

# Effectiveness of Convocation Addresses

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**Abstract:** *The term "convocation" refers specifically to the entirety of the alumni of a college which functions as one of the university's representative bodies. The Taittiriya Upanisad is of great meaning for the convocation address imparted by the teacher to the pupils who were about to leave the gurukula. During learning in a university, students should be taught different values and knowledge have to transmit in the grace of wisdom and compassion. During process of learning students work and live together with a community of learning and scholarship where they play various roles for learning, gather new experiences and establish mutual beneficial relations with outside community. University education helps students however they turn them into agitators due to various reasons.*

## Introduction

The term "convocation" refers specifically to the entirety of the alumni of a college which functions as one of the university's representative bodies. Due to its inordinate size, the Convocation elects a standing committee, which is responsible for making representations concerning the views of the alumni to the university administration. However, the convocation also can hold general meetings, at which any alumnus can attend. The main function of the convocation is to represent the views of the alumni to the university administration, to encourage co-operation among alumni, especially in regard to donations, and to elect members of the University's governing body (known variously as the Senate, Council, Board, etc., depending on the particular institution, but basically equivalent to a board of directors of a corporation). The equivalent of the Convocation in the Scottish university system is the General Council.

In the University of Oxford, Convocation was originally the main governing body of the University, consisting of all doctors and masters of the University, but it now comprises all graduates of the university and its only remaining function is to elect the Chancellor of the University and the Professor of Poetry. (The equivalent body at Cambridge is the Senate.) At Durham University, Convocation consists of all the graduates of the University along with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the heads of colleges, and all professors, readers, senior lecturers and lecturers. It has the power to discuss and make representations on "any matter whatsoever relating to the University" and appoints the Chancellor of the University, most recently Sir Thomas Allen on 11 October 2011. Convocation was established by the fundamental statute of the University in 1835 and then consisted of MAs and doctors "of the three faculties" at Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin who were members of the University when the statute was passed and those afterwards admitted to the degrees of DD, DCL, MD or MS at Durham. Women were admitted to Convocation from 1913.

In the University of London, convocation, between its establishment in 1858 and its abolition in 2003, consisted of the university's graduates who were involved in the university's governance. After 1900, convocation had the power to elect the Chancellor. At some universities and colleges graduation events are called "convocations", as opposed to commencements in other universities. At the University of Toronto, convocation events are held at a specific venue named Convocation Hall. At other universities such as Syracuse University, University of Oklahoma, and University of Utah, graduation ceremonies consist of both a commencement and a convocation with the commencement being the larger, university-wide ceremony and the individual colleges presenting degrees at a convocation. At other colleges such as The University of Rochester, University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown University, Boston College, The University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Cincinnati, University of Florida, California State University, East Bay, Miami University, The University of Minnesota, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Dakota, Simpson College, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, Mount Holyoke College, The College of William and Mary, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Scripps College, The College of St. Scholastica, The University of West Georgia, Marymount University, and William Paterson University convocation refers to a formal ceremony in which arriving freshmen are welcomed and may sign the College "matricula", a ceremonial parchment that contains the names of all of the students and alumni. New Zealand universities have courts of convocation by which all graduates elect representatives to the institutions' governing bodies.

## ➤ Indian History of Convocation address

The *Taittiriya Upanisad* is of great meaning for the convocation address imparted by the teacher to the pupils who were about to leave the *gurukula*. In sending the student out into the world after his graduation, the teacher feels as if the student is going out of his own family. It is observed that though the teacher is highly learned, his heart is full of tender feelings. He is very anxious and aware for the welfare of his students. The lack of personal contact between the teacher and the student is one of the defects of the present day educational system. In modern universities, because of the lack of personal contact between the teacher and taught, the convocation address delivered at the time of graduation seems so dry and impersonal and sometimes meaningless. Formerly, the convocation address in the *gurukula* created an everlasting inspiration in the minds of the students.

R.L. Rawat observes "These final addresses of the teachers of ancient India can be compared to the convocation address of modern universities with the only difference that while ancient addresses invited the attention to the inner spirit, i.e. spiritual ethical aspect, the modern ones remain confined to mere formal external aspects."

