**CHAPER 8--CITIZENS ROLES IN DEMOCRACY**

In order to enhance the meaning of some concept, it is important to clarify them

* ***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 right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare.

Citizenship of a state maybe 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 he was born within the territory of that state. On the other hand, the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his/her citizenship of a state to another state is known as naturalisation.

Citizens can be perceived to be made up of or divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship, and social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty (freedom of speech, justice, the freedom to conclude valid contracts); Political citizenship is associated with participation in democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community (e.g., a voter) or as an individual elected by the members of such community (e.g., politician); and Social citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in the society.

* ***Democracy***

It has been etymology established that the word democracy is derived from the Greek word *demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning rule that is rule by the people.

Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. In the words of Maxey, the states and countries where the arrangements constitution and practices and the workings of the government are such that individuals and his rights, freedom and worth are ensured and guaranteed are usually referred to as democracies.

Since there is no single definition of democracy however, what can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy are the following features:

1. The fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed
2. Independent and impartial judiciary
3. Existence of rule of law
4. Freedom of press
5. Periodic election that is free and fair

**Duties and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy**

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognise that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. A government of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy:

* A citizen in democracy should have the duty to vote. There is no point in democracy in which we do not participate. People who are unhappy with their leaders are free to organise and peacefully make the case for change or try to vote those leaders out of office at established times for elections.
* 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 have a duty to obey the law. A democracy cannot exist in lawless society, and without the willingness of citizens to obey the law, which is really a social contract, no government has where no government has the wherewithal to police a nation of lawbreakers, and anarchy results.
* A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternative to government policies.
* A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community
* (S) He must support public education in every way possible, through the payment of taxes, through local volunteer efforts, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.

In conclusion, citizens play an important role in democracy. There would probably be no democracy without the co-operation and commitment of citizens.