

UNIT 1

Democratic System

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- explain the major principles of the democratic system.
- list collective and individual democratic and human rights.
- identify the duties and responsibilities of Federal and Regional states.
- understand the organization of branches of government.
- understand the advantages of tolerance in diversity.
- identify the major contributions of Ethiopia for African countries.

1.1 Principles of a Democratic System

1.1.1 Political Power Through Competitive Election

- What is the importance of free and competitive election?

Free and competitive election for political power is one of the principles of democracy. Free and competitive election primarily implies the involvement of two or more political parties or private competitors in an election, according to constitutional provisions. Moreover, it also implies that the electorate (the people) are not compelled or hindered by anybody in electing the party or the person of their choice. It also means that there should be convenient situation for the election.

According to this principle, competent parties and individuals can speak to the people and conduct

their respective election campaigns. But none of them can speak or act in a way that leads to violence and conflict. Rather, there shall be mutual respect among the electorate and competitors and they should show tolerance of the views of one another.

Activity 1

Answer the following questions in brief:

1. Free and competitive election for political power is considered as one of the principles of democratic system. Why?
2. What is the importance of free and competitive election for a democratic system?

1.1.2 The Rule of Law

- What is the rule of law?

The rule of law is the other basic principle of a democratic system. It is a pillar on which the democratic system is constructed. According to this principle, everyone is equal before the law. This means that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnicity, wealth, social status etc. Thus, every decision and action of the government body shall be in accordance with the law, rather than the personal intention of officials. Thus, in a democratic system every citizen, even the lawmaker is under the law.

Activity 2

1. Give two practical examples of the manifestations of the rule of law and explain how.
2. Explain the advantages of applying the rule of law.

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1.1.3 Transparency and Accountability

- What do we mean by transparency and accountability?

The third principle of a democratic system states that both elected and appointed government officials shall be accountable for the activities they perform. Every activity shall be also transparent to the people. According to this principle:

1. government officials shall be transparent in their decisions and actions. The power that they hold is given to them by the people and they shall use it only for public, not private interest. If they use the public power for personal benefit, they shall be held accountable and even accused and punished by the law.
2. according to the principle of transparency, the people have the right to be informed about every activity of the government and about the realities of their country. However, there are exceptions to the right for information. These include issues that are legally recognized as secrets for national and public security.

The advantage of transparency is that it makes the people have confidence in their government. This is because it enables the people to evaluate government activities. On the other hand, the absence of transparency may make the people feel that the government is not representing their interests even when the government is properly fulfilling its responsibilities. In general, every citizen, including government officials, shall be transparent and accountable for their actions.

Activity 3

Answer the following questions in brief:

1. Give two practical examples of the principle of transparency and accountability.
2. What are the advantages of practicing the principle of transparency and accountability?
3. Transparency and accountability is one of the principles of a democratic system. Why? Discuss.

1.1.4 Majority Rule and Minority Rights

- What does it mean by majority rule and minority rights?

The other principle of a democratic system is the principle of majority rule and minority rights. Some of the manifestations of a democratic system include:

- (a) open discussion
- (b) exchange of ideas
- (c) debate
- (d) peaceful resolution of differences.

However, when peaceful resolution of differences, through the agreement of all, is not possible, the issue will be decided through voting. In the voting, the solution supported by the majority will be applied to minorities too. This is what we call the principle of majority rule.

Before voting on an issue, there will be continuous debate and detailed discussion and everyone will be allowed to express his/her views freely. Then, when arriving at a common solution becomes impossible, voting becomes essential. As we have said earlier, the solution voted for will be implemented by the majority who supported it and by the minority who abstained or opposed it.

The minority group, however, can oppose the voted solution when its implementation limits or violates their basic rights, security, dignity and freedoms (of thought and opinion). The reason for this is that the rights of the minority are protected by law in democratic systems and any decision or action against basic rights and freedoms is against the democratic system itself. Therefore, the democratic principle of majority vote shall never be practiced in contradiction to basic rights. In other words, the majority vote must conform with the rights of the minority. This is what we call majority rule and minority rights.

