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MATRIC NO: **19/MHS01/277**

COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT: **MHS/MBBS**

 CHAPTER 8- **CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY**

Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in democracy. Democracy can only operate effectively with the involvement of citizens and for democracy to deliver; citizens must be informed about issues that improve their lives. To be informed, citizens need accurate and timely information and so, transparency is a necessity for democracy. Unfortunately, there are certain barriers to citizen participation which include; gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, status based barriers. If these barriers are not dealt with, it would be difficult for citizens to participate in democracy.

 Citizens need knowledge to make decisions about policy choices and the proper use of authority, along with the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. The concept of citizen/citizenship should be well understood to help citizens know what their roles are in democracy. The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

 Citizenship can be acquired by birth or naturalization. It can be divided into civil, political and social citizenship. Just like many other concepts, citizenship does not have one definition; it means different things to different people. The concept of citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen. Citizenship is about being willing to contribute to social action as well as political debate.

 `However, there are different dimensions of active citizenship. They are ethical, integrative 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 on its part refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

 A right may defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law on a person or group. Citizens have rights such as right to life, right to freedom of religion, right to freedom of work and so on. Although these rights are not absolute because they are limited by rights of other citizens of the state, they entail some duties and responsibilities on the parts of citizens.

 Democracy, according to Abraham Lincoln is a government for the people, by the people and to the people and since there is no single definition of democracy, we can deduce the following features; the fundamental right of citizens is guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of rule of law, freedom of press and periodic election that is free and fair. Every citizen in a democracy has the duty to vote, willingness to pay taxes, duty to obey the law, refrain from uttering destructive criticism, refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community and support public education in every way possible.

 In a nutshell, democracy is a system of government in which the citizens hold the power and have a right to choose by free and fair election, whom they want as their political leader in different government sectors or levels and these citizens also have roles to play in ensuring proper governance of the state and in doing all of these, the public interest must be put first. When all these things are in place, with a positive attitude, the state would undergo proper development.