

AGORE SOCIETY  
F.N.Y.CELEBRATES

**114 TH BIRTHDAY OF  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE**





SUCHITRA MITRA

As the youngest of a family deeply devoted to everything Tagore stood for, Suchitra imbibed her love of the songs and poetry of Rabindranath. From childhood she had unerring ear for music and a natural gift of voice and expression. After taking her diploma from Sangit-Bhavana, Suchitra resumed her academic studies and graduated with an M.A. degree. Thereafter her main preoccupation was the organization of her own school of Rabindra-Sangit. The school started in 1946 and was named as "RABITIRTHA." As a teacher, Suchitra has proved herself equal to her success as an exponent and interpreter. She has been associated also with Rabindra-Bharati University. Suchitra has travelled widely in India and abroad.

Although the songs of Tagore have been her main interest, Suchitra has not been averse to participating in such other performing arts as dance, drama or recitation -- provided, of course, Rabindranath was connected with the numbers in some way.

Suchitra's personality is moulded by the songs she sings in all their variegated modes and moods. Her songs evoke visions of beauty and wonderment, colour and fragrance, love and pain, memories and longing, joy and freedom.

Suchitra Mitra is considered as one of the most exponent classical artists of Rabindra-Sangit and in recognition thereof she was awarded "Padmasree" in 1973.



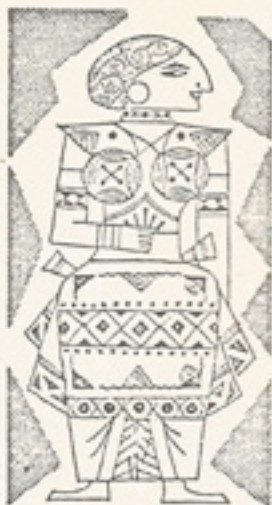
# Tasher Desh

"Tasher Desh" or "The Kingdom of Cards", a satire on conventional life, was originally conceived by Tagore as a short story almost half a century earlier than its dramatized version came before the public.

The location of the story is on an island, the citizens of which are drawn in the image of playing cards, painted, designed and labelled according to an unchangeable code of rules. To such a stagnant society comes the message of youth and liberty and creates a commotion which eventually destroys the age-old customs and beliefs of the islanders.

## THE DRAMA

The drama opens with the prince, who symbolises youth, disclosing to his friend, the merchant's son, his feeling of utter boredom with the life of ease he was leading and his longing for an adventurous voyage across the seas to strange lands. The queen mother, realising her son's restlessness, expresses consent to the journey and blesses him,



The scene shifts and we find the prince and the merchant's son shipwrecked and stranded in an unknown island, peopled by men and women of habits so strange that they would appear to be almost unreal. From their stilted speech and their geometric movements it appeared that they had no will of their own. In fact, they seemed to be quite content with an existence in which all actions were controlled by an inexorable code of conduct sanctified by tradition. The prince, however, cannot help bursting into fits of laughter at their antics. This shocks the islanders as laughter (as also sneezing) is taboo in their land.

At this stage, the Ruler of the Island enters the scene followed by the queen, princesses and courtiers. The princely visitor welcomes him with a song which offends the gathering as being sacrilegious and they seek to purify the atmosphere by singing the National Anthem of their island kingdom. The king then asks the foreign visitor if he has brought any gift, to which the prince replies that he has brought the rarest of gifts—the gift of 'restlessness'—to the placid land. The audacious remark creates a stir and the banishment of the visitor is demanded, but the queen and the princesses, whose hearts are already moved by the appeal of the visiting prince, oppose the demand for banishment.



The presence of the prince would appear to have created an upheaval in the thought-processes of the islanders. They have grown restless and they wander about in the forest. The maidens inspired by their new awareness of the beauty of nature start singing songs of love. Nature speaks to them, clouds bring mystic messages to them from beyond the horizon. Hartani, a princess, is seen busy gathering flowers in the forest. Ruitan, a prince, comes to take her back but she has no time for what appears to her now to be a petrified court. He is mystified by her strange attitude but slowly and almost unknowingly starts falling in love with her; primeval yearnings seem to be stirring in his heart. Similarly, the rest of the islanders become aware of changes taking place within themselves; they have started dreaming dreams of romance.

The king appears on the scene and expresses surprise at the perfume of flowers and singing of birds and when he faces his courtiers, he is amazed at their loss of rigidity in movement and behaviour. He calls for the visiting prince's explanation for creating indiscipline amongst the islanders. The prince replies that he did what he did because he wanted to. The rest of the gathering including the queen, one by one, repeat what the prince said. The king thereupon orders the banishment of the queen, but as she is about to leave, he begs her to take him along with her. This way the king too is freed from the age-old bonds of rigid conduct and they all join in to sing the song of emancipation.



