Svadēśabhimāni **and the works of Vakkom Moulavi (1873-1932)**

Digitization and Research Project

Terms of Reference

Project Team Leader, VMFT

(with possibility of pursuing research studies at the University of Tübingen, Germany)

Deadline for receiving application: 25 September 2023

Tentative Interview Date: October 2023.

Location: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

The Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust (VMFT) is undertaking the digitization and translation of *Svadēśabhimāni*, the first newspaper started by Vakkom Mohamed Abdul Khader Moulavi, the renowned journalist, social reformer and educational leader of the early 20th century. The newspaper is a trailblazer in the history of Malayalam journalism. Other publications of Vakkom Moulavi will also be digitized. A specific purpose of this program is to encourage research on an important period of Kerala history and the role of this historic newspaper and its promoter, Vakkom Moulavi.

Articles of the *Svadēśabhimāni* have been digitized in Malayalam and translation is underway. See svadesabhimani.com and further details below in the Annex.

We are looking for a Project Team Leader who will oversee this work, based in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The position will allow the person to develop their research, leadership and technical skills and to work with national and international academics/ institutions, working in the areas of history of Kerala and India, media and cultural studies, Islamic modernism. The position is for an initial period of 12 months. SEE BELOW FOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

The position will be of special interest to those who wish to pursue doctoral or post-doctoral studies in these areas. Part of the work would be to write a research proposal together with Prof. Dr. Heike Oberlin (HoD, Dept. of Indology, Tübingen University, Germany) and Dr. Sajitha Bashir (Vice-Chairperson, VMFT and former Global Adviser, World Bank) for a position of 2 to 3 years to be submitted to the German Research Foundation (DFG) or similar agencies. If successful (subject to the decision of the funding agency alone), this position would be a much better paid continuation of the position advertised here. It would be based at the University of Tübingen, Germany, with the Department of Indology and its Gundert Chair for Malayalam and Kerala Studies. Tübingen is known in Kerala as "Gundert's University" and for its digital "Gundert Portal" (https://www.gundert-portal.de/?language=en). Examples of possible research questions are given in the Annex (applicants may propose additional ones).

Remuneration: Commensurate with UGC Junior Research Fellowship/ Senior Research Fellowship depending on qualifications and research skills/experience.

Required documents for application:

1. Cover letter, explaining suitability for this job and providing evidence of your research/professional interest in this area. If you are interested in developing a research proposal for pursuing doctoral/post-doctoral studies at the Dept. of Indology, Tübingen University, Germany, please add a description of a research question that you would like to pursue.
2. Resume (include email id and telephone number).
3. Samples of short independent writing in English and Malayalam (indicate if published).
4. Contact details of 2 referees relevant for this position.

Please send application by email with the above documents as a single pdf file (less than 2mb) to vmft.tvpm@gmail.com, with subject line : APPLICATION FOR TEAM LEADER, DIGITIZATION AND RESEARCH PROJECT.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Project Team Leader will have two main areas of responsibility, with detailed activities listed below:

(a) Digitization project

(i)   oversee the completion of the digitization and translation of *Svadēśabhimāni*, including implementing the workflow (through the portal), oversee and ensure the quality of the work of scanning, data entry, proofreading, translation and copyediting, identify and manage the people undertaking the different tasks online);
(ii)   undertake basic troubleshooting of technical problems relating to equipment, software etc., or engage support personnel to fix issues;
(iii)   review the articles (original Malayalam/English) and tag them before publishing;
(iv)   prepare short pieces for social media, VMFT website and newsletter to update a generalist audience about the progress;
(v)   identify/collect/categorize documents from other sources, which can be linked to the website (for instance, other historical papers of the period, research articles etc.);
(vi)   contact archives, libraries and individuals within India and abroad to publicize the materials and to procure additional materials;
(vii)   initiate the digitization of other publications of Vakkom Moulavi;
(viii) identify potential sources of funding to expand the project.

(b) <u>Research on</u> *Svadēśabhimāni* <u>and Vakkom Moulavi</u>

(i)   Develop research proposal(s) working with potential universities to secure funding for doctoral/post-doctoral work in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Heike Oberlin (HoD, Dept. of Indology, Tübingen University, Germany) and Dr. Sajitha Bashir (Vice-Chairperson, VMFT and former Global Adviser, World Bank) – see above. Examples of relevant research questions are given below but additional ones can be proposed.

