Jubilant Review - Discussion on the structure of KBS

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1. Introduction
The Vanitha Vibagam of Kerala Brahmana Sabha (KBSVV) is completing its 25th year of formation. At this time of jubilation it is only natural and logical that the organization and community as a whole take a relook at itself, the parent body Kerala Brahmana Sabha, and other subsidiary bodies such as KBS Yuvajana Vibagam. It would be worthwhile exercise to review the organization, objectives, activities, structure, plan and implementation methods. This will help in identifying the strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and will be helpful in solving the deficiencies. This exercise will also be useful and essential in finding a proper and systematic way forward for the generations to come.

This discussion will try to attempt a systematic assessment of the organization structure of the KBS and its allied organizations and will suggest some alternatives.

2. Organization Structure of KBS
2.1 KBS: Kerala Brahmana Sabha was established in 1970 under the Travancore – Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act of 1955. KBS is the apex organization of Tamil Brahmins in Kerala.

2.2 KBSVV: The Kerala Brahmana Sabha Vanitha Vibagam was formally established in 1990 through a two-page guideline adopted by the KBS. It started functioning from the same year. During 2006-07 its activities were further streamlined. KBSVV is actively involved in organizing the Tamil Brahmin women of Kerala through its various activities and programmes.

2.3 Yuva: The Kerala Brahmana Sabha Yuvajana Vibagam was formally established in 2010. It acts as a platform of the Tamil Brahmin youth to come together and to work for the development of the community.

2.4 Three – tier organization structure: KBS functions in a three tier system. At the grass – root level there is ‘Upasabha’. All Tamil Brahmins living in the geographic locality of an Upasabha become its members. Elected district representatives of Upasabha constitute District Committee at the district level. The apex body of the organization is KBS State Committee. The districts are grouped under three zones for more co-ordination of activities. The term of office-bearers is for two-years.
3. Limitations

While this three-tier structure seems to be well organized and functioning, actually its efficiency is not up to the mark.

3.1 Upasabha Members: There is no control or consistency in the optimum number of members in an Upasabha. This leads to uneven workload of the office bearers. Across Kerala there are several Upasabhas that have more than 300 members, and there are some having as few as 10 members. In larger Upasabhas, active community members are dissatisfied with the functioning of KBS, because they feel that office bearers are not able to reach them. This indirectly leads to developing a bad image about KBS among the community.

3.2 Division: The Tamil Brahmin community is unevenly distributed across Kerala. Trying to organize them on the revenue district basis is not at all scientific. The Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad Districts have the maximum number of Tamil Brahmin presence. Pathanamthitta and Wayanad have the least number of Tamil Brahmins. However, according to KBS organization structure, all these districts have KBS District Committees and have same responsibilities and tasks. One can only imagine the plight of Secretary of KBS, Thiruvananthapuram in comparison to the work [free] load of Secretary of KBS, Pathanamthitta. This is only one illustration.

3.3 Communication hiccups: Any decision / programmes / events decided by KBS takes an awful lot of time to travel through the unsystematic and imbalanced system and either gets lost in between or reaches late to the concerned recipient. Nett result is wastage of time and resources and skewed decision making.

3.4 The organization still works in the old face-to-face meeting style. The concepts of tele conferencing / video conferencing using Skype, Viber, WhatsApp and so on are still not practiced. This leads to a large amount to time lag for policy making and implementation.

3.5 Lack of IT Literacy and interest. The minutes and all communications are still prepared and sent as printed items through postal services. Hosting the minutes, and other documents in web-site, sending as email attachment, and so on is not practiced. Notifications by WhatsApp, SMS, Twitter and other services are also not practiced. Broadcasting / notifying the key decisions of the meetings for public information is unheard of. This leads to loss of precious time and money. One would hang the head in shame when other community members point out that such a premier organization does not even have a permanent professional web-site on its own, or even a wikipedia page.

3.6 Mediocrity: The present organization setup never inspires nor encourages anyone [not even the office – bearers] to function efficiently. The workload is so much that even an
ardent activist would; over a short period of time; tire down and will eventually be performing very badly.

