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Summary of Chapter 8

Sovereignty lies in the hand of the people in democracy. They have the collective right to choose their governmental and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their right choice of these systems and the people have right to take part in their government. There is no democracy without the engagement of the people. Citizens engagement pursues economic, social, cultural and political development. The people, must be free to communicate their views and holding government accountable for their actions. There are barriers its citizen participation in every country, they are both subtle, obvious, small, and formidable and based on gender, race, ethnicity and religion.

A citizen can be defined as a type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities including the rights to participation decisions that affect public welfare. In Ancient Rome it was considered a privilege to be called a citizen because the states were not accorded to all the inhabitants pf the Roman Empire. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to be slaves who could not enjoy them.

Citizenship can be acquired by Birth or by naturalization. Section 26(1) to Section 32 of the 1999 constitution stipulates the conditions which any person that is trying to naturalize must fulfil before he or she is registered as a citizen. Citizenship can be divided into three Political citizenships, Civil Citizenship and Social Citizenship

Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty e.g. freedom of speech, justice, the freedom to conclude valid contracts. Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a member of a political community as an individual elected by the members of such a community. Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

Brannan et al argue that the concept of citizenship holds that citizenship is not solely compromised of passive membership of the political entity but that being active is an essential of being a citizen. Glover argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenship which are Ethical citizenship, Integrative Citizenship, 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. The concept involves the belief that every individual plays an assortment of roles and that this form of citizenship enables the individual to integrate their various roles and to immerse themselves in the community. Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.

In other for the citizens to have a share in the running of his/her government a group of rights are essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state. Rights entails the duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. Rights can be defined as a privilege conferred by law upon a person.

Democracy is gotten from the Greek work demo meaning people and kratos meaning rule, that is rule of the people. It was originated from ancient Greece where in the city state, citizens were free to meet frequently in assemblies which had the power to make laws. Greek democracy was a limited institution in that it excluded laborers and slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. Abraham Lincoln the former president perceived democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people when it is designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state and that it is a government by the people when its ideological undercurrents are grounded in the people’s culture.

There are some features of democracy such as the fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed. Independent and impartial judiciary. Existence of the rule of law. Freedom of press. Periodic election that is free and fair.

While the state provides rights and liberties all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. A democracy of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people. Democratic citizens know that they are to benefit from its protection of their rights. Citizens are expected to perform some of the following responsibilities in a democracy;

A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote. There is no point in a democracy where one cannot participate in its activities. Citizens should be willing to pay taxes because without these taxes democracy cannot function. A good citizen must always obey the law. A democracy cannot quite exist in a lawless society and without the willingness of the citizens to obey the law. A good citizen, must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to provide constructive alternatives.

Citizens play a very important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens. Citizens must be aware of their rights and responsibilities as without awareness among the citizens, a government may turn into a tyranny. Democracy assures basic fundamental rights of citizens like to vote, right to liberty, right to practice any religion or irreligious, rights to information.