In the eleventh *anuvaka* of the *Siksa Valli* of the *Taittiriya Upanisad* an excellent convocation address is introduced to the outgoing students. In this section remarks of Swami Chinmayananda represent the Hindu commandments and the entire address methodically concludes in seven impressions of thought under the captions.

- Charity and 'laws of giving'
- regarding one's relationship with others

- Advices ruling one's own mode of living with orientation to the society and oneself
- Remedy for doubts regarding one's duty and conduct in life
- Doubts One's attitude towards the learned and the wise in society
- Regulating one's relationship with the last generation and the present elders
- Relationship with oneself and one's teachers

The first instruction in the convocation address of the *Taittiriya Upanisad* is *satyam vadam*, i.e. speak the truth. Sankaracarya says that truth is that which is identified to be true by knowledge and observation

**सत्यं वद यथाप्रमाज्दवागतम वक्तव्यं तद्वदा**

*satyam vada yathapramarjdvagatam vaktavyam tadvada,*

i.e. speak only that which is to be uttered and which is consistent with the knowledge acquired through the valid proof. The aim and objective of philosophy is truth. Truth is the substratum of all positive and negative entities. The word *satya* is derived from the root *as* to be i.e. *sattayam* means existing and *satya* means the quality which is essential for existence. The Hindu scriptures lay great emphasis on truth. *Rta* and moral order are also identified with truth. In the *Satapatha Brahmana* it is specified that it is the only *vrata* observed by the gods. The *Bhahadarapyaka Upanisad satya* has been identified with

**धर्मयो वात स धर्मः सत्यं वे तत् तस्मात् सत्यं वदंताम्हुर धर्म वदतीति**

**धर्मिः वा वदनतम सत्यं वदतीति**

*dharma-yo vat sa dharmah satyam vai tat tasmāt satyam vadantamahur dharmam vadatīti / dharmaih va vadantam satyam vadatīti /*

i.e. what is dharma is indeed *satya*. Hence people say of a man who is talking the truth, he is speaking *dharma* or one who is speaking *dharma* is speaking the truth. In the *Kena Upanisad satya* is believed to be the abode of the *Upanisad*. In the *Mundaka Upanisad* it is said that truth wins ever, not falsehood. With truth is paved the road to the Divine. In the *Pragya Upanisad*, it is said that one who says falsehood withers away to the root. Further in the same *Upanisad* it is said that

**तेसमेसैवा ब्रह्मलोका एसम तपो ब्रह्मकार्यम येसु सत्यं प्रतिस्त्थितम**

*tesamesaiva brahmaloka yesam tapo brahmacaryam yesu satyam pratisthitam,*

i.e. they indeed possess that Brahman creation that have austerity and chastity, in whom truth is established.

#### ➤ World History of Convocation Address:

##### ❖ Before 1295:

Prior to 1295, the Church in England had collected in diocesan and provincial synods to control disciplinary and other matters interesting the body of the clergy. Moreover, the archbishops, bishops, abbots and priors used to take their place in the national council on account of the estates they held in chief (in capite) of the English Crown. But, the beneficed clergy took no part in it.

The increasing frequency of royal appeals for money grants and the unwillingness of the bishops to be responsible for allowing them had brought Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, as early as 1225, to summon proctors of cathedral, collegiate and conventicle churches to attend his regional synod, and gradually that typical principle became part of the arrangement of Convocation. The failure of the irregular attempt of Edward I Plantagenet to convoke the clergy at Northampton led him to issue (1283) a writ to the Archbishop with a view to Convocation meeting in London in the same year, and at that meeting a 'benevolence' was suitably selected.

##### ❖ After 1295:

Besides to the Baronage and Commons of the kingdom, after 1295, a representative body of the beneficed clergy summoned to attend personally in Parliament, the summons being conveyed by the insertion, in the bishop's writ of summons to Parliament, of the proeminentes clause. That summons was the beginning of a new phase in the long struggle waged by the Crown on the subject of the taxation of the clergy. It was to facilitate the obtaining of money grants that Edward I endeavored once more to unite representatives of the clergy and laity in one deliberative assembly, composed on the basis of temporal property. To have countenanced the attempt would have been to recognize the Crown's claim to tax church property, and the clergy insisted upon their constitutional right of making their money grants in Convocation. The struggle between the Crown and the clergy continued until 1337, when the Crown gave way, though retaining the proeminentes clause in the bishop's writ of summons. Authorities differ as to whether the Parliamentary proctors of the clergy sat in the Lower House or in the Upper House; most probably they sat and voted in the Lower House.

