



The Rediscovery of Citizenship: A Conceptual Exploration from Ancient City-States to Modern Liberal Democracies

Linesh V. V.

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi, Email: linesh@srcc.du.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

Seeping through the warp and weft of everyday life, the quotidian idea of citizenship is often a concept which is taken for granted. Despite being beneficiaries of a host of advantages and rights as a resident in a nation-state, there is a general tendency to overlook the significance of citizenship in our everyday lives. Like many other concepts in politics, the concept of citizenship also has a long history that can be traced back to the days of ancient Greek city-states. Encountering multiple challenges, the idea has evolved over the years, constantly chiseling its form and content. This article is a comparison between classical citizenship and the modern liberal citizenship, and in doing so it tries to understand the various meanings and citizenship was mainly characterised by the active participation of people in the process of government. Citizenship was a privilege bestowed upon only a few. The study also tries to nuance the concept of citizenship that has evolved during the medieval and early modern world. Since the medieval world was unquestionably and predominantly dominated by Christianity, the concept of citizenship had only negligible significance. In the modern era, liberal principles have dominated the conceptualisation of citizenship. Beyond legal status and privilege, it is now attached with a series of rights and entitlements along with membership in a particular community. Although the idea of citizenship has evolved in various phases with different forms and content, the study argues that the transformation of



citizenship from the notion of ‘active participation’ in the classical era to just a ‘passive entity’ in the modern time resulted in a deep rooted rupture between citizen and government in recent liberal democratic nations across the world.

Introduction: Anchoring the idea of citizenship on a universal and all-encompassing definition has been one of the daunting challenges faced by political scientists and philosophers alike. The ‘membership in a common society’ has been decided as the notion of citizenship since the earliest of human civilisations. It is an explicitly political enterprise. However, an appreciation of only the political dimensions is insufficient for a proper understanding of it. Even though a multiplicity of definitions of citizenship are available, each falls short of satisfactory clarity or comprehensiveness. Citizenship, whether defined as membership, status, performance or practice, entails already accepted concepts of politics, sociality, temporality, spatiality and culture. This indeterminacy about the form and content of citizenship makes it one of the highly debated topics even in the second decade of the twenty-first century. It can be seen that the term ‘citizenship’ is open to a wide variety of interpretations and lacks a uniform and concrete structure and definition. There was a rekindling of interest in the term in the 1990s, sparked by a confluence of events such as lack of voter interest and participation, and the onset of globalisation, as seen through high worker migration and the increasingly diverse demographic composition of states. All this prompted political thinkers to revisit the original connotations of ‘citizenship’ as its meaning has evolved steadily along with history.

This article is an attempt to explore the evolution of the concept of citizenship from classical era to the modern liberal citizenship; in doing so it tries to understand the various meanings and status it acquired throughout its development as a concept. Firstly, the study begins with an introduction to the idea and subsequently deals with a detailed discussion on the classical notion of citizenship. Secondly, it also engages with the nuances of the process through which the concept of citizenship evolved during the medieval and early modern world. Finally, it unravels the evolution of the modern notion of citizenship with a particular emphasis on the liberal tradition of citizenship and while concluding it highlights the various challenges and concerns faced by the theory of citizenship today. The article argues that the transformation of citizenship from the notion of ‘active participation’ in the classical era to just a ‘passive entity’ in the modern time resulted in a deep rooted rupture between citizenship and government in recent liberal democratic nations across the world.



Citizenship in Classical Era

Citizenship as a concept has evolved over a period spanning several centuries, each version being somewhat different from the other, depending on the time and the historical context. The idea of citizenship has thus had a long and eventful journey, and although there is no definite historical marker for when the notion of the citizen came into existence, several scholars agree that it is in the city-states of ancient Greece - Sparta and Athens, that some of the earliest forms of citizenship can be located. In the centuries that followed the dominance of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire also initiated several adaptations of the concept of citizenship. Together, Greece and Rome represent the classical era in which many developments concerning citizenship occurred, under the aegis of Pericles, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and several other thinkers. Citizenship was an important theme in the classical era. According to Pocock, “the term ‘classical’ comes with a double bind first, something which denotes ideal or authoritative and is hence worthy of serious attention; and second, it has reference to a particular period in history that in turn refers to the ancient civilisation, especially to Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. and later to that of Rome” (Pocock, 1995, p. 29).

Several features were common to citizenship at different periods in the classical era. For one, there was a strong emphasis on political participation and the duties required to be performed by the citizen in the political sphere, rather than on any benefits or “rights”, which is what is commonly associated with modern citizenship. The duties of a citizen in the classical era ranged from serving in public office, contributing to military service, and, more generally, a commitment to striving for the common good where private interests were subordinate to public welfare. In contrast to many other concepts in politics, some thinkers believe that the concept of citizenship emerged in Ancient Sparta, not in Athens. Derek Heater explains that “Spartan citizenship was based on the principle of equality among the ruling military elite called ‘*Spartiates*’” (Heater, 2004, p. 8). In Sparta, for example, the citizenry comprised of a military elite responsible for the governance and defence of the state, for which they were trained under an extraordinarily strict program (*agoge*). Citizenship involved other features such as the taking meals in common messes and complete disengagement from economic production. The *Spartiate* model of citizenship had several interlocking features. These were: “the principle of equality; ownership of a portion of public land; economic reliance on the work of the helots; a rigorous regime of upbringing and training; the taking of meals in common messes; military service; the attribute of civic virtue; and participation in the government of the state” (Heater, 2004, p. 8).



