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Summary for Chapter 8

In a democracy, sovereignty resides in the people and flows from them into the government and those that they have elected into power. The people have the right to choose their governmental, electoral and political systems. The government also derives authority from the will of the people and know that the people have the right to take part in the elections as well as elections that can determine who will legitimately occupy government offices.

Democracy has always been defined as being “of the people, by the people and for the people”. This basically means that the government belongs to the people, and so does all their governmental processes and electoral processes. This also means that there is no democracy without the citizen taking an active part in it. This makes participation, developing, establishing and sustaining democracy both a necessary right and responsibility of every citizen.

In order for democracy to deliver results, citizens must be aware and informed about what democracy does for them, and the various issues that they face. This lets them band together to express their views as well as getting the government to see their views and respond to them, thus holding the government accountable. Citizens need accurate and timely information from the government and politicians in order to know what is going on and also use it to keep the government in line. The citizens can also make use of this knowledge to make choices that will positively impact their lives.

There are several barriers which prevent citizens from taking part in the government as well as various political activities which would give citizens insight to political workings which dictate their everyday life. In order for a citizen to gain full understanding, all barriers which are standing between them need to be removed. These barriers include racism, ethnic discrimination and gender inequalities. There is a symbiotic relationship between citizens and the government which is very easily shown. As the citizens of a government grow more involved and enlightened in politics, it increases the growth of the government and the more the government grows, the more enlightened the citizens become.

A citizen has a relationship with the government that gives them a set of rights and responsibilities which allows them to participate in decisions that affect public welfare which empowers citizens. The rights and privileges which citizens enjoyed can be traced back to ancient Rome where it was considered a privileged status because not everyone living in Rome was a citizen. Being a citizen provided rights and liberties which allowed citizens to develop their potentialities and gain opportunities which allowed them to lead a good life.

Citizenship can be acquired via birth or naturalization. Citizenship by birth is the most fundamental in the laws of most countries. They inherit a collection of legal rights and obligations and legal rights.

In the constitution of Nigeria, a citizen is defined as anyone born before the date of independence, everyone born in Nigeria after the date of independence, either of whose parents or grandparents is originally a citizen of Nigeria. However, if anyone wishes to become a citizen of Nigeria by naturalization there are several conditions that must be fulfilled as stated in Section 26(1) to Section 32 of the Nigerian constitution.

Citizenship can be classified into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship, civil citizenship refers to the rights to necessary to protect individual liberty such as freedom of speech, justice, e.t.c), political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of power, either as a part of the political community

(voter) or as an elected member of said community (politician), while social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens should have access to resources that allows them to live in a civilized existence.

Individual rights are the foundations of the state since they allow/enable men to live and develop fully. A group of rights is essential to enable the citizen to have a share in running of his or her government. These rights are not absolute because they are limited by the rights of other citizens. In this instance, a right can be defined as a privilege offered or bestowed by the law upon a person or group. It only becomes a civil right when it becomes part of the constitution of the state.

The core function of democracy which all definitions of democracy center around are; the fundamental rights of the citizen should be guaranteed, the freedom of press shouldn't be impeded, periodic elections should be free of rigging, but also fair to all parties that are taking part in it. The judiciary system should be free of external influences and impartial to all parties.

All citizens have duties, responsibilities and obligations that they owe to the state. These duties revolve around being active in the community, and thus helping the government to grow and develop. This makes the failures and successes of the citizens in the community reflect on the government, thus making the failures of the citizens the failure of the government and the successes of the government. A citizen in a democracy has the duty of voting. If they do not vote, then they are held accountable for the leader that is elected into power and they have no right to complain about the leader that is put into power. They should also be willing to pay taxes which aid in funding the state. A good citizen is also required and is expected to be willing to obey the laws. The laws act as a shield between us and the anarchy which would surely emerge as a result of citizens refusing to uphold the law.

In conclusion, citizens play an important role in democracy, and a democratic system is reliant on the cooperation and commitment of citizens. Democracy assures that each citizen has access to each fundamental right and more, thus providing citizens with the incentive to fight and be active in the various political activities required to move their government forward. The citizens can and should act as checks and balances of their fellow man and of the government that they reside under, thus keeping the state moving forward.