The question of the exact relation of Convocation to the newer Parliamentary representatives of the clergy is obscure; nor is the obscurity lessened by the fact that the proctors of the clergy for Convocation were frequently the same persons as the proctors of the clergy for Parliament. Two opinions have found defenders: first, that the older ecclesiastical council fused with the Parliamentary representatives of the clergy; the and the second, that by the process of gradual decay of Parliamentary representation of the clergy, part of their rights passed to the ecclesiastical councils, thus giving rise to the historical connection between the Convocations and Parliament. The latter view, ably advocated by Stubbs, holds the field.

The division of Convocation into Upper - and Lower House came about gradually, and were not formed, as is sometimes supposed, on the model of the two Houses of Parliament. In 1296, the members of Convocation resolved themselves for deliberative purposes into four groups: bishops, monastic representatives, dignitaries and proctors of the clergy. Eventually, Convocation came to open with a joint session presided over by the archbishop, after which the bishops and abbots remained to deliberate as the Upper House, while the rest withdrew to deliberate as the Lower House.

The objection of the clergy of sitting in Parliament lessened their influence over that body; at the same time they secured the right of meeting when Parliament met, and that right of meeting involved the right of petitioning and to some extent of legislating for themselves. That idea of Convocation as the clerical parliament had important consequences; the right to tax church property was successfully maintained; but, the

clergy could neither elect nor be elected to the House of Commons, making a person in Holy orders ineligible for Westminster Parliament. At the same time the legislation of Convocation was binding on the clergy only and not upon the laity.

#### ❖ **The Reformation period**

During Reformation period Convocation lost its independence and saw its powers curtailed by the Act of Submission, which enacts that Convocation can only meet by royal command, and that without royal leave and license no new canons, constitutions or ordinances may be made. This act was repealed in Queen Mary I Tudor's reign, but revived by 1 Eliz. (1558-59), and still remains in full force.

The climax of Convocation's degradation was reached when, after the Act of Supremacy (1534), Thomas Cromwell, the representative of king Henry VIII Tudor, though a layman, asserted his right to preside, a right never subsequently exercised.

#### ❖ **Post-Reformation period**

The Act of Submission of Henry VIII was stringently interpreted by the judges at a committee before the Lords in Parliament as forbidding, even after obtaining royal assent, any canon either against the prerogative of the king, against common law, against any statute law or against any custom of the realm. The loss of legislative independence paved the way for the loss of taxing powers, which were finally renounced in 1665, the right of voting at Parliamentary elections being obtained in return. The power of Convocation of dealing with cases of heresy has been exercised but rarely, and then to no purpose.

This tradition continued to be convoked at the beginning of each Parliament, but its sittings were interrupted from 1640 to 1660, to be resumed after the Stuart Restoration. In 1689, in view of the opposition of the clergy to the Toleration Act of William and Mary, no summons was issued to Convocation. However, The Commons, protested against the innovation, and their petition had its effect; at the same time Archbishop Tillotson, and to some extent his successor Tenison, met the difficulties of the situation by refusing to allow any deliberations. Convocation was summoned, met and was prorogued. Parties were formed and claims were made, insisting upon the independence of the Lower House on the analogy of the House of Commons. Atterbury led the malcontents; Wake, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, Kennet, Hoadly and Gibson led the defence. The question was really a political one. Toryism dominated the Lower House; Liberalism, alike in politics and theology, pervaded the Upper House. Permission to deliberate led to trouble in 1701, and prorogation followed.

The Bangorian Controversy which was arising from of Hoadly's sermon led to similar results in 1717. The opposition of the Lower House was worn out by repeated prorogations immediately following the opening session, and with the exception of the discussions allowed in 1741 and 1742, Convocation ceased to be a deliberative body until 1854.

#### ❖ **In Modern times**

The old organization having survived many earnest Anglicans of the early nineteenth century, anxious to revive the synodal life of the Anglican Church, sought and obtained the relaxation of the customary immediate prorogation. A brief session was authorized in 1854 (The example was followed by York in 1859). The action of Convocation as a deliberative body began in 1861, when, at its own request, the Crown licensed it to amend the twenty-ninth of the canons of 1603 on the subject of sponsors, and although no result followed, new canons were passed in 1865, 1887 and 1892.

