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The Charism of Karuna - Life Story of Sister Karuna Mary Braganza

By Pearl Drego

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The Charism of Karuna - Life Story of Sister Karuna Mary Braganza is more than a life-story. It is the mapping of the Church, religious life, apostolate in India in the latter half of the twentieth century from the window of the life of a religious sister, Karuna Mary Braganza, of the Society of Sacred Heart. The author, Pearl Drego, has succeeded in presenting the life story of Sr. Karuna, an eminent educationist cum social worker and a former principal of the prestigious Sophia college of Mumbai, in the context of a continuous inner dialogue taking place between enlightened persons and their religious and socio-cultural situations, simultaneously assessing their impact on the national and international scene.

The book has 32 chapters and each chapter has something to offer about the familial, social, cultural life of the people who influenced the life of Sr. Karuna and whose life she has influenced. It is not mere information of the context that is offered by the author. The context is narrated to illustrate how it forms the entire texture of a life and how one can respond to it positively or negatively, considering it a blessing or a curse; and how it can inspire others to encounter life situations with courage and conviction.

There are people who can make a difference in the lives of others. They may be able to influence only a few directly. But those who can transform not only the lives of a few but also systems and structures do a great service to humanity as a whole. To trudge through the unbeaten path is not easy. But those who have the courage to do so can cut a formidable path and make it easy for others to explore further dimensions. The path-breaker who emerges out of the pages of this well-written and well-documented book is Sr. Karuna Mary Braganza. She has inspired thousands of her students and the poor whom she served and continues to inspire those who are seeking to make a difference in the lives of others and do not know how. She could integrate her philosophy of education

with her philosophy of social commitment for the transformation of individuals as well as the marginalised groups.

At a time when education is being commercialised Sr. Karuna's insight into the meaning of education for personal and social transformation as well as her ability to transform her vision into action by identifying herself with the deprived and rejected sections of the society is remarkable. In the face of thousands of religious who blame their religious systems and structures for their option to settle down with mediocrity or inaction, insulating themselves from the challenges of life and pretending to be unaffected by the cries of the poor, the pro-active attitude of Sr. Karuna shows that it is possible to be different and to make a difference if one is committed to the Lord and if one listens to the inner voice that calls everyone to fulfill her or his mission in this world.

The author, Pearl Drego, has done a great service to the Church in India by ably portraying the life of this nun with a mission, tracking the bends, curves and even the apparent dead-ends which she overcomes in her life's journey both in her interior soul and in the world of possibilities and challenges. The issues that the Church in India is grappling with, namely, the struggle to keep the spirit of Vatican II alive, inculturation, inter-faith dialogue, socio-pastoral commitment, option for the poorest of the poor, empowerment of women, education for social transformation, the spirituality of social action etc. pass through the prism of the person of Sr. Karuna, and Pearl Drego in her inimitable style narrates how they find colourful expressions in the context of the life of Sr. Karuna.

This is a well-researched study of a person, written with affection but not affectation, open and objective in approach but with respect and charity, so that the work seems to transcend the category of a biography. Pearl Drego's ability to narrate the life of her subject with clarity and depth is remarkable; indeed, the person becomes an event! The citations, the dialogues, the anecdotes, pictures etc. included in the book, *The Charism of Karuna - Life Story of Sister Karuna Mary Braganza*, indeed, make the life story of Sr. Karuna a literary celebration.

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Chief Editor, *Journal of Indian Theology*.