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Activity 4

Answer the following questions in brief:

1. Explain the principle of majority rule with practical examples.
2. What are the advantages practicing the principle of majority rule?
3. Majority rule and minority rights is one of the principles of a democratic system. Why?

Dear students, we have seen the four major principles of a democratic system. We hope the following practical exemplary situations may help you to get a better understanding of the principles. Read the cases very carefully and answer the questions that follow them.

Case 1

It was reported to the Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission that, in a given public enterprise, there was widespread corruption, maladministration and mistreatment of employees. Through investigations the commission found tangible evidence of the abuse of power by the officials of the enterprise. As a result the officials were arrested.

Abuse of power means using public power beyond legal limits and for personal interest.

Case 2

Journalists were informed that, in a given government office, the higher officials violate the human rights of their employees. The journalists wanted to get the authentic information of the case from the officials, but the officials refused to talk to the journalists and told them that it was not their concern.

Case 3

In the local and replacement elections of 2000 (E.C.), different political parties were involved. The electorate (the people) elected the party of their choice freely and peacefully.

Case 4

Residents of a given village contributed money for electricity and water supply. However, the money collected was only enough for one of the projects. So the people decided to implement one of the projects this year and postponed the other for the next year. Though they had a detailed discussion, they were not able to agree on which project to implement first. Thus, they wanted to vote. In the vote, out of the 520 residents, 130 supported the water supply project whereas 390 of them thought the electricity project should be given priority. Accordingly, the electricity supply project is to be implemented this year.

Group Activity

Based on the above cases discuss the questions below:

- (A) Match each of the cases with the principles of democracy discussed earlier.
- (B) In each of the cases that you have matched, is the principle properly practiced or violated. How?
- (C) If you think that in any of the cases the principle was violated, what should have been done?

1.2 Human and Democratic Rights

1.2.1 Individual Human Rights

- Mention two examples of individual human rights.

A. The Right to Life

The right to life is the basis of all other human rights. The reasons for this include that a person cannot exercise and defend other rights if he is not alive. Moreover, life cannot be replaced and cannot be given by anybody. Hence, no one can take a life which he/she has not given. This shows you that life is honourable and highly valued. However, the right to life can be limited (violated) by law. This happens when a person commits serious crimes such as deliberately killing another person and other related

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crimes that highly endanger the well-being and security of a society at large. In short, a person may lose the right to life and he/she may be punished by the death penalty if he/she commits crimes that legally would lead to such a punishment.

B. The Right to Protect Body from Damage

This right emanates from the right to life, because respecting the right to life, without the right for physical well-being, is meaningless. Therefore, the right to protect one's body from damage is as important as the right to life.

This right implies that a person should not be arrested and imprisoned without being accused or sentenced. According to this right, a person cannot be arrested without sufficient evidence and a written court order.

Activity 5

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain how important it is to a person to have his/her individual human rights respected.
2. What is expected of you in order for your human rights to be properly respected?

1.2.2 Group Human Rights

- Mention two examples of group human rights.

A. Right to Equality

The right to equality is one of the basic rights. It means the right to be treated equally. It is particularly important in a country of diverse nations, nationalities and peoples. This in turn contributes to peace, development and building a democratic system.

B. The Freedom of Religion, Belief and Opinion

The freedom of religion, belief and opinion means the freedom to hold, accept and follow a religion or belief of one's choice. According to this provision, no one shall be forced to follow any religion or worship. For example, children shall not be forced to be enrolled in a given religious school.

However, the freedom of religion, belief and opinion can be limited by laws. Such laws are enacted so as to protect the public security and peace, as well as to protect the basic rights of other persons.

Activity 6

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the advantages of exercising group human rights.
2. Can group human rights be limited by law? Why?

