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## Chapter 6

### Citizenship

#### ❖ Citizenship and Rights

- Citizenship has been defined as full and equal membership of a political community.
- All the rights of citizenship have been granted to people after a prolonged struggle.
- The precise nature of the rights granted to citizens may vary from state to state; however, in most democratic countries some political rights are included.
- Equality of rights and status is one of the basic rights of citizenship.
- Citizenship is about more than the relationship between states and their members.
- It also includes the relationship between citizens and involves certain obligations of citizens to each other and to society.
- One of the rights granted to citizens in our country, and in many others, is freedom of movement.
- This right is of particular importance for workers. Often resistance builds up among the local people against many jobs that go to people from outside areas.
- Citizens are free to try and influence public opinion and government policy by forming groups, holding demonstrations, using the media, appealing to political parties or by approaching the courts.
- A basic principle of democracy is that disputes should be settled by negotiation and discussion rather than force.

#### ❖ Equal Rights

- Different groups of people may have different problems and needs. Rights of one group may conflict with the rights of another.



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- Equal rights for citizens need **not** mean that uniform policies have to be applied to all people, since different groups of people may have different needs.
  - If the purpose is **not** just to make policies that would apply in the same way to all people, but to assure equality to people, the different needs and claims would have to be taken into account while framing policies.
  - Changes in the world situation, economy and society demand new interpretations of the rights of citizenship.
  - The formal laws regarding citizenship only form the starting point and the interpretation of laws is constantly evolving.

#### ❖ **Citizens and Nation**

- Most modern states include people of different religions, languages, and cultural traditions.
- The national identity of a democratic state is supposed to provide citizens with a political identity that can be shared by all the members of the state.
- Criteria for granting citizenship to new applicants vary from country to country.
- India defines itself as a secular, democratic, nation-state.
- The Indian constitution attempted to accommodate a very diverse society.
- Discrimination against citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them is prohibited by the Constitution.
- Special rights to religious and linguistic minorities are also protected.

#### ❖ **Universal and Global Citizenship**

- Many states support the idea of universal and inclusive citizenship. However, each of them fixes criteria for such a grant.
- This is done to keep out unwanted people from becoming members of a state.
- Decisions regarding how many people can be absorbed as citizens in a country pose a difficult humanitarian and political problem for many states.
- The problem of stateless people is an important one bothering the world today.
- Borders of states are still being redefined by wars or political disputes and for the people caught up in such disputes, the consequences may be severe.



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- Supporters of global citizenship argue that although a world community and global society does **not** yet exist, people already feel linked to each other across national boundaries.
  - The concept of national citizenship assumes that our state can provide us with the protection and rights that we need to live with dignity in the world today.
  - One of the attractions of the notion of global citizenship is that it might make it easier to deal with problems that extend across national boundaries and therefore need cooperative action by the people and governments of many states.