The Lycurgus constitution did establish what has become a perennial principle of citizenship and which still carries huge significance. From a contemporary perspective what is important in Sparta was its emphasis on the security; after all the Spartan modal was completely centred on it. However, the priority of security in the conceptualisation of citizenship gradually declined after Sparta. But recently, especially after 9/11, there has been a reinventing of the relationship between security and the citizenship.

Athenian citizenship, on the other hand, was based on citizens' obligations to the community, mostly in terms of the responsibility of citizens in the formation and enforcement of laws, where governance was carried out in rotation; a citizen was both the ruler and the ruled. Solon was the great law-giver of Athens, in a sense he is equivalent of Sparta's Lycurgus. In Athens, "only adult male Athenian citizens, the one who had completed their military training as *Ephebes* had the right to vote" (Rothchild, 2007). Whereas women were given limited rights and privileges, they were excluded from the status of citizens. Citizens whose rights were suspended (usually because they did not pay the city debt) were also not allowed. For some Athenians, this was a permanent (and inheritable) disqualification. However, unlike oligarchy, there were no property requirements to restrict access. Given the exclusive and traditional view of Greek city-state citizenship, a relatively large proportion of the population participated in the Athenian government. In Athens, some citizens were much more active than others, but the system needed a lot to work proving the participation of qualified people far beyond modern democracy. According to Heater, "the ideal of equality, the enjoyment of liberty, and the belief in participation are three basic principles which underlay Athenian democracy" (Heater, 2004, p. 25).

In turn, in Rome, citizenship underwent a series of changes starting with the extension of citizenship to towns outside of the Empire (in sharp contrast to Greek citizenship, where neighboring Greek cities' residents were treated as aliens), and ending with the great simplification of citizenship under Marcus Aurelius from a privilege to that of legal status. A Roman citizen was distinguished from a man who was of more lowly status, or unfree, illegitimate, or a foreigner. Later, Romans came to realise that giving citizenship to people from all over the empire legitimised Roman rule over conquered areas. As a result, with the passing centuries, "citizenship was no longer the status of political agency, but it had been reduced to a judicial safeguard and the expression of rule and law" (Pocock, 1995, p. 31). The Roman conception of citizenship was comparatively more nuanced and complex than the earlier Athenian conception, and it usually excluded political participation. Citizens had many roles which could lead to 'contradictory obligations'. Roman citizenship was not a single "black-and-white category" of



citizens versus non-citizens, but could be associated with more degrees. And women were given a safer and more respected position than what Hosking calls a “subsidiary citizen” (Hosking, 2005).

However, citizenship rules generally had the effect of invoking loyalty among the highly diverse populations of the entire empire. While promoting political participation, Roman politician Cicero recognised that too much public involvement could have dangerous and devastating consequences. Thus, it becomes clear that the notion of citizenship has evolved substantially and that each period in its history has marked differences.

Plato and Aristotle were prominent voices in the discourse on citizenship in the classical era, but Aristotle’s work on the subject is widely considered to be more authoritative. At the very least, Aristotle provided one of the earliest commentaries on citizenship in his *Politika*, and this serves as an important point of reference in the evolution of the concept of citizenship (Heater, 2004, p. 16). For Aristotle, participation in politics was superior and more virtuous than seeking private pleasures and professions. His widely quoted statement “man is a political animal”, is, in fact, more closely translated as “man is an animal impelled by his nature to live in a *polis*” (Aristotle, 1948). Aristotle’s *Polis* was a form of political community. Aristotle attaches a great deal of significance to the *polis*, which he conceives as the final goal in the life of the individual. The *polis*, therefore, had an even more profound significance since it was the means to achieve the highest moral development of individuals.

Aristotle admitted that “the nature of citizenship, like that of the state, is a question which is often disputed: there is no general agreement on a single definition” (Aristotle, 1948). Aristotle’s notion of citizenship is not based on residence, for slaves and resident aliens also share residence with citizens but are not granted citizenship. Also, unlike today, citizenship did not merely involve voting every few years, but rather carried with it the responsibility of direct participation in governance. Aristotle’s sense of citizenship depended on a “rigorous separation of public from private, of *polis* from Oikos, of persons and actions from things” (Pocock, 1995, p. 31). This allowed the people to interact politically with equals. Good citizens were able to live according to the constitution that reflected their citizenship obligations and responsibilities and the need for ample free time to attend to them. Associated with the idea of the good citizen is that of civic virtue, which Aristotle again found difficult to define universally. Many people were simply excluded from citizenship status. The young and the old were not considered citizens as the young were immature, “underdeveloped”, and the old were infirm, “superannuated” (Heater, 2004, p. 17). Aristotle did not see women as fit to be granted the status of a citizen because he



believed they lacked deliberative faculties, and due to their responsibilities in the domestic sphere, did not have the leisure to understand the workings of politics.

In short, Aristotle's conception of citizenship was rooted neither in a shared residence nor in the individual's access to certain rights, which are the two most common features of modern citizenship. Instead, he conceived citizenship as comprising the responsibility to govern the *polis*, and in turn to be governed by one's peers in the *polis*. To this was attached the notion of civic virtue, and the "good citizen". Citizenship was seen as the manifestation of man's natural political bent and was a non-inclusive concept that was best put into practice in a city-state small enough to ensure that inhabitants were familiar with each other and could engage in direct rule. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, Aristotle's inordinate amount of writings was revived and valued in the Middle Ages, as a consequence that his ideas on citizenship molded the writings of several political thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas and Marsilius of Padua.