### 4. Types of Organisation Structures

An organizational structure defines how activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision are directed towards the achievement of organizational aims. It can also be considered as the viewing glass or perspective through which individuals see their organization and its environment. Any operating organization should have its own structure in order to operate efficiently. For an organization, the organizational structure is a hierarchy of people and its functions. The organizational structure tells you the character of an organization and the values it believes in. Depending on the organizational values and the nature of the activity, organizations tend to adopt a structure suitable for its management purposes. There are several types of organization structures. The origins of these models are in the areas of industrial and business management. The organizational structures can be used by any organization if the structure fits into the nature and the maturity of the organization. Community organisations and people active in community work can also adopt these structures for systematic, smooth and efficient management of the organisations. Before venturing into a review about reorganizing the structure of KBS, it will be good to try and understand the various types of structures prevalent. Organizations follow a combination of the following organizational structures:

1. **Pre-bureaucratic structures:** Pre-bureaucratic (entrepreneurial) structures lack standardization of tasks. This structure is most common in smaller organizations and is best used to solve simple tasks. The structure is totally centralized. The strategic leader makes all key decisions and most communication is done by one on one conversations.

2. **Bureaucratic structures:** Bureaucratic Structures have many levels of management ranging from senior personnel to regional personnel, all the way to local unit personnel. Since there are many levels, decision-making authority has to pass through more layers than flatter organizations.

3. **Post-bureaucratic:** In the generic sense the term post bureaucratic is often used to describe a range of ideas developed since the 1980s that specifically contrast themselves with Weber's ideal type bureaucracy. This may include total quality management, culture management and matrix management, amongst others.

4. **Functional structure:** A functional organizational structure is a structure that consists of activities such as coordination, supervision and task allocation. The organizational structure determines how the organization performs or operates.

5. **Divisional structure:** The divisional structure consists of self-contained divisions. A division is a collection of functions which produce a product.
4.6 Matrix structure: The matrix structure groups people by both function and product. This structure can combine the best of both separate structures. A matrix organization frequently uses teams of persons to accomplish work, in order to take advantage of the strengths, as well as make up for the weaknesses, of functional and decentralized forms.

4.7 Team: One of the newest organizational structures developed in the 20th century is team and the related concept of team development or team building.

4.8 Network: Another modern structure is network. The new network organizations contract out most of the functions that can be done better or more cheaply. In essence, personnel in network structures spend most of their time coordinating and controlling external relations, usually by electronic means.

5. Suggestions to reorganize the Organization Structure

Let us try to examine how the present organization structure can be meaningfully reorganized into a more streamlined and effective system for the development of the community.

5.1 Upasabha: The grass-root unit ‘Upasabha’ should be reorganized using a parameter of ‘optimum size’ model. The maximum number and minimum number of households / members for the Upasabha should be decided using a stable parameter. Whenever the number of members / households exceeds that figure, that upasabha should be bifurcated into two Upasabhas, based on a geographical continuum.

5.2 Similarly smaller Upasabhas not having the minimum number of members should be unified, based on a reasonable geographical continuum.

5.3 The zones should become middle tier instead of districts. The maximum and minimum number of Upasabhas for each zones should be fixed using the ‘optimum size’ model. Whenever the number of Upasabhas exceeds that figure, that zone should be bifurcated to two zones, based on a geographical continuum.

5.4 State: At the state level the present structure of state executive committee can continue, but it should be more lean, quick and proactive.

5.5 Special purpose teams: There should be specialized teams at Upasabha, Zone, and State level to handle the matters such as communication (including publications and web-site management), education, health, employment / self development. Organization should consider establishing permanent Trust / Society for such activity so that more seriousness will be attributed for the same.

5.5.1 Educational Trust: An educational institution such as school, college, professional institution, etc. have always remained as dream to all of us. It is high time KBS should give
serious consideration to establish an Educational Trust. Under the aegis of this Trust, we can start different educational institutions. Trust will give more permanency to KBS educational and employment policy. The day to day management of the institutions will be easier when done through the Trust.

