

6. Citizenship

Q1. Citizenship as full and equal membership of a political community involves both rights and obligations. Which rights could citizens expect to enjoy in a most democratic state today? What kind of obligation will they have to their state and fellow citizens?

Answer: Citizenship has been defined as a full and equal membership of a political community, i.e. a political identity to an individual by its state. In a contemporary world, states provide a collective political identity to their members as well as certain rights. Following rights can be enjoyed by a citizen in a democratic state:

1. A support and protection from state to travel anywhere in the state.
2. Some political rights to vote, to contest elections, to hold public offices, etc.
3. Civil rights like freedom and speech and expression
4. Socio-economic rights, i.e. equal opportunities, right to education, right to minimum wage, etc. Besides the exercise of certain rights, the citizens are supposed to fulfill some obligations also towards state and its fellow citizens which are as follows:

(a) Citizenship involves some obligations towards state and its fellow citizens.

(b) These obligations are the outcomes of considerations to be inheritors and trustees of culture and natural resources of the country.

(c) These obligations do not include only the legal obligations provided by the state but these expect some moral obligations to participate, contribute and to share the life of community, etc.

Q2. All citizens may be granted equal rights but all may not be able to equally exercise them. Explain.

Answer:

- Full and equal citizenship means that all citizens rich and poor should be given equal rights. Generally in all the democratic countries, citizens are given equal rights. But all of them may not be able to exercise them equally due to poverty, like illiteracy or socioeconomic conditions, etc.
- As the problem, a large population of slum dwellers squatters in urban areas, though they may do some necessary and useful work at low wages but they are often viewed as unwelcome guests. They are also blamed for straining the resources of the area and spreading crime and disease.
- The authorities in cities hardly spend any amount on slum dwellers for their betterment. Though some NGOs are taking initiatives for them, i.e. a national policy was also framed in January 2004 on urban street vendors.
- The slum dwellers are also becoming aware of their rights but still they are not able to exercise even their political right that is right to vote, because it requires a permanent address which is

not possible for them to provide.

- The other groups are the tribal people and forest –dwellers because these people are dependent on access to their natural resources and they face a threat to their livelihood.
- Government is struggling with the problems of how to protect these people and their habitat without hampering the development of country.
- To ensure equal rights and unity for all citizens cannot be a simple matter for any government. If the purpose is not just to make policies to apply, in the same way but to make more people more equal, the different needs and claims of people would have to be taken into account when framing policies.

Q3. Write a short note on any two struggles for full enjoyment of citizen rights which have taken place in India in recent years. Which rights were being claimed in each case?

Answer:

- The constitution of India has made an attempt to provide equal membership to the groups which are different, i.e. SCs, ST and women, etc.
- Even lot of initiatives have been made to cover some communities living in remote areas like Andaman and Nicobar Islands who usually don't have much contact with the modern civilization.
- The various movements were initiated for women, SCs and STs, and people displaced due to developmental projects of the government and 33% of seats have been reserved for all of them.
- In a democratic state, the demands of marginalized people have been negotiated, i.e. 27% reservation has been provided for OBCs in all educational institutions.
- The women have also demanded the reservations of 33% seats in the state legislature assemblies and Lok Sabha.

Q4. What are some of the problems faced by refugees? In what ways could the concept of global citizenship benefit them?

Answer:

After the end of Second World War, many countries of the world faced problems related to refugees. India too after independence in 15th August 1947 faced the same problem due to partition. Following are the problems which refugees have to face:

1. There is lot of restrictions and fencing around the borders but still there is a considerable migration which is difficult to stop.
2. Refugees may be forced to live in camps or as illegal migrants.
3. People may be displaced by wars or Tsunamis, famine or earthquake, etc. and no state is willing to accept them and they cannot return to their home state also.
4. Refugees cannot work legally or educate their children or acquire property.
5. To sort out the problems of refugees, the United Nations has appointed a High Commissioner for refugees to support them.

The concept of Universal citizenship has benefitted to the refugees:

- (a) It might make it easier to deal with the problems to be extended across nations borders
- (b) It may need cooperative action by the people and government of various states.
- (c) It can find an acceptable action on the issues of migrants.

(d) It can ensure some basic rights and protection regardless of the country in which they are living.

Q5. Migration of people to different regions within the country is often resisted by the local inhabitants. What are some of the contributions that the migrants could make to the local economy?

Answer:

In a democratic state like India, we have right to freedom of movement. The citizens have the right to reside and settle in any part of India.

- Migration takes place from time to time in cities, regions or nation.
- If jobs and medical facilities and facilities provided by state are limited along with natural resources it may restrict entry of outsiders even in the case of fellow citizens.
- Many similar struggles also have taken place in different parts of the world, i.e. Mumbai for Mumbaikars, etc. These migrants are supportive to the local economy in the following manners:

1. Slum dwellers contribute to the economy through their labours as hawkers, petty traders, plumbers, workers, mechanics, petty traders, etc.
2. Migrants perform and do necessary and useful works often at low wages.
3. Small business, i.e. tailoring, textile printing, etc. can also be developed in slum areas.

Q6. “Democratic citizenship is a project rather than an accomplished fact even in countries like India which grant equal citizenship”. Discuss some of the issues regarding citizenship being raised in India today.

Answer:

- People displaced by war (in 1971 and afterwards from Bangladesh) or famine or internal or external disturbances (from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Burma, Myanmar, etc.). These people were forced to become refugees in their own or neighbouring countries.
- India prides itself on providing refuge to the persecuted people, i.e. Dalai Lama and his followers in 1958 entry of people from neighbouring countries has taken place along all the borders of states of India and process continues.
- These may be people from Asia and Africa who provide paid agents to smuggle them into India for terrorist attack or for smuggling drugs.
- Many refugees remain stateless for many generations living as illegal migrants. Only few are granted citizenship.
- Such problems are a challenge in front of democratic citizenship where the rights and identities should be available to all equally.