



## VAKKOM MOULAVI FOUNDATION TRUST



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

## Our history

- The Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust (VMFT) is dedicated to promoting the all-round progress of the people— social, economic, intellectual, and cultural. Specific areas of work include promoting harmony and understanding among different religions and faiths, pilot programs for rural development, eradication of unemployment and poverty and understanding the impact of science and technology on social change. In adhering to these ideals, VMFT honours the memory and legacy of Vakkom Mohammed Abdul Khader (1873-1932), the noted social reformer, journalist and intellectual of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kerala.
- VMFT was registered as a Public Charitable Trust in 1986 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala through a generous contribution by the late Shri K.M. Bashir, a senior official of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It was inaugurated on 21 June 1987 by Sri. E. K. Nayanar, then Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala. After the demise of Sri K.M. Bashir, the activities of the Trust were supported through donations by his wife, Aisha Bashir, and his family. The VMFT undertook various funded projects, including from the Sri Ratan Tata Trust. Since 2013, the VMFT has received a recurring annual grant from the Department of Culture of the Government of Kerala.
- Right from its inception, VMFT has organised regular events and programs that focused on contemporary development issues, promoting education for the future, inclusive governance, science and technology for sustainable development and fostering social harmony and has become widely known in Kerala and increasingly across the country and world.

## SECTION 1

## AN OVERVIEW OF VMFT

- Constituted in 1986, Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust (VMFT) has earned for itself a powerful presence in the social and cultural landscape of Kerala. With the goal of advancing Kerala's overall development, it focuses on three broad thematic areas: Education for the Future, Inclusive Governance, and Science and Technology for Sustainable Development. As a memorial to Vakkom Muhammad Abdul Khader Moulavi (1879-1932), the Foundation is publishing his works and promotes research on his contributions, to shed light on the historical forces that shaped Kerala's development in the early 20th century.
- In all these areas, our approach is to serve as a platform for promoting and debating new ideas, to generate new knowledge through research and studies and to impact lives through training and field projects. We are guided by the principles of social justice and integrity in public affairs.
- The VMFT has started two centres, the Renaissance Study Centre and the Swadeshabhimani Media Study Centre. It has instituted the Vakkom Moulavi Memorial Lecture and the K.M. Bashir Memorial Lecture to uphold the ideals of political and social reform and socio-economic development. VMFT has also commissioned research projects in the area of education and science.

## SECTION 2

## GOVERNANCE

### VMFT BOARD OF TRUSTEES - MEMBERS

Name	Position
<b>Er. A. SUHAIR</b>	<b>Chairperson</b>
<b>Dr. SAJITHA BASHIR</b>	<b>Vice Chairperson</b>
<b>Prof. V. K. DAMODARAN</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Prof. JAMEELA BEGUM</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Dr. GITA GOPAL</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Mr. ARVIND KHARE</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Mr. ASIF BAHAUDDIN</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Dr. SULTANA BASHIR</b>	<b>Trustee</b>
<b>Dr. ZAHIR BASHIR</b>	<b>Trustee</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & THANK YOU**

We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have supported and contributed to our mission throughout this year. Your unwavering commitment and generosity have been pivotal in helping us to advance our work in new directions, and to foster a new social and cultural renaissance in Kerala.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our partners, volunteers, donors, and well-wishers. Your collaboration and dedication have been instrumental in the successful implementation of our initiatives, enabling us to make a significant impact on the community. Special thanks go to the students, journalists, social and cultural activities, teachers and educators whose active participation has greatly enriched our programs.

We also acknowledge the hard work and enthusiasm of our team members and Board of Trustees, whose efforts have driven the Foundation's progress and success. Your contributions have ensured that we continue to strive towards a more just, educated, and progressive society.

## **CONTACT US**

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The main objectives for 2023-24 were to:

- Commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Vakkom Moulavi throughout the year and increase awareness of his contributions within Kerala and outside.
- In the area of inclusive governance, build capacity of young people and women to use media for social justice through media literacy and documentary film making programs
- In the area of education, promote systematic work on education research and policy development, improve teacher capacity and build VMFT's network with national and international organizations working in education
- Raise the profile of VMFT as an intellectual centre and increase the outreach of its programs amongst youth and women from broad sections of the society.

