

International Conference on ‘Kipling in India: India in Kipling’ (26-28 April 2016)

Concept Note:

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born and brought up in India till the age of five speaking an Indian language, and after schooling in England, returned to India to work here as a journalist for The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, from 1882 to 1887, and then The Pioneer, Allahabad (‘the leading paper in India,’ as Kipling described it) from 1887 to 1889. He left India in March 1889 to return just once briefly in 1891.

His father, J. Lockwood Kipling, had come out to India in 1865 as a teacher of art and crafts in Bombay/Mumbai at what later became the J.J. School of Art. He moved in 1875 to Lahore as the curator of the museum, and published in 1891 a book titled *Beast and Man in India*; he returned to England in 1893. Rudyard’s only sibling, Alice (Trix), married Capt. Jack Fleming of the Survey of India, published two novels of her own, *The Heart of a Maid* (1891) and *A Pinchbeck Goddess* (1897), and lived on in India with her husband while coping with a mental illness. She and Rudyard had earlier both contributed poems to a volume titled *Echoes* (1883).

When Rudyard Kipling left India in 1889, he was already the author of eight books of poetry and fiction set in India, including *Departmental Ditties* and *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Later, while living in the UK and the USA, he published several more works set in India, including a co-authored novel *The Naulahka* (1892), the two *Jungle Books* (1894, 1895), and finally, his masterpiece *Kim* (1901).

Beyond these bare facts, the larger significance of Kipling’s formative and vital connection with India as a person and a writer has been summed up thus by one of his recent biographers:

India was where Rudyard Kipling was happiest, where he learned his craft, where he rediscovered himself through his writing and came of age as a writer. India made him, charged his imagination, and after he left India in March 1889 at the age of twenty-three he was most completely himself as an artist when re-inhabiting the two Indian worlds he had left behind. He lived thereafter on borrowed time, a state of higher creativity he was unable to maintain once he had exhausted his Indian memories with the writing of his masterwork *Kim*. (Charles Allen, *Kipling Sahib*, 2007).

There is, thus, much to examine, explore and reevaluate in Kipling’s connection with India and his writings about India, in terms of locale, culture and language, the themes he chose to write on, and the historical and political context then and now.

An international conference on ‘Kipling in India: India in Kipling’ was organized during 26-28 April 2016 at IAS in association with the Kipling Society, United Kingdom. Professor Harish Trivedi, Professor of English, University of Delhi and Professor Janet Montefiore, 36 St Dunstan’s Street, Canterbury, CT2 8BZ were the Conveners of the conference. The welcome address was given by Professor K. Satchidanandan, National Fellow, IAS on the behalf of Director, IAS, Shimla. Professor Harish Trivedi, Convener of the seminar gave introductory remarks.

PARTICIPANTS

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