

## **Clone of Vivekananda Tree Planted in Almora**

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Two clones of a peepal tree under which Swami Vivekananda meditated while on his sojourn in the Kumaon Himalayas in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were planted on Friday at exactly the same spot in Kakrighat near Almora, where the original tree once stood before it died in June 2014.

Although the exact age of the original tree was not known, it is believed to be at least 200 years old. A team of scientists from the Central Agro Forestry Research Institute, Jhansi, G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUAT), Pantnagar, and Vivekananda Parvatiya Krishi Anusandhan Sansthan, Almora took up the job of rejuvenating the tree under the guidance of senior scientist S. Ayappan, ex-director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). After inspecting the tree in October 2013, the scientists found that the tree had become quite old and the living stem was only around 90% of the total spread. Although the rejuvenation process failed, ten clonal plants from the original tree were successfully raised at Agroforestry Centre, GBPUAT, Pantnagar.

Two of the cloned trees were planted in Kakrighat on Friday by Swami Balabhadrananda, assistant general secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math in the presence of among others, Savin Bansal, the district magistrate of Almora.

Recounting the entire exercise, Salil Tewari, professor at G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, who was involved in the cloning process, told *TOI*, "Since 90 per cent of the tree had already died, we disinfected whatever branches we got. A few cuttings were regenerated and put in a glass house under controlled conditions. At the end of the process, only 10 saplings could survive. Since March this year, the cuttings were put in open conditions so that they were able to survive in extreme weather during winter."

According to the book, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol I, Vivekananda spent one night at Kakrighat along with his brother disciple Swami Akhandananda while he was on the way to Almora from Nainital in 1890. He meditated under the peepal tree at the confluence of rivers Koshi and Suial. The book recounts Vivekananda as saying after the completion of the meditation, "I have just passed through one of the greatest moments of my life. Here under this peepal tree, one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved. I have found oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. In this microcosm of the body everything that is there (in the macrocosm), exists. I have seen the whole universe within an atom." This realization at Kakrighat was later expressed in his lectures on macrocosm and microcosm in New York delivered on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1896.

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