Chima- Dim Eberechukwu 19/mhs01/127

MBBS. GST 203

**CITIZENS ROLES IN DEMOCRACY**

In democracy, the government belongs to the people; governmental process belongs to the people; and elections belongs to the people. There is no democracy without the engagement of the citizens. Citizens must come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government respond to citizens' views in order to make the government accountable. There are still factors that limit citizens participation in government. For the symbiotic relationship between democracy, the government and citizens to continue to exist, these factors must be eliminated.

The relationship between the people and the government is called citizenship. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate and decisions that affect public welfare. Modern states give citizenship on practically their whole residents or population. They provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their potentialities. Citizenship can be determined by one’s place of birth. An individual can also voluntarily change his citizenship from one state to another by the process of naturalization.

Citizenship can be divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights needed to protect every citizen liberty. Political citizenship is related to participation in political activities like elections and voting. Social citizenship gives citizens the access to resources that will enable them to live comfortably in society. Citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of political entity, but being active is an essential of being a citizen.

Citizenship is word that can’t be explained by one definition. According to Glover, active citizenship has three dimensions; ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. Ethical citizenship involves personal sacrifice that are made to aid some public benefits and are also ultimately enjoyed by the person who made the sacrifice. Integrative citizenship involves the belief that every individual plays different roles, and that this form of citizenship enables the individual to integrate their various roles, and that this form and immerse themselves into the community, hence causing them to have a greater appreciation of the collective. Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individual when they practice their citizenship.

Active participation of citizens aims to expose citizen’s diverse opinion and deepen their sense of interconnectedness with their fellow community members. Citizens require rights to be able to have a share in the running of the state. A right may be referred to as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a right is expressed within the constitution of a state, it becomes a civil rights. If the civil rights of citizens is evaded, case can be taken to court. Examples of civil rights; right to work, right to life, right to education and many others.

The concept democracy comes from Ancient Greece, where every citizen is expected to participate in the running of the government. Democracy derived from two Greek words demos and kratos which means rule by the people. The idea that every citizen irrespective of their social and financial status are allowed to participate in the running of the government was first advocated in England. The present day democracy involves the settlement of difference by counting votes.

Abraham Lincoln gave us an iconic definition of democracy which is still relevant toady. He defined democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The state exists to serve individual and provide the conditions which make a full and happy life possible. There are certain features that must be in place for democracy to work. They include; the fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of the rule of law, freedom of press and periodic election that is free and fair.

Citizens of a state recognize that that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. Democracy requires hard work and investment of time for it to work effectively. Some of the responsibilities that citizens are expected to perform include; voting during elections, paying of taxes, obeying all the law of the state, refraining from interfering with the rights of others in the state and so many others.

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens vote on who would lead them. Citizens must be aware of their rights and responsibilities to prevent a dictatorial government. This awareness allows the citizens to participate in every event in democracy with full enthusiasm. The citizens are in charge of the future in the state and that is why they must do everything to save democracy at all cost.