5.5.2 Communications: KBS should have a strong team for managing communications.

5.5.2.1 Several publications are brought out at different levels in KBS, this includes calendars, directories, annuals, quarterlies and monthly magazines. There should be an apex body to co-ordinate this activity. Moreover, KBS should consider providing the soft copy version of these publications on the Internet for the increased use and convenience of community members living in other states and abroad. Software such as Open Journals System (OJS) can be used for this.

5.5.2.2 There should be a dedicated team to manage the social media activities of the KBS. The lukewarm response that we get for most of the events is due to poor handling of media including social media. Every programme / event / activity conducted by KBS should be notified through social media. Its video, photo images, reports etc. also should be made available online for better viewership. In this context it is sad to observe that there is not even a permanent professional web-site for Kerala Brahmana Sabha and Vanitha Vibagam. Yuvajana Vibagam; however; has made great progress in managing the web and social media efficiently.

5.5.3 Self-help groups: The programmes / schemes implemented by Governments can be better utilized through forming self-help groups. This will provide more employment opportunities and stable income for the members. Vanitha Vibagam should give serious consideration in this matter.

5.5.4 Community volunteers: It is observed that there are several members / households from our community who need special care and attention. This includes aged people living alone, invalid / differently abled persons and so on. KBS at present does not have any mechanism / programme to take proactive action for the welfare for such members of our community. It is sad that in most cases KBS does not know about the existence of such persons until the last moment. These marginalised people should be given utmost priority by KBS henceforth. In every Upasabha, organizers should engage trained volunteers. These volunteers should visit such households periodically and provide special care and attention. A token honorarium should be paid to the volunteers for such activity. Organization will become meaningful only when it positively and proactively engages the community.

5.6 Community survey: KBS should conduct a comprehensive socio – economic – health – demographic survey of our community spread across Kerala. The data emanating out of this survey should be used to formulate the policies of KBS. This community survey should be repeated once in 5 years, to understand the growth and development of the community.
5.7 Similar organizations such as Yogakshema Sabha, Nair Service Society, SNDP etc. are organized in a better way, thereby streamlining the system for better management of the organization. KBS should learn from these models and try to create one for ourselves that would serve our purposes better.

6. Advantages
KBS would benefit in many ways by venturing on a complete organizational restructuring:

6.1 Easier Management: With a proper line of management defined and with number of people / households that every Upasabha is to handle is defined, it becomes easier for KBS to manage its activities very efficiently.

6.2 Communication: With a properly laid out structure the flow of communication from top – bottom and vice versa becomes very easy and smooth. The members will be completely informed about KBS activities and KBS will be more informed about its members.

6.3 Meaningful engagement: With more streamlined organizational setup, and with more comprehensive information about the requirements and needs of community members, KBS will be in a better position to engage with the members in a more meaningful and proactive manner.

6.4 Unity: With more proactive support from KBS, the community members will feel more affinity towards the organization and satisfaction towards its activities. There will be a gradual increase in their participation and involvement in the activities of KBS.

6.5 Welfare Schemes and Activities: With a more informed and engaging organization structure, it becomes easy for the KBS to inform the members about Welfare schemes of Governments and make them available to the deserving community members by helping them to enroll for the same.

6.6 Image: Once a streamlined organization starts functioning in an exemplary way, the image of the KBS will increase and world will start listening to us.

7. Conclusion
In history, 25 years is not a very long period of time. But for a community welfare organization like KBS Vanitha Vibagam; involved in the task of supporting and reaching out to every Tamil Brahmin woman in Kerala; to remain active continuously for 25 years is no mean achievement. The significance of this success increases by the fact that this was achieved; may be in varying degrees; with scant resources and meager manpower that was always purely voluntary. This journey that the organization undertook in the last quarter of a century has been an arduous one. The entire credit for this goes to all the office – bearers
and members of the committees at all levels who for all these years persistently upheld the cause of Tamil Brahmin women. And indirectly all these years the organization has been; through the women; reaching out and supporting the Tamil Brahmin families in the state of Kerala. A lot has been done and is being done. And even more will have to be done in future. May this organization rise from success to success and reach the pinnacle of glory leading and guiding the Tamil Brahmin community’s development and welfare.

**Bibliography**


