



Novel Insights, *An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Impact Factor: 4.25(IIFS), 8.2(IJIN)

Volume-II, Issue-II, November 2025, Page No. 130- 136

Published by Uttarsuri, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.2.issue.02W.052



Freedom of Expression and Good Governance

Dr. Chingangbam Newgold Devi, *Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, G.P. Women's College, DMU, Manipur, India*

Dr. Achom Roshan Kumar, *Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, G.P. Women's College, DMU, Manipur, India*

Dr. R.K. Helen Devi, *Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, G.P. Women's College, DMU, Manipur, India*

Received: 25.11.2025; Accepted: 30.11.2025; Available online: 30.11.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

The present paper discusses the significance of freedom of expression in good governance through secondary sources of data. Freedom of expression is necessary both for individual and for the society. Until and unless people identify and share their problems and issues, no one can recognise and understand their concern difficulties and challenges, but also their appreciations towards the state for good governance cannot be reached. To have good governance, a free and fair relation between the public and the state is necessary. Accessing the freedom of expression by the people helps in having free and fair relations with the state. Many international constitution and documents guaranteed freedom of expression as one of the human rights. Freedom of expression is significant both for good governance and for safeguarding democracy. But limitations and restrictions in practising freedom of speech and expression is also mentioned in many international documents. Therefore, people should take great care while expressing their viewpoints and sharing their opinions, so that their views and opinions do not harm the sentiments of other people or ethics and morality of the state and society.

Keywords: governance, good governance, freedom of expression.

Introduction:

Freedom of expression plays an important role in the life of a man as well as in the society. Until and unless people identify their problems and issues, no one can recognise his/her difficulties. Direct relation between the public and the government is necessary for good governance in a state. And for this freedom of expression is necessary. So that people can share their ideas, experiences, grievances, challenges, appreciations, suggestions, etc. Also, people should take great care while expressing their viewpoints and sharing opinions so that those viewpoints and opinions do not hurt the sentiments of other people or ethics and morality of the state and society. There are different platforms where people can share their opinions such as print media, electronic media, and social media, other online

Freedom of Expression and Good... Chingangbam Newgold Devi, Achom Roshan Kumar & R.K. Helen Devi
platforms, etc. The paper discusses the importance of freedom of expression in good governance. Secondary sources are concerned for writing the paper.

Governance and Good Governance:

World Bank in its report *Governance and Development*, define governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (The World Bank, 1994).¹⁰ Three distinct aspects of governance have been identified by the World Bank. These may be mentioned as (i) the form of political regime; (ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development; and (iii) the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge functions (The World Bank, 1994).¹⁰ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) define “governance as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). The concept of governance can be used in various contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance.

“Since governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.”⁹

Different stakeholders are involved in assuring good governance. According to UNESCAP, major stakeholders of good governance include:

“Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, other actors may include influential land lords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, religious leaders, finance institutions political parties, the military etc. The situation in urban areas is much more complex. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc. may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process. All actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the ‘civil society.’ In some countries in addition to the civil society, organized crime syndicates also influence decision-making, particularly in urban areas and at the national level. Similarly formal government structures are one means by which decisions are arrived at and implemented. At the national level, informal decision-making structures, such as ‘kitchen cabinets or informal advisors may exist. In urban areas, organized crime syndicates such as the ‘land Mafia’ may influence decision-making. In some rural areas locally, powerful families may make or influence decision-making. Such, informal decision-making is often the result of corrupt practices or leads to corrupt practices.”⁹

Good governance is concerned with the processes for making and implementing decisions, not about making ‘correct’ decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions. Good decision-making processes share several characteristics with good governance. All have a positive effect on various aspects of local government

Freedom of Expression and Good... Chingangbam Newgold Devi, Achom Roshan Kumar & R.K. Helen Devi including consultation policies and practices, meeting procedures, service quality protocols, councillor and officer conduct, role clarification and good working relationships. The World Bank defines

“Good governance is epitomized by predictable and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law” (The World Bank, 1994).¹⁴

UNESCAP has given eight major characteristics of good governance. It may be mentioned as

“Participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.”⁹

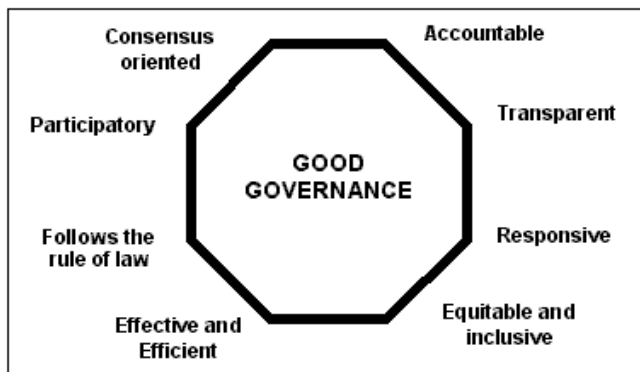


Figure 1: Characteristics of Good Governance (UNESCAP)⁹

1. **Participation:** Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.
2. **Rule of law:** Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.
3. **Transparency:** Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.
4. **Responsiveness:** Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.
5. **Consensus oriented:** Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole

Freedom of Expression and Good... Chingangbam Newgold Devi, Achom Roshan Kumar & R.K. Helen Devi
community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.