## 1. Commemoration of Vakkom Moulavi's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary



### Activities

The principal activities were:

- A series of public lectures in premier universities and institutions across the world and in Kerala to publicize the work of Vakkom Moulavi in the context of the social, political and educational reforms in Kerala/India in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These included the University of Tübingen, Department of Indology (Germany), which hosts the archives of Herman Gundert, the notable German scholar of Malayalam of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and one of the most prominent institutions for the study of Malayalam and Kerala history. Other lectures were held at Oxford University, Department of International Development (UK) and University of Glasgow, Heritage, Urban Studies and Development Lab (UK), as well as the Institute of Management in Government (Kerala). The lectures were delivered by the Vice-Chairperson of the VMFT, Dr. Sajitha Bashir.
- Substantial advances in the digitization and translation of *The Svadesabhimani*, the first newspaper launched by Vakkom Moulavi which operated between 1905-1910. All Malayalam issues of the paper were digitized and a significant set of editorials and articles were translated into English

- Organization of quiz competitions on Vakkom Moulavi and other social reformers in high schools in Trivandrum district
- Publishing of articles in the national and local newspapers.

## Impacts

**Raising global awareness about Vakkom Moulavi and Kerala's history:** The international lectures were the first that have been organized abroad and represent an important milestone in VMFT's work to disseminate Vakkom Moulavi's work. Further discussions were held regarding potential future collaborations on research, publications and seminars. The exchange of ideas and the prospect of joint academic endeavours are a promising step towards deepening the understanding and appreciation of Vakkom Moulavi contributions to the development of Kerala.

**Preserving cultural and political heritage:** The creation of a unique digital archive, *The Svadesabhimani*, is a pathbreaking achievement not only for VMFT, but also for preserving the history of Kerala. Over 1500 articles were digitized in Malayalam and translated into English. This has enabled a global audience to engage with its historical content and socio-political insights, enriching contemporary discussions on modernity, social and political reform, resistance to colonialism and the development of political consciousness.

**Promoting youth understanding of social reform in Kerala:** Through the quiz competitions, students were encouraged to critically delve into Kerala's rich and complex social reform movements among different communities, which have contributed to the development of modern Kerala. The keen interest sparked amongst them to evaluate the ideals and legacies of our social reformers contributes to VMFT's mission of building harmony and understanding between people of different faiths.



## The making of modern Kerala

Investigating the digital collection of the newspaper  
*The Svadesabhimani* (Patriot), 1905-1910

Talk by  
**Dr. Sajitha Bashir**

Tuesday, 06. June 2023 | 16:15 hrs

Room 1.06 | Nauklerstr. 35 or

<https://zoom.us/j/6616912195?pwd=UVR0c1JvcXVIJncvakdoZ3N4ZGk3QT09>

The talk will present the social and political issues covered by the famous Malayalam newspaper *The Svadesabhimani* (Patriot), launched by the Muslim intellectual and social reformer, Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi (1873-1932), which is being digitized and translated into English for the first time. Placing government accountability to the public as central to its mission, the newspaper shaped a nascent political consciousness, while its analysis and coverage of local, national and international events, reforms and debates helped create a vibrant public sphere, until its forcible suppression by the princely government.

Dr. Sajitha Bashir is former Education Manager and Global Adviser at the World Bank, and Vice-Chairperson of the Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust which is undertaking the digitization and translation of *The Svadesabhimani*.



