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## THE PLACE OF A CITIZEN IN A NATION

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**Abstract:** The concept of citizen has been defined in many different ways, and so has the relationship between nation and citizen. However, the advent of technology, new means of communication and the internet have brought about a change in the structure of a nation and the concept of citizenship. Consequently, the nature of the relationship between nation and citizen has undergone a change in recent years. An attempt has been made in this paper to assess the qualities of a good citizen, the notion of a conventional good citizen and to trace the changes in the concepts and relationships. The writer has also offered some solutions to the new kinds of problems which are created on the background of globalization and has tried to explain and suggest solutions to the problems. The change in the nature of the relationship between citizen and the nation is explained in detail.

**Key words:** Nation, Citizen, Good Citizen.

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**Introduction:** The word 'nation' implies something more in addition to the word 'country' or 'state'. While 'country' emphasizes the physical dimensions and boundaries of a geographical area, and the word 'state' is limited to a self-governing legal and political entity, the word 'nation' implies both the above ideas and also a race of people, a community, with a common culture, traditions, history and usually language. The word 'Nation' has some emotional connotations, a unique kind of attachment of the people who live in the nation. The people who live in the nation are referred to as citizens of the nation. A nation is like an individual that has a soul, a spirit and the power to move people, to urge them to take action. It is common to refer to one's land as 'motherland'. There is a special tie, a bond between the citizens of the nation and the entity called 'nation'.

The relationship between nation and the citizen has been a topic of wide interest not only among politicians, sociologists and anthropologists, but it has inspired many a poets and writers to write poems and verses that reflect their emotions about the nation. It has led to martyrs to lay down their lives and thousands of soldiers to make sacrifices. It is indeed worthwhile to investigate the relationship between nation and the citizen.

**The Place Of A Citizen In A Nation:** It is evident that a nation comprises chiefly of citizens. One cannot think of a nation without citizens. There may be a geographical piece of land, there may be policies for a government neatly noted down in black and white, there may be cities, transport facilities and all kinds of infrastructure. In spite of the presence of all other elements, a nation cannot be formed without citizens.

Hence, citizens are the chief elements that build a nation. Every nation has its own legal system and policies. As citizens of the nation, they are entitled to certain rights, duties and obligations. They enjoy the

freedoms of speech, action, expression, religion etc. though these change from nation to nation. Every nation has its own policies, a government, an administrative system, which the citizens of the nation are obliged to accept. They are entitled to the right to health, medical facilities, education and minimum basic needs as citizens. At the same time, they have to pay taxes and perform other duties like obeying the law, respecting the law, following rules etc.

Every nation would be a haven if citizens lived up to their roles and performed their rights and duties as citizens. Unfortunately, the concept of citizenship, although it sounds very apt, reasonable and convincing is in actuality very complex and difficult to understand. If every citizen understands the exact concept of citizenship and plays his role or at least attempts to play the best role, things would improve positively.

However, understanding the concept of citizenship requires a certain degree of maturity and political awareness. It is necessary to train children to become worthy citizens. The training should start early in life and practice in citizenship must be implemented in schools from primary level so that by the time children begin to study subjects like History, Economics and Politics, they will be familiar with citizenship and try their best to play their roles effectively.

**A GOOD CITIZEN:** Individuals must possess certain characteristics in order to be good citizens. Every nation does not follow a similar political system. While the democratic system is supposed to be the best one, there are minor changes in nations that follow democracy. Hence, the first duty of every citizen is to understand thoroughly the nature of the political system in the nation. It will enable him to further understand what is expected of him as a citizen of that nation. In spite of the differences, it is possible to list some common characteristics of a

good citizen. The qualities of a good citizen are made up of numerous character traits. A good citizen must take his own personal responsibility. He must be truthful, trustworthy and one who respects the law. He must be aware of the welfare of the entire community and thus fight for the under-privileged. He must have qualities like sympathy, compassion, kindness, tolerance and courage. He must be a self-controlled and disciplined concerned. He must have environmental awareness, a scientific and unbiased mind and must be polite and courteous. He must be a social person who has global awareness.

**DUTIES: Attitudinal 'block':** A citizen who is aware of the place of his nation in the global scenario will also understand the strengths and weaknesses of the nation, the gifts showered by nature, the direction of progress, the limitations and extent of development of the nation and the needs in every respect. There are many citizens who have the ability to understand all these issues, but it is the mindset, the attitude that is of prime importance. Most citizens understand and are very competent, but they have a personality or rather attitudinal block that prevents them from extending their services for the nation. It is not a question of just understanding, it is a matter of accepting, of involving oneself, of answering the call of the motherland and attending to the needs. One can take the example of jihadis. Sometimes, we hear of small children who are jihadis. Naturally, jihadi is not a simple concept. One wonders how many who claim to be jihadis are fully aware of the meaning of the term. Yet, they have no mental, civic block that prevents them from full-hearted participation in jihadi activities. They fling themselves for the cause which they accept. If every citizen of every nation accepts his nation as the prime factor, he can involve himself in national activities and give his best to the nation. Of course, thoughtless involvement can be harmful; citizens have to be trained to understand their role in the nation, a rational, sensible and constructive role. The best way to train citizens is through the system of education.