Citizenship in the Medieval Era

Citizenship as a concept and a practice faced a significant setback during the middle Ages. It had been a cardinal principle throughout the classical era. But in medieval times, it was relegated to the margins. In the fifth century AD, the Roman Empire collapsed and was replaced by 'barbarian' kingdoms of Anglo-Saxons, Vandals, and Goths. In the east, the empire survived in some sense in the form of Byzantine autocracy. This essentially meant that the great Roman Empire no longer existed. The basic concept of the state as a unit of political governance invented by Greeks and Romans was completely absent during this time. The medieval world increasingly slipped into political anarchy. At the same time, as a religion, Christianity was spreading its faith across Europe.

Derek Heater identifies three important features of medieval citizenship.

First was the relationship of citizenship to the unquestioned and effectively unquestionable pre-eminence and pervasiveness of Christianity. Secondly, the classical idea was not forever lost; indeed, it was powerfully revived with a deep interest in Aristotle. Thirdly, in the Middle Ages, citizenship in practice meant a privileged status in a city or a town, not a state (Heater, 2004, p. 42).

Any discussion on citizenship during the medieval era is closely associated with Christianity. Christianity and Roman citizenship were incompatible with each other. Christians could not adapt to the Roman civil religion because citizens had to pay at least lip service to civil religion. In 391 AD



Theodosius declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Thereafter, the Christian church was expanded and consolidated throughout the world. According to Heater, “indeed, Christianity and citizenship have not always been easy bedfellows because Christianity is not, in essence, a religion of this world” (Heater, 2004, p. 43). This trend continued till the thirteenth century. However, a serious attempt to revive the classical idea of citizenship came from St. Thomas Aquinas. He tried to accommodate citizenship in the Christian world. Aquinas thought that “all life is the expression of God’s purpose. This is true of political affairs as much as any other facet of worldly life” (Koritansky, 2007). Aquinas also praised the excellent consideration of this subject.

Aristotle’s *Politics* was reintroduced into Christian Europe from Arab and Jewish sources during this period. Therefore, Aquinas firmly placed Aristotle in his plan for the Christian universe. However, the association of citizenship with Christianity was not a perfect amalgam. “Aquinas was primarily a theologian, and the utter commitment of ‘The Angelic doctor’ (as he was called) to the accepted interpretation of the Christian doctrine could never be doubted. It is unthinkable, therefore, that he could consciously have wished to detach citizenship from a Christian context” (Heater, 1999, p. 50). Another Italian scholar Marsilius of Padua took up this task. The significance of Marsilius lies in his effort to restore citizenship in its secular Aristotelean explanation.

All these intellectual developments were confined only to Italy. This shows the high standard of scholarship that Italy had. And similarly, this shows that citizenship practices were most developed in that part of Europe. The world outside Italy was deprived of any significant political establishment. Societies outside Italy were divided into small social groups or towns and cities. These were predominantly under ecclesiastical control which seriously limited the possibility of a rich tradition of citizenship practice.

Citizenship in Early Modern Era

The transition from medieval to early modern citizenship is marked by the liberation of the concept from the inhibitions and complexities of Christianity. One of the remarkable contributions to citizenship in this period came from Niccolo Machiavelli, the renowned Italian political thinker. The central notions to his idea of citizen are courage, loyalty, and virtues such as the ability and will to act for the city in the military and civilian areas. Machiavelli’s theory of citizenship was shaped by the time in which he lived. However, its relevance was not limited to the Italian Renaissance. In the Age of Enlightenment, a new wave of interest in the classical world had arrived; there, his ideas enjoyed renewed importance.



By the early sixteenth century, Europe saw the emergence of ‘nation-states’ such as England, France, Sweden, Poland, and Spain. However, they were hardly homogeneous ethnically and linguistically. About this time, the notion of citizenship as a legal status, which was part of the late Roman Empire, especially during the time of Caracalla, became one of the common features of the European political scene. “The concerns of absolutist states with imposing their authority over heterogeneous populations provided the context in which a citizen came to be defined by Jean Bodin, the sixteenth-century jurist, as ‘one who enjoys the common liberty and protection of authority’” (Roy, 2005, p. 6).

Bodin focuses on the ‘social and legal dimensions of citizenship’. In his view, the basis for acquiring citizenship can be birth, enfranchisement, or adoption. He also highlights “the cohesive quality of citizenship when the whole body of citizens submit to a single sovereign despite the existence of diverse laws, customs, language, religion, and race” (Ramaswamy, 2015). He rejects the idea of equal citizenship as it is almost impossible since states hardly ever acknowledge all their citizens as equal in privileges and rights. According to this concept, unlike Roman tradition, the citizen was not an authority himself but a person under the protection of the state. Unlike classical traditions, this modern view of citizenship was essentially a passive or ‘negative’ idea.

The ‘commonly (shared) liberty’ became the key feature of citizenship in this period and thereby ignored the significance of civic virtue and ‘commonly (shared) public responsibilities’ as associated with the classical tradition. This notion of citizenship implies an orientation towards ‘protection’ or security that needs to be ensured by the authorities. “For the early liberals, what was to be protected was one’s physical life (as in Hobbes), the family and home (as in Bodin and Montesquieu), or conscience and property (as in Locke)” (Roy, 2005, p. 7). The modification of the concept of citizenship just as a legal status in the modern era entails the protection of freedom in the private domain. So a citizen is no longer a public person; rather someone who always pursues private pleasure and personal liberty. However, nostalgia for classical Greece and Roman values of citizenship as an activity with an emphasis on public duty and civic virtue persisted.

