Ezembakwe Emeka

19/MHS01/168

MBBS

Review of Chapter 8: Citizens Roles in a Democracy

This chapter starts by stating the fact that the people of a state have the right to choose their government through electoral system. They vote the people they want into power through their own will. These concepts are under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it captures statements of famous foundations like the democratic government is the government ‘of the people, by the people, of the people’”, meaning that the government serves the people. Now for this to happen there must be citizen engagement. Citizen engagement brings about development of the society in every aspect. But the citizens must be informed about the issues concerning their lives, and they must be free to express their opinions.

The chapter then tries to show the relationship between the government and the citizens. This relationship can be termed as “Citizenship”. Citizens have certain rights which allow them to take part or participate in the public welfare of the society and the citizenship came to the people that lived in that particular country, but in ancient Rome, it didn’t work like that. If you were a slave, serfs, or an alien, you wouldn’t get citizenship because of religious, political, racial reasons. Citizenship can be acquired through birth, or by naturalization. This theory was brought about when Turner says that citizenship is a formal legal identity that the individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to scarce political, economic and cultural reasons of society.

There are many concepts of citizenship because citizenship can’t just have one definition, it means different things to different people leading the definitions to vary based on their perspective, for instance, Brannan et .al argues that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of a political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen which explains that citizenship is about getting involved in the social action and in the public affairs of the society. But there are more sophisticated definitions, for instance Glover argues that there are three dimensions of citizenship which are active citizenship. Now citizenship isn’t just practical, it can be theoretical, giving it the term of ‘Educative citizenship’. So here Dagger in 1997 refers to that term as the process that develops a moral, practical, and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practise their citizenship. But whichever ways one looks at the concept citizenship, Citizenship is a privilege status conferred by states on its people either by birth or by naturalization. Now there is what we call citizen’s rights which allow individuals of a country live and develop fully. These rights are privileges that have been expressed in the constitution of a state, they are not absolute since there are limited, but they are also duties and responsibilities of the citizens of a country.

The chapter then goes ahead to discuss the term “democracy”. Democracy is gotten from the Greek words ‘demos’ and ‘kratos’ which means people and rule respectively. It first originated from ancient Greece. Abraham Lincoln, the former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Since there is no definite definition of democracy, however it can be deuced from these terms or features of democracy which include; The fundamental rights of a citizen is guaranteed, independent and impartial Judiciary, Existence of rule of law, Freedom of press and periodic election that is free and fair.

In conclusion for democracy to succeed, citizens must be active not passive, so to help with the citizens have duties and responsibilities in the society and some include; the duty to vote, the duty to pay taxes; the duty to obey the law, the duty to refrain from uttering destructive criticisms, the duty to refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. If all these are responsibilities are successfully carried out by the citizens, democracy as a concept and a whole will prosper in the society.