1.2.3 Individual Democratic Rights

- Mention some of the individual democratic rights.

A. The Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression

The right of thought, opinion and expression is one of the basic rights for human life and survival.

However, legal limits may be imposed on this right with the purpose of protecting national security, personal dignity and honour.

It is also important for the development of personality. This right includes the right to freely express one's thoughts and opinions and freely gather information. Therefore, every person is free to gather and disseminate written or oral information within or outside his country without limitation.

B. Freedom of Movement

This is the right to move anywhere within the country and the right to go abroad and to return to the country. It also includes the right to choose one's place of residence.

Activity 7

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain how important it is to respect the democratic rights of the individual.
2. What is expected of you to properly exercise your democratic rights?
3. Can these rights be legally limited? Why?

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1.2.4 Group Democratic Rights

- Mention some of the group democratic rights.

A. The Right of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples

The right of nations, nationalities and peoples for self-determination is one of the group democratic rights. This right enables people to live together freely/as they wish. According to this right, nations, nationalities and peoples have the right to govern themselves, develop their culture and language and even establish their own autonomous government.

Moreover, the people have the right to control their elected officials and even depose them from power and replace them by other. They do this when they lose confidence in the officials and believe that they are no more necessary. There shall be no hindrance that prohibits the people from exercising this right.

B. The Right to Association, Assembly, Demonstration and Petition

The democratic rights of citizens include the rights of assembly, association and the right to express opposition through demonstration.

There are legal limitations on the right to association, assembly, demonstration and petition in order to protect citizens' security, dignity and honour, to prohibit any propaganda for war and any public expression intended to injure human dignity.

These rights are basic and highly valued, because, in order to fulfill their needs, people have to solve their problems together. This can be practised through the right for association and assembly. Therefore, no one shall be forced to be a member of an organization without his/her will.

However, there are legal limitations to these rights. They shall never violate the rights of other persons. Moreover, when these rights are exercised with the intention of violating the law and endangering the constitutional system, they are illegal.

C. Popular Sovereignty

Popular sovereignty implies that the people of a given country are sources and owners of all power. Political power emanates from them and resides in their hands. When the people have full rights of self-determination to elect their representatives and to depose public officials at their will, one can say there is popular sovereignty. The realization of popular sovereignty is the base for respecting all democratic and human rights.

Activity 8

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the necessity and importance of respecting group democratic rights.
2. What is expected of you to properly exercise these rights?
3. Can group democratic rights be legally prohibited? Why?

1.3 Tolerance in Diversity

1.3.1 The Importance of Tolerance in Diversity



Picture 1.1. Christian and Muslim friends studying together

- Look at picture 1.1 carefully. Identify at least three differences among the people.
- What does the picture indicate? What do you understand?

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The four friends

There are four friends who are students of grade 7. Obong is a follower of Orthodox Christianity, Wote is a follower of catholic, Hawa is a follower of Islam and Ermias is a follower of Protestant Christianity. These students like each other very much and they are always found together both inside and outside the class. Even their deep friendship extended to their parents.

They make an effort to succeed in their education. They have planned a study programme according to which they meet at the house of each in turn. When it is their turn, their parents prepare a meal and make tea for the children.

Hawa together with his parents visits his friends during Christian holidays like Epiphany, Easter and X-mas. Similarly, the Christian friends and their parents visit their Muslim friends during Ramadan, Meuelid and Arafa.

The deep friendship between these children made them appear like members of the same family, and the parents of each consider all of them as their own children.

Activity 9

Answer the following questions based on the above story:

1. What have you learned from the four friends?
2. What have you learned from their parents?
3. Do you know any friends who love each other like the four friends? If yes, write about them.

Tolerance in diversity is highly valuable for living together. This is because it leads to peace, love and mutual understanding.

A family may have different beliefs, thoughts and inclination. They can co-exist with these differences in the spirit of fraternity and mutual understanding.

