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**CHAPTER 8: CITIZENS ROLES IN DEMOCRACY.**

In order to enhance the meanings of words used in this context, it is important to clarify a few concepts;

**CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP**: the term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

In ancient Rome, it was considered a privileged status to be call citizen because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Modern states confer citizens on practically their whole residents or populations. Citizenship of a state may be acquired by birth or by naturalization. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship.

Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty; political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of such a community; and social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

However, there are broader definitions and perspectives of citizenship as well, as shown by Glover, who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

Barriers to citizens participation are multiple in every country. For full citizenship to be achieved, we must remove these barriers, whether they are based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age or another status. Citizens must, therefore, understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government.

**CITIZENS’ RIGHTS:** A right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Therefore, a right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right.

**DEMOCRACY:** the word democracy etymologically is derived from the Greek word *“demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning rule, which is ‘rule by the people.’” Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy is a system where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. Since there is no single definition of democracy however, what can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy are the following features:

1. The fundamental rights of the citizens are guaranteed.
2. Independent and impartial judiciary.
3. Existence of rule of law.
4. Freedom of press.
5. Periodic election that is free and fair.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY**

Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. They recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy:

1. A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote.
2. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes to fund democratic government, there would be no democracy.
3. A good citizen must have duty to obey the law.
4. A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.
5. A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.
6. (s)he must support public education in every way possible, through payment of taxes, through local volunteer, through according this sytem the respect to which it should be entitled.

Citizens should participate in every event in democracy with full enthusiasm to ensure the survival of democracy. One way of doing this is through citizens ensuring that rules are accountable.