

involves opportunities for students to reflect upon their life experiences.

One of our students, Ms. Beena Mol, from our Agriculture course (2002) said that what she valued most was the way in which the teaching was organized – the fact that teachers lived *with* and *for* the students, that they were available 24 hours a day, and that they took part in all activities instead of completing their classes and then leaving for home. Also crucial for her were the practical activities – ‘learning by doing’ – which allowed her to learn without having the pressure of exams and homework hanging over her head. Beena’s time at the People’s College shaped her life in ways she would never have imagined before she left her village, aged 17. And afterwards, she found a job in the agricultural sector, as she had hoped.

In the second phase of 2007-2017, without DANIDA funding, MPC trained another 1,000 disadvantaged youth and women from the community. The fee charged to students and the income from the Training-cum-Production centres (established during the earlier funding period) has helped the college to sustain itself. Since 2017 students have asked for certification to join mainstream employment and higher education, so we are now forced to link with universities. This has diluted the Folk Education model to a limited extent, but we have nonetheless sustained our holistic education system built on the philosophy of Grundtvig. It is worth remembering the contribution of Danish volunteers to sustain this Folk Education Model in Mitraniketan.

See also the section on MPC in Anders Holm’s *The Essential N.F.S. Grundtvig* (2019) pp.199-205.



Principal Reghu Rama Das (right) with the founder of Mitraniketan, Viswanathan (centre) – beneath Grundtvig!

## Mitraniketan People’s College (MPC)

Inspired by his trips to the USA (Highlander) and Denmark (in 1955) Viswanathan (1928-2014) returned to his birthplace in Kerala in south India and founded a non-profit project “Mitraniketan”(Home of Friends)in 1956. Later in 1996, with the support of the Association of Danish Folk High Schools (FFD) and DANIDA, he founded a People’s College in Mitraniketan. The non-profit organisation consists of a Kindergarten, Children’s School, a Technology Centre, and a Farm Science Centre.

Principal Reghu Rama Das, writes to the Newsletter: “MPC aims at empowering youth and women through various life-oriented and enlightenment activities which keep them engaged for life experience. We have designed one-year residential courses for the purpose integrating life skills and livelihood skills. During the 10 years with DANIDA funding (1996-2006) Mitraniketan trained 1,000 youngsters from different parts of Kerala with diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds. We are proud to record that this has primarily changed their attitude towards life and built their confidence to function as a responsible member of their community. A large number of youngsters now help their family and community and consider the experience they have gained from MPC as more valuable than what they got from formal education. It focuses on activities based on day-to-day needs to ensure living interaction and social learning as envisaged by N.F.S. Grundtvig. The education process



## **Grundtvig's Works under threat**

Successive governments have supported the Grundtvig Centre through their annual Finance Bill – until last year (see GS 11). When the newly-elected Social Democrat government omitted the grant from its Finance Bill last year, there was such an outcry that it soon reappeared and all was well – or so it was thought. Yet, to the concern of all Grundtvig-lovers, the government has repeated its omission this year – and the outcry now is no less vehement. The suspicion among the opposition is that this is another 'bargaining chip' and that the government wants a *quid pro quo* out of the situation.

If the Centre closes through lack of government funding, just half the works will have been made available. Many critics have compared the situation to 'building only half a bridge'. And once stopped, the project cannot be restarted. The centre director, Katrine Frøkjær Baunvig, is worried but not yet panicking. "At the moment we cannot do much more," she says. "We are appealing to the politicians' goodwill. It would be wise of them to give us peace to work instead of sending us back home every autumn – as in Ludo!"



Krista Stinne Greve Rasmussen  
Photo ©Laura Bisgaard Krogh

The newly-appointed leader of the digitalisation project is Krista Stinne Greve Rasmussen. She tells the Newsletter: "When I was appointed editor-in-charge of the project at the end of February this year, it was an extremely competent and experienced team that welcomed me. Several of

them have been with us right from the start! A publication project such as this is borne primarily by the professional environment and a planned progression.

"The digitalisation of the works that Grundtvig published in his lifetime was launched in 2010. Comprising roughly 1,000 works and 36,000 pages, the project is on track to be finished by the end of 2030. With the publication by the 10 philological experts of a further group of works this September, 45% of the work is now online – 16,222 pages and 451 works in a critical edition. A few *unpublished* exceptions, such as 'Withing Living Memory' (see *The Common Good* 2019), have also been included. You can follow the project's progress at grundtvigsvaerker.dk (Danish only)."

## **Grundtvig as 'middle of the road'**

Following the retirement of Lise-Lotte Rebel (Denmark's first female bishop) the new bishop of the Diocese of Helsingør (or 'Elsinore' for Hamlet-lovers) will be elected during October-November 2020. Bishops are elected by church council members and pastors in the diocese in question. There are four candidates this time – two men and two women. Of interest to readers is the comment on all four candidates by Professor Peter Lodberg, Aarhus University. Speaking to the *Christian Daily* on 27 August, he said, "They have all put the Grundtvig stamp on themselves. It has become something of a brand – to signify that they do not represent anything terrible or extreme."

## **Five of Grundtvig's best-known lines**

Freedom for Loki as well as for Thor!

The School for Life, p. 49

Man is not an ape, destined first to ape the other animals and then himself until the world's end. Rather is he a glorious, incomparable creature, in whom divine powers through thousands of generations proclaim, develop, and enlighten themselves as a divine experiment, in order to show how spirit and dust can permeate one another and be transfigured into a common divine consciousness.

The School for Life, p. 66

In this lies our wealth, on this tenet we draw:  
that few are too rich and still fewer too poor.

*Living Wellsprings*, p. 191

Human comes first, and Christian next.

*Living Wellsprings*, p. 249

The common good: in these three words we find the only basic law for all peoples and kingdoms on earth.

*The Common Good*, p. 233