Tolerance is also advantageous for the community in that it enables working together, open discussion, negotiation and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Tolerance makes the society develop unity in diversity and help people to co-exist peacefully.

Activity 10

Discuss the following questions:

1. What does tolerance in diversity mean?
2. How could we peacefully co-exist with others while we have differences?
3. What are the advantages of love and peaceful co-existence?

1.4 Functions of Government

1.4.1 The Functions of the Federal Government

- (a) It shall protect and defend the Constitution.
- (b) It shall formulate and implement the country's policies, strategies and plans in respect of overall economic, social and development matters.
- (c) It shall establish and implement national standards and basic policy criteria for public health, education, science and technology as well as for the protection and preservation of cultural and historical legacies.
- (d) It shall formulate and execute the country's financial, monetary and foreign investment policies and strategies.
- (e) It shall enact laws for the utilization and conservation of land and other natural resources, historical sites and objects.
- (f) It shall establish and administer national defence and public security forces as well as a federal police force.
- (g) It shall administer the National Bank, print and borrow money, mint coins, regulate foreign exchange and money in circulation; it shall determine by law the conditions and terms under which States can borrow money from internal sources.

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Activity 11

Discuss the following question:

1. Choose any two functions of the federal government and discuss why they are federal government functions.

1.4.2 Power and Functions of Regional States

- (a) To establish a State administration that best advances self-government, a democratic order based on the rule of law; to protect and defend the Federal Constitution.
- (b) To enact and execute the State Constitution and other laws.
- (c) To formulate and execute economic, social and development policies, strategies and plans of the State.
- (d) To administer land and other natural resources in accordance with Federal laws.
- (e) To levy and collect taxes and duties on revenue sources reserved to the States and to draw up and administer the State budget.
- (f) To enact and enforce laws on the State civil service and their condition of work; in the implementation of this responsibility, it shall ensure that educational training and experience requirements for any job, title or position approximate national standards.
- (g) To establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State.

Activity 12

Discuss the following question:

1. Choose any three functions of regional governments and discuss why they are functions of regional governments.

1.4.3 City Administrations and their Accountability

- What does it mean by city administration?

In all regions, there are legally recognized self-administering cities. The city administrations are accountable to the people who elected them, and they have their own councils, executives and mayors appointed by the executives. The mayors control the day-to-day activities of the city administration. In addition to their accountability to the people who elected them, the city administrations of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa are accountable to the Federal government.

Addis Ababa is the capital city of the country and the headquarters of the Federal government. Cities have different levels of administration. For example, in Addis Ababa, the city council is the highest political body followed by sub-city councils and kebele councils. All these councils have executive organs.

Group Activity

Organize yourselves in group under the guidance of your teacher and prepare explanations on one of the following issues which will be given to you by lot.

- (A) Functions of the federal government.
- (B) Functions of the regional government.
- (C) The reason for the accountability of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa to the federal government.

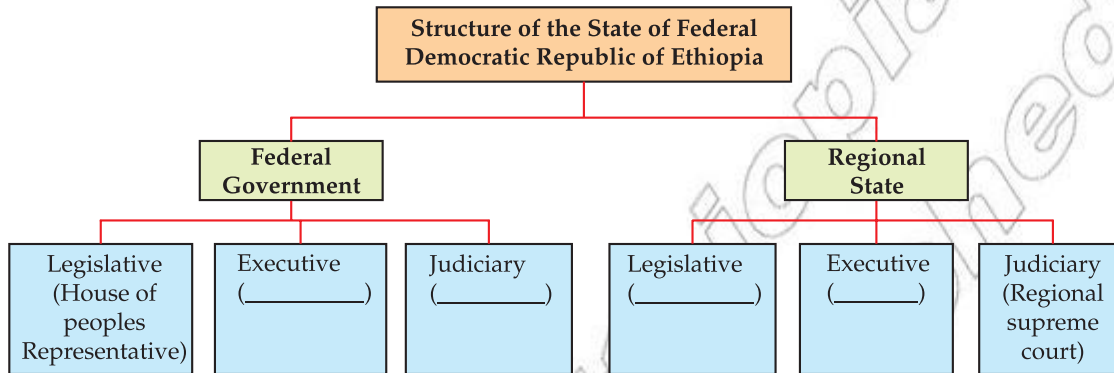
1.5 The Structure of the State of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

State structure means the organization of political powers at different levels (Federal, Regional, etc.) and into different branches (legislative, executive, and judiciary).