Towards a Modern Concept of Citizenship

According to Helen Irving (2016) pre-modern citizenship was a status into which a person was born, like the membership of a family. She goes on to say that only late in the eighteenth century was it generally accepted that a foreigner might change his/her allegiance by naturalisation, and with that his/her citizenship status. Modern citizenship has evolved through a long process of many political



developments around the world, especially in Europe and America. Emergence of nation-states in Europe deserves special mention here. “Modern citizenship is the creation of the great and irreversible changes that swept through the world between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, giving rise to what we understand now as the modern nation-state. There can be no single explanation for these phenomena” (Irving, 2016, p. 31).

Richard Bellamy (2004) attempts to explain how modern citizenship was formed in the wake of the political and socio-economic transformations resulting from the American and French Revolutions, on the one side, and the Industrial Revolution, on the other. For him three developments constitute the basis of modern conception of citizenship. They are: 1) the new political context of the nation-state, 2) the emergence of commercial and increasingly industrial, market economies, and 3) the breakdown of traditional social hierarchies and systems of ascribed status by this market leading to the fostering equality of opportunity. He also explains that these three interrelated developments promoted three key components of modern citizenship. They are: 1) an emphasis on individual rights, 2) close association of citizenship to the national community, and 3) capacity and right of individual to participate as a full and equal member within the economy and the polity.

So, one of the major features of modern concept of citizenship is that it gives utmost importance to the individual and individual rights. Here lies the core of liberal citizenship, where modern citizenship becomes liberal citizenship. “Liberal citizenship, as with all strands of liberalism, seeks to prioritise the individual. For liberals, the individual exists prior to society; the commitment to the individual is, thus, a core ontological belief” (Lister & Pia, 2008, p. 9).

The Liberal theory of Citizenship

The liberal theory of citizenship has dominated the Western world for the last two centuries, and it continues to be so even today. “Liberal citizenship was the offspring of the liaison between revolutionary upheaval and contractarian natural rights theory” (Heater, 1999, p.4). ‘The English civil war’ and its impact on the political theory of John Locke, ‘The French revolution’, the capturing of independence by the American colonies all were very crucial in the development of the liberal theory of citizenship. The emergence of the capitalist economy along with a bourgeois class has also contributed to the growth of liberal citizenship.

Even though liberalism is considered to be one of the most influential theoretical traditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concept of citizenship did not have any prominence in the history of this particular theory. The idea is mainly subsumed under the large theoretical formulations of eminent



liberal scholars. However, a significant shift in this trend is brought by the contributions of T. H. Marshall. Every contemporary discussion of theory of citizenship starts with studying the path-breaking account of the ‘historical development of citizenship’ provided by Marshall in his essay, *Citizenship and Social Class*, which was based on a 1949 lecture delivered by him at Cambridge in commemoration of his namesake Alfred Marshall. Marshall perceived in the development of the capitalist-welfare state a historical expansion of citizenship rights which was consistent with class divisions and the market mechanism. The expansion of these citizenship rights did what Karl Marx never believed possible - providing basic equality of membership to all, despite inequalities created by capitalism.

Based on this analysis Marshall argues that “citizenship, which is based on the principle of equality, blunts many of the sharp edges that the market induces, which are based on inequality. The class structure gets significantly modified with the advancements of citizenship. The process of modification in the capitalistic market does not mean the abolition of classes. The class structure remains but the rise of citizenship minimises its disadvantages” (Ramaswamy, 2015, p. 213). To substantiate his theory, Marshall discusses the evolution of the welfare state in post-war Britain. He distinguishes between three categories of citizenship rights and assigns an approximate period for the development of each in England. The first, the ‘civil rights’, that emerged in the 18th century, were essential for individual freedom and consisted of the right to freedom of speech, belief, and religion, the right to own property, etc. These rights were indispensable to the development of a market economy as they enabled individuals to operate as autonomous bargaining units. These rights undermined the usual privileges of the feudal class and solidified the relationship of the early capitalist class.

The second, the ‘political rights’, which developed in the 19th century were the rights necessary to participate in the political process and to share in sovereignty. They consisted of the right to vote, form political parties, hold public office, etc. Marshall himself was most interested in the third category of citizen rights, the ‘social rights’, for he was interested in exploring citizenship’s impact on social equality.

The addition of these rights in the twentieth century made the situation more complicated but interesting. There emerged a conflict between citizenship and capitalism. The extension of social rights was a commitment to redistribute wealth on more equitable terms and to narrow disparities between the different classes through means like progressive taxation. Social citizenship sought to reform capitalism through the legislature. Part of this process was the gradual development of universal primary education, health and social security provision. Legislation on minimum wages, hours of work, and working



conditions made the working class less vulnerable to the capitalist class. Marshall's two principles of citizenship were simple and insightful, which included three elements of rights and the idea that social citizenship was the central basis of the other two. His theory is said to be the 'most influential exposition of post-war conception on citizenship rights. However, his theory is not without its critique.

The critique on liberal citizenship

The Marshall paradigm has been attacked primarily by the critics from the left. They firmly believe that citizenship has not changed the basic structure of inequality in capitalism. Citizenship does not cause significant damage to property rights, so citizenship is at best a reformist and, at worst, a working class integration strategy. Feminists too offer a similar argument. Modern citizenship has done relatively little, they argue, to improve the position of women in society (Marshall's theory is centred on the achievements of male citizenship. His pattern falls apart if the experience of women is incorporated. He describes the position of women in the nineteenth century concerning civil rights as 'somewhat peculiar'). "These criticisms refer to empirical evidence of permanent inequality in modern capitalism. Therefore they argue that citizenship does not change the balance between market and society. In the UK, demographic and epidemiological evidence suggests little change." The focus of this discussion was on the results of the Black Report on social class and community-related health inequality.