**The Role Of Education:** Education is the most effective means of training citizens to play their roles as good citizens of a nation. How early to begin the training is a matter of controversy. Naturally, very small children cannot be expected to understand deep concepts like democracy. One cannot begin to teach about history, politics, nation and political systems directly. But one can certainly begin to implement and practice systems in school. For example, democracy can be practised even in pre-school. Habits like sharing things, helping out peers, equal attention, equal distribution, and equal treatment irrespective of gender, caste, colour or religion on the part of teachers are some of the things that can be practised in schools. If the teacher is

impartial, fair and just, the same kind of behaviour can be expected from the students. A democratic view must be maintained in every schools activity. As children grow up, they must be encouraged to hold discussions, give opinions, share ideas and take collective decisions base on a common agreement. This can be done by assigning various kinds of projects to the children. Thus, by using innovative techniques, political seeds of civic sense and citizenship can be sown in young minds.

#### **The Nature Of The Relationship Between Nation And Citizen:**

Education is one way of preparing the minds for good citizenship. Tremendous efforts need to be taken to maintain a healthy relationship between the nation and citizen. Citizens of the United States, it is clear, have a great many rights that give them a number of freedoms: the freedom to think what they like; to voice their opinions, individually to their elected representatives or collectively in small or large assemblies; to worship as they choose or not to worship at all; to be safe from unreasonable searches of their persons, their homes, or their private papers. However, the theory of democratic government holds that along with these rights come responsibilities: to obey the laws; to pay legally imposed taxes; to serve on juries when called to do so; to be informed about issues and candidates; and to exercise the right to vote. Another major responsibility is public service. Millions of men and women have entered the armed forces to defend their country in times of national emergency. Millions more have served in peacetime to maintain the country's military strength. Young and old alike, have joined volunteer organizations for social service.

Responsible citizens generally fulfil all these duties and responsibilities. But this is not enough that a citizen can do for the nation. Any responsible person will take a person injured in an accident to the hospital. But a person will treat his injured mother will special care. It is this special kind of service that a true citizen ought to render to his nation, which is his motherland after all. The responsibility that can make the most lasting difference, however, is getting involved in the political process. "Proponents of participatory democracy argue that increased citizen participation in community and workplace decision-making is important if people are to recognize their roles and responsibilities as citizens within the larger community," says Craig Rimmerman professor of political science, in his book *The New Citizenship: Unconventional Politics, Activism, and Service*. "Community meetings, for example, afford citizens knowledge regarding other citizens' needs. In a true participatory setting, citizens do not merely act as autonomous individuals pursuing their own interests, but instead, through a process of decision, debate,

and compromise, they ultimately link their concerns with the needs of the community."

Tom Harkin, U.S. senator from Iowa, says that the kind of activists who fuelled the earlier civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and environmental movements are now focusing their energies "closer to home, organizing their neighbours to fight for such issues as better housing, fair taxation, lower utility rates, and the cleanup of toxic wastes.... Cutting across racial and class and geographical boundaries, these actions have shown millions of people that their common interests far outweigh their differences." The views expressed here suggest clearly that it is time citizens participate directly in governance. Until now, the least that a citizen was expected to do was to vote. Initially, people voted with a great sense of responsibility. Check the voting percentage in any democratic country and the trend to vote is decreasing overall, as though voters have lost faith in the system. People seem to have lost faith in election results. There is no absolute transparency in the system in most of the nations. Even electronic machines are known to be tampered with. It is doubtful how a democracy can survive if such a condition continues. There will be chaos and confusion and citizens will really be unable to define their roles in the havoc. Direct participation of citizens needs to be encouraged and made possible, which is the only possible solution to this problem.

**Participatory role of citizens:** If changing times have posed new problems, changing times also have solutions to the problems. The greatest change in the world has been brought about in recent times by the internet. Use of the internet is no longer restricted to a privileged few; teenagers too are equipped with smart phones and make maximum use of the internet. Technology is at the tips of their fingers. Cell phones have become an essential part of the body, much more important than a handkerchief or a wallet. If one has a cell phone, one can manage without a wallet! The tiny handy device is a portal to vast information and a mini task manager. From making payments and phone calls to establishing groups to share all kinds of matter, cell phones enable citizens to be in touch with other citizens, with political leaders and can also put across their queries or ideas to Prime Ministers and Presidents! Even if the data is sorted and managed by secretaries, there is a feeling of directly being involved in matters of the state. This can give the citizens more satisfaction than voting remotely, as unknown entities, just a number to make up the desired number of votes. But direct communication with people involved in governance will soon bring about a lot of desirable changes. One can look forward to a vast change in the relationship between nation and the citizen.

