Quotes of Srila Prabhupada appreciating spiritual dramas

Dramatic performances were enacted during the presence of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu, but the players who took part in such dramas were all pure devotees; no outsiders were allowed. The members of ISKCON should follow this example. Whenever they stage dramatic performances about the lives of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu or Lord Kåñëa, the players must be pure devotees. Professional players and dramatic actors have no sense of devotional service, and therefore although they can perform very artistically, there is no life in such performances. Çréla Bhaktisiddhänta Sarasvaté Öhäkura used to refer to such an actor as yäträ-dale närada, which means “farcical Närada.” Sometimes an actor in a drama plays the part of Närada Muni, although in his private life he is not at all like Närada Muni because he is not a devotee. Such actors are not needed in dramatic performances about the lives of Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu and Lord Kåñëa.

Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu used to perform dramas with Advaita Prabhu, Çréväsa Öhäkura and other devotees in the house of Candraçekhara

- Ädi Lila 10.13

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So you have got some talent for writing and producing dramas and now Krishna has given you the opportunity for dovetailing your talents in His service. Very good. When I go there I shall be very glad to see these dramas enacted. Yes, I acted the part of Advaita Prabhu in one such drama. I organized that theater performance in my youthhood. My friends were trained up and we performed and it was very much appreciated by the highest class of men in Calcutta. We were invited to many places to perform the drama. Lord Caitanya inaugurated these Vaisnava dramas, it is true, but where to obtain such copies of these plays I do not know. While performing such dramas, always the actors must be Vaisnavas. Outsiders may help but devotees should have all the major roles. So you may perform such plays conveniently. It is a very nice program, but do not sacrifice other programs on account of it.

- Letter to Vrindaban Candra – Bombay 13 April, 1971

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People will appreciate such kértana without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Çré Kåñëa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord’s glories.

- Madhy Lila 11.95

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I am especially pleased to hear that our KC drama program is being developed by you nicely. We have got unlimited stock for such dramas, so go on in this way, improving more and more, and Krishna will give you direction so that one day, very soon, your all dreams will come true and you will be acting our KC dramas on the Broadway.

Everyone enjoys play-acting, only there is at present a dearth of proper material for elevating the general mass of people to the proper standards. Practically, the whole world is going to hell. There is no decency, no gentleman anywhere. So we have to portray to the people of this fallen Age of Kali-yuga what is the right standard for their behavior. When they see that, Oh, here is such nice activity, such nice people, they will automatically become changed, simply we have to engage their senses in the right taste. So this drama-playing is very good presentation for attracting their attention and displaying Krishna Consciousness very beautifully. Make everything very simple, without too much fancy costumes, and the real message will come out very nicely……

…..So in combination with the others you go on thinking how to improve these KC plays and dramas and how to give the public more and more of Krishna Consciousness. That is real preaching work.

- Letter to Nayanabhirama – Bombay, 22 December 1971

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So I do not care very much for these plays and dramas unless they are coming directly from the Vedas. If we can recite from Bhagavad gita the first chapter without any need for elaborate scenery or stage-props and gorgeous dresses, that is best. Just like your Shakespeare. Macbeth may be recited by two men, without anything else, and simply by their acting ability and the meaningful words alone, they can very easily capture the entire audience and give them real substance. We have so many stories, like Jagai-Madhai, Krishna departing for Mathura, like that. Satire will not help us. Our message is very grave, and because it is the Absolute Truth, it will work without any artificial presentation.

- Letter to Madhuvisa London, 8 July, 1972

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Regarding the dramas, my point is not to deviate from gravity and compromise or distract from the situation. Keep this point in vision and continue. That is a very good proposal to stage one play based upon Lord Caitanya. Read TLC on the stage, just like Caitanya Mahaprabhu is giving instruction to Sanatana Goswami, and the actors may speak little philosophy, without need for special costumes or other things. Then kirtana. There must be always kirtana. Dialogue, kirtana; then again dialogue, again kirtana; again repeat; like that. No humor should be there, just philosophy and kirtana. If it is successful, then the same dialogue-kirtana may be followed by other sankirtana parties in Europe and America.

- Letter to Madhuvisa – Amsterdam, 29 July, 1972

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Yes, I did not see your drama in New Vrndavana about the advent of Lord Krsna. But I have heard from others that it was done very nicely, so I am very much pleased. These kinds of dramas about Krsna, Krsna's pastimes, and also Lord Caitanya's pastimes, are very much desirable for presenting to the public widely. So if you can organize your traveling party to present such dramas all over your country and other places that will be very much appreciated. Perhaps you can work together with Visnujana for presenting our road show opera to the public also. I had opportunity to see that opera in Pittsburgh and it was very well done, with a lot of drama and dancing as well. You may keep me informed from time to time what is the progress of your play-acting group, Vaikuntha Players.

- Letter to Nayanabhirama – Los Angeles, 18 Septempber 1972

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………and I have noted the contents, along with the drama-script from Srimad-Bhagavatam. It is very nice. This kind of play-acting is wanted. Now introduce it to your country-men very nicely presented. Emphasis should be given to the words of Bhagavat, they are spiritual and will have powerful effect if someone only hears them with attention, do not be very much enamoured by fancy costumes and stage-decorations, they will only distract. Real acting art is to know how to speak. The greatest dramas, even in your western culture, they can be played without any extra equipment. Just like your Shakespeare--sometime I saw they were playing one drama, I think Hamlet or something like that, and only two men were there on the bare stage and everyone was praising. So the art is catching their ears. Now in that spirit go on with your work and try to do something wonderful.

- Letter to Jayadhrama – Ahmedabad 13 December 1972

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Dramas are alright if you can perform them nicely. Even if you don't speak them in English, they can be rendered into Hindi on the microphone while the drama goes on.

- Letter to Aksayananda – Calcutta, 13 January 1976

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