"First, the theory failed to produce a coherent and consistent analysis of the causal mechanisms that produced an expansion of citizenship" (Titmuss, 1962). Jeffrey Alexander, an American sociologist, and one of the world's leading social theorists, notes correctly that "Marshall relied 'on the mechanisms of social evolution - which must, perforce, be shrouded in obscurity - to explain why solidarity must develop and justice prevail'. One possible causal explanation of the growth of social rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the consequence of working-class struggles over economic rights relating to employment such as the right to form unions and to strike, sickness benefits, and retirement. In these respects, there have been substantial differences between the American and British historical experience" (Alexander, 2006). At the same time, class inequality and lack of "access to basic resources such as education, housing and social security were the main social factors behind the growth of British civil rights. The ethnic diversity, racial segregation, widespread migration, and the pursuit of social improvement have shaped The American experience. U.S experience circled around the failure and success of citizens' principles in the context of distrust and separation. In his *Income distribution and social change*, Richard Titmuss," a pioneering British social researcher, argued that "mass warfare



stimulated critical social inquiry and weakened the values and institutions that were resistant to social change, forcing society into a period of self-reflection" (Titmuss 1962).

The second major criticism of Marshall was that he explained the idea of citizenship as a coherent and unified concept and revealed no real interest in comparing different forms of citizenship in terms of different historical trajectories. He was not thinking about the future need to promote society in the position of a citizen, not to mention protecting it from regression.

Another major drawback in Marshall's British depiction is the lack of understanding of the racial and ethnic differences associated with national citizenship. In general, his theory was as blind to ethnicity and race as to culture. Marshall envisioned a more or less homogeneous society in which regional, cultural, and ethnic divisions played no role compared to social class divisions.

Marshall's theory placed the concept of citizenship at the centre of many academic debates and discussions. While doing so, he firmly locates the idea within a liberal democratic paradigm. Despite various limitations, his attempt is considered to be a sincere effort to conceptualise citizenship in the context of the welfare state and capitalist economy. He identifies the contradiction between equality-based citizenship and the underlying inequality of capitalism. To Marshall, "in the twentieth century, citizenship and the capitalist class system have been at war" (Marshall, 1950, p. 84). Without any doubt, one may say that after Aristotle, it was Marshall who formulated one of the most systematic theories of citizenship. Citizenship is now seen as full membership of a political community with all the necessary rights. Although this idea of modern citizenship was based on egalitarian norms, some people are still abstained from complete citizenship rights including women, along with coloured and colonised people. Thus, the conflict between equality-driven citizenship rights and capitalism with its characteristic inequality became the main ground for criticism of liberal citizenship.

John Rawls, the most celebrated political philosopher of our time, has tried to address these contradictory impulses in the liberal capitalist society. In his famous 1971 work, *Theory of Justice*, Rawls argues that:

[C]itizens are free and equal members of constitutional democracy, each with his/her distinctive conception of the good. To pursue these goods, they need the same primary goods, that is, the same basic rights, liberties, and opportunities as well as the same all-purpose means such as income and wealth and some social basis of self-respect... (Rawls, 1971).



People agree on a conception of justice since it ensures the availability of primary goods such as liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the basis of self-respect to all. Unequal distributions of ‘primary goods’— liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect are justified only if it favours the least advantaged of the society.

In his view, all distributive questions are to be settled by the state. The state is the key agency to perform distributive tasks in such a way that the worst-off gets the best deal. Any theory of citizenship is meaningless unless it provides for social empowerment. He advocates a re-arrangement of social and economic inequalities in such a way that the deprived ones get the larger share of the cake. Hence, in Rawls’ view, for worst-off section social and economic rights must be the chief component of the citizenship project. Rawls’ “two principles of justice” laid the foundation through which liberal democratic citizenship could now be practiced. In short, the liberal model of citizenship has placed the individual at its core, and citizenship is construed as a legal status, indicating the entitlement of rights.

So far, in this section, I have tried to provide a brief outline of citizenship according to the liberal tradition. It is clear that throughout the twentieth century, the liberal model of citizenship has mainly placed the individual at its core and citizenship has been construed as a legal status indicating the entitlement of rights. This liberal approach towards the conceptualisation of citizenship has invited several criticisms from various quarters. These criticisms have widened the scope of citizenship studies beyond the traditional liberal framework.

Liberal Citizenship and the Contemporary Challenges

The world witnessed profound transformations during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The cities in advanced capitalist states saw unprecedented movements of different groups of people such as students, women, and environmentalists as well as identity-based movements of ethnicity sexuality, and gender. The hitherto marginalised identities began asserting themselves and established new categories. These developments led to a redefinition of liberal notions of citizenship and changes in citizenship policies. Thus, new claims based upon identity and difference were made by the above mentioned new groups of people.

As a result, various struggles based upon identity and difference (whether sexual, ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, diasporic, ecological, technological, or cosmopolitan) have found new ways of articulating their claims as claims to citizenship understood not simply as a legal status but as political and social recognition and economic redistribution (Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 2).



The classical concept, sometimes even the modern or liberal concept, does not allow for differences and thus it becomes natural that new categories are not accepted. Classical and modern concepts conceive citizenship as all inclusive and universal. Only the universal categories are recognised and particularities are not even identified. It is in this context that the development in the late 1960s and early 1970s made a challenge to the classical and liberal concepts.