<u>Important Note</u>: VMFT cannot assure the success of the application and securing funding. However, VMFT is cooperating with the Department of Indology and its "Gundert Chair" at the University of Tübingen. If the research funding proposal (to be written) is successful, the incumbent will be able to join the doctoral/post-doctoral program at the University of Tübingen, after giving due notice.

Qualifications, Skills and Experience:

- Postgraduate/ Ph.D in English language/ Malayalam language/ history/ linguistics/ Islamic studies/ modern Indian studies/ media studies / religion/ politics/ sociology/ economics. Postgraduates from sciences and engineering fields are also encouraged to apply if they have a demonstrated interest in the field.
- High level of fluency in Malayalam and English (reading, writing, speaking).
- Demonstrated interest in history/ social justice/ media studies and willingness to learn.
- Understanding of research methods and interest in doing research.
- Commitment to high-quality standards and the objectives of the assignment.
- Ability to plan and coordinate multiple tasks.
- Familiarity with technology (basic software, word processing, website).
- Ability to network and communicate with different individuals and groups.
- Two years' work/research experience is desirable.

Annex

1. **Examples of research questions (applicants may propose additional ones)**

- How did *Svadēśabhimāni* compare with other contemporary Malayalam and English newspapers in the Travancore/Kochi/Malabar region, in terms of content, coverage, arguments and approach? How does it relate to the development of ideas at an early stage of the emergence of the national movement? Comparisons can also be extended to newspapers in other regions of India, such as Bengal.
- How did *Svadēśabhimāni* discussion of important social issues, such as social reforms, education, political representation reflect the ongoing changes and debates in Travancore/Kerala society and polity?
- To what extent did the newspaper shape the intellectual development of Vakkom Moulavi in his future work?
- Exploring the influences of the ideas of the Kerala Renaissance, Indian nationalism and Islamic modernism on *Svadēśabhimāni* and Vakkom Moulavi.
- What were the political and social forces that led to the suppression of *Svadēśabhimāni* in 1910 by a Royal Proclamation? What were the responses of other contemporary newspapers?

2. **About *Svadēśabhimāni*** (svadesabhimani.com)

The Malayalam language newspaper *The Svadēśabhimāni* (Patriot) published in Travancore between 1905 and 1910, is now widely seen as beginning the era of critical journalism in Kerala. For the first time, its contents have become available to a broader international audience through the digitization of available issues and on-going translation into English in the context of the 150th birth anniversary of Vakkom Mohammed Abdul Khader Moulavi (1873-1932), who was its owner, publisher and managing editor. The newspaper's motto, stated in the opening issue, was pathbreaking for its time: "**We will not conceal public grievances for fear of any calamity that may befall us. For certain**."   It was banned by the government in 1910, in the first case of media suppression, with the confiscation of the press and exile of its second editor, Ramakrishna Pillai. The digital collection opens a window into the society, government and politics of Kerala and India at a critical time in history.

Svadēśabhimāni focused its attention on exposing the corruption and misdeeds of the Travancore rulers, but also wrote about the important issues of the period, including education reform, representation in government, debates on social and cultural reform in various castes and the reform of the legislative council. Straddling a period of intense national ferment, instigated in part by the partition of Bengal in 1905, international developments such as the Russo-Japanese war, the anti-colonial awakening in the Muslim and Arab world, the newspaper brought to its

audience the picture of a world undergoing massive changes. In a period of relative political inactivity in Kerala, *Svadēśabhimāni* helped to mold the political consciousness of the intelligentsia.

Note: The original masthead of the newspaper was *The Svadesabhimani* written in English and in Malayalam, scientifically transliterated as *Svadēśabhimāni*. It is often spelled in English as *Swadeshabhimani*.

3. About VMFT

The Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust (VMFT) is a public charitable trust based in Trivandrum, Kerala. It was inaugurated on 21 June 1987 by the then Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala, Sri E.K. Nayanar, and established as a memorial to Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi (1873-1932), a pioneering journalist and courageous social and political reformer and one of the most prominent leaders of the Kerala Renaissance of the 20th century. It also undertakes research and development projects on contemporary issues of importance to the people of Kerala and India. VMFT has chosen three core areas for its work: Inclusive Governance, Education for the Future, and Science and Technology for Sustainable Development.

VMFT is governed by a Board of Trustees comprising reputed professionals and academics from various fields. The digitization and research project is financed through a grant from the Kerala government and voluntary contributions.