Asien-Orient-Institut | Abteilung für Indologie und Lehrstuhl für Islamische Geschichte und Kultur



## 2 Inclusive Governance

### **Activities**

During 2023-24, VMFT focused considerable efforts on building awareness amongst and training young people to understand and use visual media and new media. Activities were conducted under the auspices of the Swadeshabimani Media Study Centre and included:

- Interactive workshops were organized for high school students on media literacy, using a training curriculum developed by VMFT. Data collected from students also resulted in a report on media literacy amongst young people, highlighting the high level of dependence on social media for news and social connections, and relatively low levels of awareness about the sources of information and personal safety (“Kerala’s Children – Using media or being used by media?”).
- Workshops on creative documentary film making were organized under the title of “Moving Stories”. Led by acclaimed filmmaker Shri R.P. Amudhan and Dr. Fathima Nizaruddin (formerly with Jamia Millia University), the workshops covered essential techniques such as composition, lighting, movement, and sound editing, fostering creativity and enhancing participants' storytelling capabilities. The workshops were intended for college students and older adults in the community, including women, with no prior background in film making to engage in quality documentary film making using mobile phones and simple techniques.
- Documentary film screening on themes of social justice and meetings with directors under a series entitled “Behind the Lens”. The audience comprised college students and young people, especially from rural areas, who engaged in critical discussions with directors on major social issues, such as environmental devastation, women’s rights and evolving family and social dynamics. The series was launched by eminent documentary film director, K.R. Manoj with the screening of his award winning film, “A Pestering Journey”, which focuses on the indiscriminate promotion and use of pesticides in Punjab and the effects it had on the community.

## Impacts

**Fostering critical use of social media amongst the young:** Over 330 students participated in the workshops and became aware of the methods of accessing news and information and judging its veracity, the methods of manipulation of emotions, the use of data and the means to safeguard privacy.

**Empowering marginalized groups to use films and visual media for powerful storytelling and fostering critical debate:** Just as in an earlier period, the press and print media played a major role in shaping public consciousness, audio-visual media can be a tool for empowerment. VMFT's efforts to make simple technologies and techniques available to a broader group of people, including those whose voices have hitherto been excluded, are gradually producing an impact.



### 3 Education for the Future

#### **Activities**

This past year involved a change in the focus of our activities, with a much greater emphasis on promoting and using evidence-based analysis to foster change in Kerala's education system overall and teacher professionalisation in particular, in order to enhance student learning and development. A major aspect of our work has been to highlight the need to prepare Kerala's education system, teachers and stakeholders, for new challenges, and to equip them with knowledge, tools and technology to address them.

- Building on its consistent work with schools and teachers, VMFT organized monthly meetings with teachers to influence class room teaching and foster a culture of research among educators in Kerala, exposing them to cutting-edge pedagogical insights and encouraging their own research endeavours. Topics covered included effective pedagogy and assessment strategies, project-based learning approaches, and innovative methods to enhance student engagement. The sessions were led by a faculty member from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). A session on "Memory and Learning" by a neuroscientist from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) introduced educators to recent developments in brain science and implications for education practice.
- VMFT undertook analysis of some of the large scale education datasets to analyse trends in the evolution of Kerala's school education system. This included analysis of the UDISE Plus database relating to Kerala, an all India database of all schools and students in the country, the National Sample Survey (NSS) rounds on education and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) relating to employment and education. The preliminary analysis was presented at the seminar on education research (see below).
- Collaborative agreements were established with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Centre for Development Studies (CDS), and the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, to organize a series of three seminars on emerging challenges for Kerala's education system and society, as well as the issues of quality and inclusiveness of education. The three topics for the seminar series are: (i) climate change and

environmental sustainability (ii) language, culture and identity and (iii) The future of work and the future of education. The seminar series was launched on October 19, 2023 in Thiruvananthapuram by the Ambassador of Finland to India, H.E. Kimmo Lähdevirta, with the participation of the Dean and other faculty members of the Department of Education of University of Jyväskylä. It coincided with the visit of the Finnish Education Minister Anna-Maja Henriksson's to promote the partnership between the Govt. of Kerala and Finland on education.

- VMFT took the lead in organizing the first seminar on education research on “Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability” in December 2023 together with TISS and CDS. Participants included university faculty, teachers, researchers, government officials, and international organizations like UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education, as well as researchers from Columbia University and the University of Jyväskylä and came up with a set out concrete recommendations on how to address climate change and environmental sustainability through the education system. The report of the seminar was distributed widely in Kerala and was also featured in a blog post of the Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning (GINTL) which connects education researchers from China, India, Africa and Finland.