These changes in the 60s and 70s have made a significant impact on the conceptualisation of citizenship. “A significant terrain of contestation opened up in the 1980s in citizenship theory, with multiculturalism, plurality, diversity, and difference having become significant terms of reference for retheorising citizenship” (Roy, 2005, p. 20). Moreover, the process of globalisation and its impact on the nation-state deeply altered the landscape of twentieth-century citizenship debates. The dominant notion that citizenship is an individual’s membership in a nation-state has become completely obsolete under various forms of globalisation. Terms such as world-citizenship, global-citizenship, cosmopolitan-citizenship, and denationalised-citizenship have become quite common in the globalised world. All these developments have generated a renewed interest in citizenship debates among scholars belonging to different theoretical perspectives. Hence, citizenship has become a buzzword for all academic discussions of our times.

The challenges posed by these new developments around the world led to criticisms of liberal citizenship from the perspective of marginalized groups such as women, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Feminist Critique on Citizenship

Feminist scholars have always led the charge against the modern conception of citizenship. Citizenship is generally conceived of as an egalitarian idea that provides rights to individuals and groups and reduces difference, discrimination, and subordination. However, since its inception and development, citizenship as a concept has remained highly discriminatory in its practice. Many sections of the society have traditionally been considered ineligible for citizenship, and hence have been deprived of rights. These include slaves, workers, aliens, and women. Feminism considers both classical and modern concepts of citizenship as hostile to the interest of women. Communitarians, Marxists, and feminists have criticised citizenship’s promise of equality, which does not take into account the practical ability to exercise rights.

Feminists of all kinds have criticised the dominant notion of citizenship mainly on two grounds. They argue, firstly, that “citizenship is gender blind. By focusing on the uniform and equal application, it



fails to take cognisance of the fact that modern societies are steeped in patriarchal traditions, which make for male domination and privileges” (Roy, 2005, p. 28). The policies and programs legitimised by the framework of formal equality have successfully sustained the various forms of inequalities existing in our society. Most importantly, close observation of the historical conceptualisation of this notion reveals that citizenship is completely dependent upon the dichotomy between members and non-members. The discourses around the idea of citizenship have created division in which the space of citizenship is always identified with public and male activities. The generality and universality associated with the public sphere necessitated that all particularities are to be pushed into the private sphere. The well-known distinction between public and private within the liberal practice of citizenship is essential for making its citizen an autonomous individual.

This demarcation has resulted in the identification of the domestic with private. According to feminists, this has played a significant role in the marginalisation and exclusion of women from mainstream society. Historically speaking, one can argue that well-celebrated events like the ‘American Revolution’, the ‘French Revolution’, and the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” (1789) were also instances of exclusion and subordination of women. Modern citizenship, though not completely excluding women, included them on the basis of their socially useful and dependent roles as mothers and wives, keeping them, thereby, outside the political sphere and distancing them from resources and opportunities such as education, property, etc. Therefore, feminists have rightly pointed out that both the classical and modern traditions of citizenship have been indifferent to women, either by excluding them from citizenship completely as in the ancient Greek tradition or by accommodating women indirectly as citizen-consorts, as in the revolutionary tradition of France. Feminist scholars have adopted different paths to overcome this problem of subordination and exclusion of women from membership in a political community.

One of the early attempts in this regard can be traced to the works of Mary Wollstonecraft (1996) when she argued that education is necessary for women not only for achieving self-respect but also to perform their role as citizens. J. S. Mill, a liberal thinker, highly encouraged women’s public involvement. However, women’s active participation in the public sphere can be guaranteed only when they can come out of the confinement of the household. In this regard, Susan M. Okin, a liberal feminist political philosopher, argued that a woman can truly be an equal citizen in the public sphere if there is sexual equality within the private domain. Carol Hanisch, a radical feminist, described it as ‘Personal is Political’ (Hanisch, 1970) and Kate Millet, an American feminist, popularised it in the 1970s. They argue that without restructuring the private domain in terms of gender equality, women will not be able to



exercise their citizenship rights even though it is nominally provided to them in the public sphere. Thus, it can be observed that there are different strands of feminism. As such, feminists have taken different paths to political inclusion subscribing to different views on politics and the political community. One of the strands of feminism approached citizenship as an aspect of public/political activity. They worked towards women's inclusion in the public sphere as equals, emphasising democratisation of the public sphere "through communication, speech, and action, which are seen as empowering, and through alliances for a shared common objective" (Mouffe, 1992). On the other hand, another strands of feminism argued against this mere 'add women' approach without questioning the 'maleness' of the public sphere.

As a result, this led to two different arguments. The first is that 'personal is political' as power progresses between the state and the private sphere and, the second one is the idea of maternalist citizenship, which advocates the re-imagination of citizenship and the public sphere to encompass 'feminine' values instead of merely entering the bastions of male-defined politics of the public sphere. It emphasised the superiority of maternal qualities like compassion, caring, and responsibility as key elements of citizenship, and "in the process, the maternalists dissolve the distinction between male/public and female/private facets of life" (Elshtain, 1981 & Gilligan, 1982, quoted in Roy, n. d., p. 6). Thus, feminist politics continues to be burdened internally, but at the same time, differences in race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, etc. are important in determining women's access to the political community. This context-based analysis highlights the differential lived experiences of women because of their different social positioning. However, there is strong evidence that claims about "difference" reinforce women's central and powerless role in perpetuating difference itself.