6. Equity and inclusiveness: A society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

7. Effectiveness and efficiency: Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

8. Accountability: Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.⁹

It is clear from the discussion of the definition; stakeholders involves and characteristics of good governance that it is little difficult to achieve totally what good governance is in reality. It is much similar to the ideal type. Only a very few countries and societies have successful in achieving good governance in its totality. However, actions must be taken continuously to work towards achieving good governance in reality in order to ensure sustainable human development. In India, Good Governance Day is observed annually as Susasan Diwas, on 25 December to enhance accountability in the government, since 2014 to honour the late Prime Minister Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Nandigama, 2024).⁵

Freedom of Expression and Good Governance:

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantee the right to freedom of expression, both in Article 19. According to Article 19 of UDHR,

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”⁸

Freedom of expression is not only important in its own right but is also necessary to achieve other human rights. Freedom of expression has benefitted both individuals and the states. At an individual level, freedom of expression is important for development, dignity and fulfilment of every person as people can understand their surroundings and the world by exchanging ideas and information freely with others. It also makes people feel more secure and respected by the state if they are able to share their minds. Also, for the states, freedom of expression is necessary for good governance and therefore for economic and social progress. Freedom of expression and freedom of information contribute to the quality of governance in various ways. It promotes good governance by allowing citizens to raise their concerns with the authorities. If people can speak and share their minds without fear, and the media are allowed to report what is being said, the government can become aware of any concerns and address them effectively. It also helps in improving government policy in all areas, including human rights. They also enable journalists and

Freedom of Expression and Good... Chingangbam Newgold Devi, Achom Roshan Kumar & R.K. Helen Devi
activists to highlight human rights issues and abuses and persuade the government to take action. For all these reasons, the international community has recognised freedom of expression and freedom of information as some of the most important human rights.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) mentions that

“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.”³

Another international document, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also provides that

“Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference; Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”⁴

All these and many other international documents clearly guarantee the right to freedom of speech and expression. However, there is no freedom which is absolute and unlimited. All these international documents provide restrictions and respect for these rights. According to ICCPR there are two key categories of restrictions that limit freedom of expression: (i) for respect of the rights or reputations of others; (ii) for the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.⁴

The ECHR (European Convention on Human Right) defines all possible restrictions related to the practice of freedom of expression. According to Article 10 of the ECHR

“the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety; for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals; for the protection of the reputation or the rights of others; for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence; for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.”³

Freedom of expression is a very sensitive right, which required certain restrictions. Unrestricted freedoms can lead to the violation of other human rights, such as infringement of public health and morals. It can also lead to unwanted accidents both globally and nationally or locally when those speeches and expressions present threat or danger for the national security or for public order and public safety. According to the ICCPR,

“Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law; Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.”⁴

Hence, freedoms require responsibility and restrictions. But these restrictions shall be explained by legitimate reasons, which shall be examined by courts.

Therefore, freedom of expression is necessary for good governance as good governance talks about participation, transparency, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and

Freedom of Expression and Good... Chingangbam Newgold Devi, Achom Roshan Kumar & R.K. Helen Devi
efficiency, consensus oriented, rule of law, responsiveness. Only when people freely and fairly share their concerns and opinions, state can respond effectively towards public needs and requirements which will further help in making effective policies for enhancing good governance. Also, freedom of speech and expression constitutes one of the basic foundations of a democratic society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Conventions, Constitutions and laws of the democratic states guarantee the right to freedom of speech and expression, which also provide restrictions and respect for these rights prescribed by law, as there is no freedom which is absolute and unlimited. It is necessary to exercise freedom of expression in order to have a democratic society, but their limitations are also needed for safeguarding the democratic society.

Conclusion:

Freedom of expression plays an important role in enhancing good governance. Participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, responsiveness, which is among the major characteristics of good governance, can only be achieved when people can freely open up their minds and share their concerns with others and the states without any fear. Also, state can take proper initiatives to deal with it effectively and to ensure good governance. Active participation of different stakeholders of good governance can also be done through freedom of speech and expression. Freedom of expression is not only significant for good governance; it is equally significant for a democratic society as it constitutes one of the basic foundations for a democratic society. Article 19 of UDHR declared right to freedom of opinion and expression as human rights. Even-though many international constitutions and documents guaranteed freedom of speech and expression as one of the basic human rights, people should practice it with responsibility. These institutions also provide same restrictions regarding freedom of speech and expression as unrestricted speeches and expressions can lead to many unwanted accidents and consequences. Therefore, people should take great care while expressing their viewpoints and opinions so that it should not hurt the sentiments of others.

References:

1. Bychawska, Dominika-Siniarska (2017). *Protecting the Right to Freedom of Expression Under the European Convention on Human Rights; A Handbook for Legal Practitioners*. Council of Europe
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/english/bodies/hrc/docs/gc34.pdf>
2. Callamard, Dr. Agnes (2008). *Article 19*, UN HCHR, Geneva
<https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/conferences/iccr-links-between-articles-19-and-20.pdf>
3. European Courts on Human Rights, Council of Europe. *European Convention on Human Rights*
https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/convention_ENG
4. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ccpr.pdf>
5. Nandigama, Madhusudan Reddy (2024). *Good Governance- Principles and Initiatives – Challenges and Impact on Society*, SAMRIDDHI 1 (2); January 2024
<https://www.mchrddi.gov.in/images/samriddhi/number2/6.Good%20Governance.pdf>

6. United Nations (2011). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Expression/Factsheet_1.pdf
7. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf
8. United Nations (2015). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf
9. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *What is Good Governance?*
<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>
10. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank (1994). *Governance: The World Bank's Experience, USA*
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/711471468765285964/pdf/multi0page.pdf>