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CHAPTER 8

CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

The people in a democracy have the collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people.

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 rights to participates in decisions that affect public welfare. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalisation. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state. Citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in the laws of most countries. There are certain conditions to be fulfilled for a person to acquire citizenship by naturalisation.

Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship. Citizenship doesn’t have just one meaning, it means different things to different people. According to Brannan et. Al, Citizenship is not solely comprised of passive membership of political entity, but that being active is an essential of being a citizen. However, there are broader definitions and perceptions of citizenships, as well, as shown by Glover, who argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship: ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship, and educative citizenship.

Citizen’s Rights

Individual’s rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. In order to let the citizen have to share in the running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. A right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group.

DEMOCRACY

It has been etymologically established that the word democracy is derived from the Greek word ‘demos’ meaning people and ‘kratos’ meaning rule that is ‘rule by the people’. The concept of democracy originated from Ancient Greece where in the city states, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. In these assemblies, citizens were free to discuss state affairs, take decisions and exercise their political rights.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY

Just as the state provides rights and liberties for citizens, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognise that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. There is a saying in free societies: you get the government you deserve. For democracy to succeed, citizens must be active, not passive, because they know that the success or failure of the government is their responsibility, and no one else’s. Some of the responsibilities of a citizen are; a citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote. There is no point in democracy in which we do not participate, a citizen should be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes to fund a democratic government, there would be no democracy, a good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies, a good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. He must not interfere with the properties of other persons.