It has already been seen that feminism is critical of both classical and modern concepts of citizenship. Since classical concept, sometimes even modern concept, does not recognise particular identities, it is quite natural that women's identity and their specific problems are not recognised and addressed. Lister and Pia (2008) says that classical theories approach citizenship as a universal category and feminism offers its criticism to the classical model based on 'differences' and so, the foundation of feminist criticism lies in its concern with difference. The liberal idea of citizenship, which contends that "citizens can enjoy rights independent of the context to which they belong", has been the prime object of work of Iris Marion Young (1990), a feminist scholar, and has subsequently been expanded in the 'theory of multicultural citizenship. The dominant liberal idea of citizenship could not really cope with newly emerged concerns like cultural diversity and identity politics. This lacuna of liberal citizenship was replaced by the notion of multicultural citizenship.



Multicultural Citizenship

Multiculturalism refers to the demographic fact that, as a result of immigration, Western countries have become more racially, religiously and ethnically diverse. One of the fundamental theoretical and practical conundrums of our time is the problem of hiding the aspiration for political equality behind the fact of social and cultural differences within liberal democracies. “Cultural diversity in modern society is frequently understood in terms of ‘multiculturalism’, a word that has been closely aligned with the ‘identity politics’ that has reshaped political conflicts and debates over the last four decades” (Soutphommasane, 2012, p. 44). Normatively, multiculturalism refers to “an ideology that attaches positive value to cultural diversity, calls for the equal recognition of different cultural groups, and calls upon the state to support such groups in various ways” (Miller, 2006, pp. 326-27). In multicultural literature, the most common contrast is between descriptive and normative uses of the term (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Barry, 2001; Joppke, 2004). According to theories of multiculturalism, real equality is ensured by giving importance and keeping in mind their socio-cultural location and not through ‘uniformity of treatment’.

Within political philosophy, it has been mainly conceptualised within a liberal tradition focusing on the (cultural) rights of certain minority groups in a liberal democratic nation” (Young, 1990, p. 250).

Similarly, the defence of group rights by Will Kymlicka, a famous scholar on the liberal theory of multiculturalism, is embedded in a liberal conception of citizenship. “In support of this statement, he has developed a multiculturalist perspective that requires social institutions to be reformed in a manner that allows for the accommodation of the cultural distinctiveness of multiple ethnic groups in a single state” (Beckett, 2006, p. 46). This perspective advocates that the rights given to individuals under liberalism should also be given to groups which, according to Kymlicka, would result in ‘differentiated citizenship’ and should not be seen as a threat to the liberal conception of citizenship but its extension. The drawback of Kymlicka’s approach is that it inadequately deals with the problem posed by complex identities and cultures (Beckett, 2006). Kymlicka suggests that the existence of cultural groups does not indicate that all are diverse and uniform. “The culture itself may show differences according to such factors as class or gender” (Beckett, 2006, p. 47).

Like Kymlicka, Young (1990) also celebrates differences in terms of identity and therefore criticise the liberal notion of universal citizenship, but she rejects the entire idea of liberal citizenship and thus defers from Kymlicka. According to her, “the liberal idea of universal is actually the disguised particular of the dominant group” (Young, 1990, p. 165). She proposes the solution of celebrating the



'politics of difference'. This new politics would, she argues, "take the form of a rejection of the appropriation of a universal subject position by socially privileged groups by which they force 'those they define as different, outside the definition of full humanity and citizenship'" (Young, 1990, p. 169).

In short, one can observe that even though cultural factors have a major role to play in the theory and practise of citizenship, multicultural citizenship engages only a restricted view of culture. The main concern of multicultural citizenship is the protection of minority rights in a diverse state. Migration and accompanying cultural differences have further complicated the conditions of citizenship, and it has become more challenging and demanding in the post-9/11 world.

Migration and Changing Conceptions of Citizenship

The large-scale migration around the globe has profoundly altered the socio, economic, demographic, political and cultural landscape of many liberal democratic nations today. As a consequence of migration, especially from Asian African countries to Western Europe and North America, new ethnic and social identities were created in those societies. This has a huge impact on the conceptualisation of citizenship of these nations. According to Niraja Gopal Jayal, an eminent political scientist, "Historically mature and well-established states, confident of their place in the world, have begun to search fanatically for the means of defining their national values and national identities to better cement ties among its citizens. These nations are also trying to ensure that new citizens adduce sufficient proof of subscribing to the accomplished values of the nation.

Host countries with citizenship policies based on a liberal framework were forced to change them. Along with such changes, new concerns and considerations have emerged in the formulation of citizenship criteria like security and borders (Cinalli 2017). Many security precautions were adopted in deciding the qualifications for the right to citizenship in these countries (Salter 2007; Guild 2009; Nyers 2009; Jayal 2013). There were also very strict initiatives for tightening and closing the borders (Ambrosini et al., 2020).

Along with the US, several liberal democratic nations like the UK, Germany, Canada, and so on implemented anti-immigration policies in the recent past. Under the Theresa May administration, the UK implemented an immigration policy which is highly anti-immigrant in nature and has placed countless restrictive measures on migration since 2010 (Consterdine, 2018). The immigration acts of 2014 and 2016 consisted of several hostile measures that prevented the migrants from accessing social amenities like health care, education, and employment. In 2019, Germany also amended their existing asylum and immigration policy, which is inherently against immigration. This amendment includes deportation of



illegal migrants and refugees and several restrictions on immigration (Mischke, 2019).