## **Impacts**

Despite its great advances in school education, Kerala suffers increasingly from poor quality as well as inequality in education. These trends threaten its past successes and also render it difficult to address future challenges, and the lack of research and public debate based on evidence also limits effective policy making.

**Improving student learning through teacher innovations:** The monthly teacher meetings have coalesced into a “Teachers Research Forum” where teachers are encouraged to learn about new pedagogical approaches, including through the use of digital technology, and create a space for collaboration, sharing insights and continuously improving their teaching methods. The Teachers’ Research Forum is evolving into a network for promoting local level innovation in the education system.

**Developing locally relevant curricula for climate change.** Kerala is highly vulnerable to climate change and yet this is not reflected in school curricula. Following the seminar, teachers and researchers mobilized by VMFT are working together to develop curricula that incorporate local experiences of different communities (coastal, tribal, and so on) to equip children and communities to understand and respond to climate change.

**Fostering high quality research through national and international collaborations.** The activities of 2023-24 have led to important research insights on the increasing segmentation in Kerala's education system and the implications for inclusion and quality. VMFT's work has catalysed education research, which is sorely lacking in Kerala. Collaborations are ongoing with researchers from CDS, TISS and University of Jyväskylä on quantitative and qualitative analysis of Kerala's education system, which will help to influence public discussion and policy making.



## ORGING NEW COLLABORATIONS IN EDUCATION

Universities	
 <p>JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ</p>	
<p><b>Jyvaskyliopisto University of Jyvaskyla</b> The University of Jyväskylä is a strong, internationally attractive research university with societal impact.</p>	<p><b>Columbia University</b>, officially Columbia University in the City of New York, is a private, Ivy League, research university in New York City. Established in 1754 as King's College on the grounds of Trinity Church in Manhattan, it is the oldest institution of higher education in New York and the fifth-oldest in the United States.</p>
Research Institutions	
 <p><b>Centre for Development Studies</b> (Under the aegis of Govt. of Kerala &amp; ICSSR, Govt. of India)</p>	
<p><b>Centre for Development Studies</b> is a research institute Under the aegis of Govt. of Kerala &amp; ICSSR, Govt. of India.</p>	<p><b>TISS</b> is a premier institution of higher education in India that offers teaching, research and extension programmes in social sciences.</p>
Multi-lateral institutions	
	

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**Annexure**  
**List of Activities of VMFT**  
**(April 2023- March 2024)**

**I. Inclusive Governance**

**Swadeshabhimani Media Study Centre (SMSC) activities**

**• Documentary Workshop Series titled 'Moving Stories'**

*Series 2*, a three-day documentary workshop was organised on the art of documentary film making using mobile phones was organised on July 22-24 ,2023 at VMFT Hall. The workshop was led by Shri.R. Amudhan, Indian documentary filmmaker, curator, festival organizer.

**• Media Literacy Workshop Series for High School Students**

*Series 6* conducted on July 12 ,2023 at Govt. G.H.S. S, Nedumangad, Thiruvananthapuram, led by SMSC Program Coordinator.

*Series 7* conducted on July 13 ,2023 Govt. Vocational HSS, Boys, Mancha, Thiruvananthapuram, led by SMSC Program Coordinator.

*Series 8* conducted on October 06, 2023, at Aruvikkara Govt. Girls HSS, Thiruvananthapuram, led by SMSC Program Coordinator

**• Documentary Screening and Discussion with Director Series**

*Series 1*: Screening of National Film Award Winning Investigative Documentary ‘A Pesterling Journey’ ‘followed by a riveting talk and discussion with its director, Shri.K.R. Manoj on August 26, 2023, at VMFT hall. Dr. Fathima Nizaruddin moderated the event.

*Series 2* titled ‘Filming Personal Stories’: Screening of two documentaries ‘My Mother’s Daughter’ and “And I Call My Father” by Dr. Fathima Nizaruddin and Ms. Hazeena. on October 21,2023 at VMFT hall, The discussion with the two women directors were moderated by Prof.Jammela Begum.