Apart from such general authorizations, the Crown also possesses the right to submit definite business to the consideration of Convocation. This is done by "Special Letters of Business", a method used in 1872 and in 1907, in submitting the reports of the ritual commissioners to its consideration.

Arthur Featherstone Marshall wrote a trenchant parody of the Church of England's Convocation debates in his pseudonymous *The Comedy of Convocation of the English Church* (1868). Its characters include Deans Blunt, Pliable, Primitive, Pompous and Critical; Archdeacons Jolly, Theory and Chasuble; and Doctors Easy, Viewy and Candour.

Lay representation developed from the House of Laymen, which first met in connection with the Convocation of Canterbury in 1886 (York, 1892), and formally in legislation in the Church Assembly (1919) and General Synod (1970).

#### ➤ **Effectiveness of Convocation Addresses**

At the end of graduation or after completing ant degree students listen to a convocation address arranged by the particular university. Convocation addresses help students in getting awareness regarding current scenario of education. Students collect many thoughts. Some general thoughts are given below which are very helpful to them in understanding nature of education, need of society, current scenario of education etc.

- Students can think about community. After completing education they can help community.
- Continuous positive efforts of university foster good values in students.
- Education shows proper direction to us.
- Education is the foundation and the consequence of rapid economic growth.
- The modern youth have different values rather than old generation.
- Our youth's response towards present crisis is notable. It is done through education.
- Research and aim at breakthrough in scientific theories should be given first preference in our needs.
- Higher education must aim at producing leaders, creating new knowledge, striving to produce better individuals and identifying the hidden interest and talents of individuals and helping them to develop their potential.
- Education process of higher education is to realize the India human resource potential.
- Persons who are educated think about others and society as well.
- Our fundamental national goal should be the improvement and strengthening of universities.
- Education policy must be flexible according to circumstances and it should also understand the urgent need for education requirements.
- The function of university is based on society.
- The nature of University towards teachers and students affects community.
- In university, English has been taught in such way that ensures chances of employment but it can be taught by well-recognized methods of language teaching which would strengthen students' level and competency.
- Studying all subjects will make their own contribution to the growing of the human spirit.
- Role of university in everybody's life has much more importance.
- Leadership of the academic community affects the academic system.



- Higher education is correlated with the economic development.
- Role of education is to keep pace with changes in the international environment.
- University should foster freedom of thought and independence of judgment
- Students' discipline is the problem.
- Investing in higher education is much better for the growth of country.
- The demand for higher education is social rather than economically productive demand.
- With the help of education, we can have programme of action for existing problems.
- The content of the education is changed as per need of society and country.
- Low secondary education completion rate affects higher education.
- National development is our greatest need and for that we all should work together.
- University has to provide leadership.
- If students are poorly trained or lack proper standards of conduct and discipline them as a result of it they would not work properly in any field and unable to right decisions.
- During learning in a university, students to should be taught different values and knowledge have to transmit in the grace of wisdom and compassion.
- What a country can spend on education affects the economic gap between the rich and the poor countries.
- The skills and competency level of students have to meet requirements of workplace.
- We can think about a concept which is more important than what we are.
- The person who is interested in getting knowledge is free from any kind of passion like getting money, having authority or having respectful status.
- Refusing to attend classes or destroy college or public poverty-such lower standards of student's work in reality they are hurting themselves and damaging their own property.
- During process of learning students work and live together with a community of learning and scholarship where they play various roles for learning, gather new experiences and establish mutual beneficial relations with outside community.
- Education is an eternal process. It does not end with graduation.
- University education helps students however they turn them into agitators due to various reasons.
- The irony of Indian education is that the students and he became greatest champion.
- The conscience of the teachers will have to their primary responsibility.
- Pursuing after only one subject and misinterpret of the need of employment ruins children's opportunity for getting complete education.
- Students of any stream deserve the time and attention.
- Qualitative research work is the output of an intense love of one's subject.
- Students should be aware of infinite serpent power by studying our great leaders and saints.
- In the field of teaching students should not be considered as products but as human beings.

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