At the same time these developments initiated an academic debate within the liberal tradition of post-national citizenship as the traditional notion of citizenship shifted beyond the nation-state and its boundaries. “The dynamics of globalisation, especially international migration, challenge the traditional frameworks of citizenship and have prompted scholars to develop new models of membership: transnationalism, and post nationalism” (Bloemraad, 2004, p. 332). At the same time, recent developments in various liberal democracies clearly show that there is an opposite trend going on especially in the context of global migration and financial crisis where liberal states are moving more towards the traditional notion of citizenship, with the involvement of the sovereign power of the state, immigration and border policies are becoming more restrictive than earlier (Bloemraad and Sheares 2017; Ni Mhurchu 2014). Liberal states are regulating the cross-border movements of the people through selective and exclusionary borders and other security practices (Bauder, 2014, p. 76).

Thus, there is an inherent tension existing between the ideals of liberalism and democracy, which makes things more nuanced and complicated, as strife between native nationalists and migrants is growing. Within the liberal democratic tradition, there are divergent political standpoints around the question of ‘us’ v/s ‘other’ or in other words, ‘citizens’ v/s ‘aliens’. There exists a moral and theoretical dilemma of choosing the rights of migrants or refugees ahead of its own political members or citizens, as several social benefits have to be divided between them. The emerging economic issues and large-scale migration flows have resulted in growing domestic opposition and politically pressurizing governments to implement anti-immigration policies. It resulted in a retrieval of the traditional notion of citizenship more or less controlled by the restrictive-interventionist policies of liberal democratic states. scholars are not able to reconceptualise the concept of citizenship in accordance with the emerging challenges posed by migration. Hence, the liberal democratic citizenship has been entangled between concerns of border and security on the one hand and the larger humanitarian concerns on the other.

Citizenship :From active participation to passive identity

As stated above, the Greek understanding of citizenship is noticeable being more of a status of privilege and having the responsibility of actively participating in the process of governance. The obvious question arises, then, of what has changed so significantly from Aristotle’s vision of an ‘actively participatory political citizen’ – so much so that the Greeks used the term ‘idiot’ to characterise a private person who did not participate in public affairs – to the more reluctant, uninvolved figure we observe today in our modern democracies.



Here, I would like to focus on two broad concerns that play a significant role in shaping modern ideas of citizenship. First, with the rise of the nation-state, as opposed to the city-state structure of Aristotle's era. The polity has grown to a size and diversity inconceivable in the fifth century B. C. Athens. With the complexity of the modern nation-state and the highly differentiated and unequal societies encompassed within a territorial national identity, several pressures arise that make the operation of a Republican model difficult, if not impossible. There exist both pragmatic concerns of having vast and diverse populations rule themselves through civic participation, as well as the absence of any 'moral unity' among citizens of a state who are often in conflict over highly differentiated interests and identities. Second, a significant factor to consider while forming an understanding of modern-day citizenship is the process of globalisation. Globalisation has done much to erode the significance of borders and national citizenship in the first place, with massive flows of information, human resources, capital, and cultural transmissions taking place across national borders. In an era where many people identify with a larger global identity, the conventional understandings of citizenship and loyalty to a state have been thrown into some confusion. Citizenship has often been thought of as a tool to promote social cohesion, and also as a means of exclusion. Both these facets of citizenship have come under fire from this worldwide process of increased communication and contact.

Finally, one of the most fundamental problems faced by many democratic nations especially the well-established ones today with respect to citizenship is the 'democratic deficit'. The conceptual history of citizenship from the classical era to the most modern time indicates the transformation of citizenship as an activity to certain entitlements of rights in contemporary liberal democratic regimes. This shift of citizenship status has created a deep-rooted divide between the political elite and the common public, often cited as the main reason for the recent resurgence of right-wing 'populism' in the liberal democratic nations across the world. The gap between citizens and the government has widened. It is this breach which has been utilised by many right wing populist parties across the world. "From Modi's India to Duterte's Philippines, from Maduro's Venezuela to Erdogan's Turkey, from Italy's Salvini to Brazil's Bolsonaro, populism has become a worldwide phenomenon" (Herpen, 2021, p. 4). This upsurge of populism has profoundly shaken the institutional and normative foundations of modern liberal democracy and its notion of citizenship.

Conclusion

The prolonged journey of citizenship through the different periods of history shows that citizenship is an essentially contested concept in which the meaning, form, content, and values of



citizenship have kept changing. While exploring the unfolding of citizenship from ancient time to modern, one can see that instead of taking a linear trajectory the form and content of citizenship have been subject to constant modification under the changing context of history. Today most of the debates and discussions of citizenship can rightly be placed in the context of liberal democracy. During this process, the liberal notion of passive citizenship has completely dominated theory and practice of citizenship, while ignoring the classical republican ideals.

The modern conceptualisation of citizenship which contends that citizens can enjoy rights independent of the backgrounds to which they belong has been considered to be a significant development and has subsequently been included to in the theory of multicultural citizenship and others. Above all, globalisation and the influx of immigration have also opened up new challenges before most of the liberal democratic nations. All these concerns and dilemmas associated with the recent conceptualisation of citizenship in addressing the various issues faced by the liberal democratic nations today are opening up a significant terrain of contestation. Moreover, the prioritisation of liberal citizenship values over the republican values actually created a huge disconnect between the citizens and government. This divide between the rulers and ruled in contemporary liberal democratic nations resulted in the resurrections of right wing populism that poses a serious threat to liberal democracies across the world.

Conflict of Interest:

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article

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