**A new concept of citizen:** It is interesting to imagine the new concept of a nation as well as citizen in the near future. The advent of technology has brought about changes in the nature of a nation and the citizen. Eventually, the nature of the relationship between nation and citizen has to change. The new nations will not be politically governed bodies with power strings placed in the hands of a few. Those who govern and those who are governed will not be miles apart as if they are two different species and not all human beings. Those who govern will have to shake off their lethargy and gear up for action. Those who govern must shake off their fear and question the government if it fails to carry out its responsibility. Tax payers have a right to demand what they deserve and governments have to be more systematic and transparent.

"The politics of proliferating rights and entitlements, unleavened by a corresponding ethic of obligation to the commonweal, has literally and figuratively bankrupted the nation. And by making government the ultimate arbiter of every public dispute, it has sapped individual and civic initiative and turned self-reliant citizens into passive consumers of public benefits."

Manual work is already replaced by computerised systems, leaving no scope for manipulations. Generation X is matured enough to understand how computers and internet can be used for their maximum benefits. Information they can access within minutes if they lack knowledge. Even expert advice can be sought instantly if they lack experience. On the whole, new citizens will be a different lot, more conscious, aware, tech savvy and always online! "The inability to understand some of the technical subject matter and recapitulation prompted by inertia of powerlessness that is reinforced by poverty in the countryside undermine active engagement. Furthermore, the good intentions to promote participation and engagement are sometimes undermined by the elite interests in manipulating the masses so that they toe the line. Despite active promotion of decentralized governance, participation has not ensured effective engagement in public management," (Retrieved Web. 6 Jan. 2015). Citizen engagement can include monitoring the utilization of funds disbursed to Local Governments for the provision of social services as reported in the print media. This enables citizens to foster a culture of accountability through demanding knowledge of how the funds have been utilized. There must be participation in the budget conference; which enables citizens to understand and contribute to prioritization of development activities that affect their welfare. Involvement is also expected in the development of the local development plans, which enables citizens' active participation in planning of

the development process. Involvement of citizens in the development of agricultural research and extension programmes can be very beneficial.

**A reciprocal and catalytic relationship:** The civic alternative is a new politics of reciprocity that links rights and responsibilities: Government should expand opportunities for citizens willing to give something back to their communities and their country. National service is emblematic of this approach. People lack confidence in government mainly because major public sector systems are failing. Schools are the places where citizens are moulded but they lag international standards and provide poor students with an abysmal education. Public housing has become synonymous with social dysfunction. The criminal justice system seems powerless to stop violence, especially by juveniles. Moreover, these public systems have become formidable obstacles to public innovation. In order to dramatically improve the quality of schools, liberate poor people from dependency, help low-income families get decent housing, and protect the streets, it is necessary either bypass or dismantle bureaucracies that monopolize resources and resist change.

The critical task is to replace bureaucratic government with a catalytic model for governing that equips citizens and communities to solve their own problems. Such a model decentralizes decisions, puts resources directly in the hands of citizens, expands choices in public services, uses competition to lower costs and spur innovation, and focuses relentlessly on outcomes rather than process.

**Conclusion:** The structure of nations and the nature of citizens are changing in recent times as everything else is changing with the wave of globalization. A typical citizen is expected to serve the country

faithfully and possess certain characteristics so that he can be a worthy and good citizen of a nation. As a citizen, every individual has rights and duties to perform. Enjoying the rights and performing the duties is not enough to characterize an individual as a citizen. There is much more in the relationship between nation and the citizen than appears to the eye. It is a special and unique kind of relationship, similar to the relationship between mother and child. A citizen must not remain aloof and detached as an outsider. He must be actively involved and play a participatory role in the government. Mere voting is not enough. If he wants to get the sense of real active participation he must exploit the advantages offered by new technology and use the internet to express his opinions and be an important voice in matters of the state, not an unknown voter. The government has to be more systematic and transparent.

The relationship between the nation and citizen must be reciprocal and catalytic. Nationality and citizenship actually belong to different spheres of meaning and activity. The former is in essence a cultural concept which binds people on the basis of shared identity while citizenship is a political concept deriving from people's relationship to the state. Yet Gellner shows that nationality and citizenship have actually become as one, for in modern societies, each requires the other. What both perspectives miss is that nationality and citizenship are neither necessarily in alignment nor are they antithetical. Rather, it is becoming clear that they are in complex, even contingent, relationship to each other, such that in the twenty-first century the tensions between them will become more obvious.

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