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CHAPTER EIGHT

CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY

The term citizen has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of these government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choice of the systems, and the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices.

For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve lives. They must be free to come together to express their views and preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens’ views thus holding those in government accountable. To be informed, citizens need accurate and timely information, particularly government-held information. Citizens, including political competitors, must also be free to impart their views about governmental processes and public affairs; otherwise citizens cannot be truly informed, nor can they freely make choices. Also, citizens must understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They 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 official accountable.

However, as with so many other concepts, citizenship does not have just one definition, it means different things to different people. Citizenship is about to willing to contribute to social action as well as to political debate, to be willing to get involved. While involvement in local clubs and societies is seen as valuable, they argue that the involvement must speak of public-mindedness and have a purpose beyond that of a small group of people. For them, it is active citizenship if someone volunteers in public service; either as users of such a programme or service, or as genera members of society.

Educative citizenship on its part according to Dagger refers to the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

Citizens do play a good role in democracy. Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is also defined as the system of government by the people, of the people and for the people. There would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens.