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Manish Kumar

Chapter 3

Citizenship

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- ❑ *Historical Background of Citizenship*
- ❑ *Citizenship in the Early and Late Medieval Period*
- ❑ *Modern Conception of Citizenship*
- ❑ *Multiculturalism and Citizenship*
- ❑ *Citizenship in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Countries*
- ❑ *Conclusion*

Citizenship has historically been a contested concept and involved a wide range of meaning depending upon the types of political community in which it is placed. What kind of relationship should govern a political community (internally and externally) or the nature of its membership along with rights and duties are debated among social scientists from ancient times. As such, this is not a new phenomenon but has been the case of all political communities across time and space. The issue of citizenship, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this book, is not devoid of institutional mechanism and the governance process, which a particular community adopts. Accordingly, it needs to be analyzed in congruence with the evolution of state-system and its governing process. Usually, it is understood that the form and substance of citizenship in each historical period highlights the socio-economic and political forces operating at that particular time. However a deeper probe poses many more questions: Who are the citizens? What constitutes citizenship? Who are excluded or included from citizenship and on what basis? Is it only a legal or political status, or does it have something to do with the socio-economic or religious-cultural circumstance in which it is placed upon and so on? These set of questions offer a complex set of answers that must be understood in a historical perspective. This chapter begins by inquiring the idea of citizenship and tracing its historical trajectory from ancient Greek to the Roman period where the idea of active and passive participation in the political sphere will be highlighted. The second part reflects