**• Other Meetings/Lectures/ International Seminars**

On the occasion of National Press Day organised a public event titled “Fostering a Democratic India: The Role of the Media Then and Now” on November 16, 2023, at VMFT Hall in collaboration with the Dept. of Malayalam and Mass Communication & Dept. of English and Media Studies, St. Xavier's College Thumba. Abhilash Mohanan, Deputy Editor of Mathrubhumi News, and Saraswathy Nagarajan, Deputy Editor, of The Hindu were the speakers for the event. Prof. J. Prabhash, former Pro Vice-Chancellor of Kerala University moderated the discussion.

Talk by Dr. Sajitha Bashir, Vice Chairperson on the topic “Making of Modern Kerala: Investigating the Digital Collection of the newspaper, Swadeshabhimani (Patriot)1905-1910’ at University of Tubingen, Germany on June 06,2023.

Talk by Dr. Sajitha Bashir, Vice Chairperson on the topic ‘Muslim Educational and Social Reform in Modern Kerala: Investigating the Digital Collection of a Historical Newspaper’ at University of Oxford on June 09,2023.

## **II. Education for the Future**

### **School Outreach Programs**

- Teacher Monthly Workshop Series/Meetings**

Organising members Dr. Sajitha Bashir, Vice Chairperson, VMFT, Dr. Anu Joy, School of Educational Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Dr. Suresh Kumar, Rtd SCERT and DIET Faculty Member, Jabeena, Rtd. Headmistress.

*Series 1:* Workshop on ‘Pedagogy and Assessment for a Meaningful Learning of Concepts in Middle Schools ‘organised on August 05,2023 at VMFT hall.

*Series 2:* Workshop on ‘Enquiry and Project based Pedagogical Approaches’ organised on September 16,2023 at VMFT hall.

*Series 3:* Workshop on ‘Memory and Learning: Findings from Neuroscience ‘organised on 18, 2023 at VMFT hall. Speakers were Dr.S.R. Chandra, Former Professor of Neurology, NIMHANS, Bangalore & Prof. Malla Bhaskara Rao, Professor and Former Head of Dept. Of Neurosurgery, NIMHANS, Bangalore. Dr. Anu Joy moderated the discussion.

*Series 4:* Workshop on on ‘Developing an Integrated Curriculum for Climate Change for Middle Schools’ organised on January 20, 2024, at VMFT hall.

- Seminar Series of Education Research in Kerala.**

Official Launch of Seminar Series on Advancing Education Research in Kerala held on October 19,2023 at KTDC Mascot Hotel in collaboration with Centre for Development Studies (CDS) and Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS). H.E. Kimmo Lahdevirta, the Finnish Ambassador to India inaugurated the event. Prof.Marja Leena Lakso, Vice Chancellor of University of Jyvaskyla in Finland and Prof. Anna Maija Poikkeus Dean of Faculty of Education and Psychology made presentations of Finnish education system. Representatives of Finland’s Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning (GINTL) were also present in the meeting. The seminar series are planned to be organised by Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust (VMFT) in collaboration with Centre for Development Studies (CDS) at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Kerala.

*First Seminar on “Developing a Research Agenda for Education in Kerala: Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability “was organised on December 6-7, 2023, at Centre for Development Studies, Ulloor, Thiruvananthapuram.*

- **Education Research /Reports**

Education data analysis research work is in process to contribute in preparing a report on Kerala's education system based on statistical analysis of key data sets. Two resource persons are assigned for doing/supporting the analytical work on UDISE data set as part of Kerala Education Research.

Prepared the content and designed Main & Executive Summary Report in English of the First Education Research Seminar and also distributed to the participants. Also, done translation and design of the Executive Summary of the report in Malayalam and circulated to DIETS in Kerala.

### **III. Vakkom Moulavi Memorial**

#### **Renaissance Study Centre Activities**

- **Digitization Project**

Digitization project of Swadeshabhimani Newspaper is ongoing. Will be completed by end of June,2024.

- **Meetings**

Talk by Prof.Sundar Sarukkal on ' Social Life of Democracy' on January 27,2024 at VMFT hall.