problem or philosophically speaking, his/her inner Brahma is being suppressed so the leader has to liberate him/her.

The Yoga, meditation and Pranayam and other physical exercise and relaxation lessons could be incorporated in the leadership development course of the managers for the purity and sound health. It helps to develop concentration for study and at the same time keeps the blood circulation intact throughout all cells, thus, making the body energetic and fit for doing physical work and develop confidence. In this way, it is linked to Marx's hunger thesis and John Holt's fear thesis. Application of these philosophical interpretations have the practical implications that large number of cells are now being suppressed and wish to be liberated, as per the Osho's interpretation, the strings of body are waiting to be balanced for proper realization of music (the soul) by everyone. In other words, it also indicates that for a leader to be effective there should be a proper balance between leader's task and relationship behavior (Khanal, 2012). The leader is central to identify the problems of different pluralistic cells in the organization thereby letting the centers to de-center and vice-versa (Derrida, 2006). Individual cell is the part of whole body. A cell carries all the features of individual body. When cells die the whole body's existence is gone. Thus the living presence of the cell signifies the existence of the body. Looking from the perspectives of John Holt's fear thesis a learner's cell, which is also the representative of the soul, is found repressed and dominated by the inhuman and insecure working environment of the organizations.

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