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Copy the diagram below into your exercise books and fill in the organs or branches of government in the space provided in brackets. Two are done for you as examples.

The Federal Democratic state of Ethiopia has three branches of government. Similarly, regional states also have three branches. These are the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.



Picture 1.2. The structure of the state of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

1.5.1 The Legislative

The legislative is the highest political organ of the federal government. The House of Peoples Representatives (HPR) is the legislative organ of the federal government. The Regional states council is the legislative body, which is the highest political organ in the region. The function of the legislative is to make and endorse laws, decrees, rules and regulations for public peace and security in the country and the regions.

1.5.2 The Executive

The federal executive is the council of ministers while that of the regions is the regional administration. The major function of the executive is enforcing or implementing the law made by the legislative. In order to fulfill this function, the executive establishes and supervises Ministerial offices, the police force, and the office of public prosecutor and personal houses. The chief executive of the federal government is the Prime Minister. The chief executive of the regional state is the President.

1.5.3 The Judiciary

The Federal judiciary is the Federal Supreme Court. Under it, there are the Federal Higher court and the Federal First Instant court. In the regions, this organ of government is the Regional Supreme Court. Under it there are Regional Higher Court and Regional First Instant court.

The major function of the judiciary is to give judicial (judgement) services. This body helps to ensure peace and security by interpreting laws made by the legislative and executive.

As stated above, in democratic systems law-making, implementing and interpreting are given to different branches of government. Moreover, in this power division, none of the branches of the governments can interfere in the powers of the other. The main reason for the division of power between three branches of government is to prevent power concentration at one place. It also prevents dictatorship.

Such a power division is according to the principle of separation of power. This principle enables legislative houses (councils), executive institutions and courts (the judiciary) to act independently.

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Activity 13

Discuss the following question:

1. What is the reason to divide state power into three branches in democratic systems?

1.6 Foreign Relations of Ethiopia

1.6.1 The Contribution of Ethiopia for African Countries



Picture 1.3. The Ethiopian peace-keeping force on a mission

- What do you understand from the above picture?
- Mention the contributions of Ethiopia to African countries that you know.

Ethiopia contributed a lot to maintain peace in the continent of Africa. For example, its peace-keeping force was part of the United Nations'

peace-keeping mission in Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Liberia. The Ethiopian peace-keeping force is known for its effort in the rehabilitation of war-displaced people. Ethiopia's involvement in peace-keeping activities began in the Korean war of 1950's where it accomplished a mission that became a pride for Africans. Its large-scale involvement in peace-keeping mission in the continent is an indicator of the country's international recognition and commitment for the peace of Africa.

Ethiopia was also a model for the independence of African countries from colonialism. Moreover, the country contributed to the anti-colonial struggle of Africa by giving military training for freedom fighters and contributing soldiers and deciding immigration and asylum issues.

Activity 14

Write a report of two pages on the following questions in groups. You can use your history teacher, history books etc., as references.

1. Choose one country where the Ethiopian peace-keeping force had campaigned and write a report including the following information:
 - (A) The date of the mission
 - (B) Major activities.

Summary

A democratic system has many basic principles. These include free and competitive elections, the rule of law and transparency and accountability.

Tolerance to diversity is highly important for peaceful co-existence. It enables communities to live peacefully in unity in diversity.

The Federal government of Ethiopia has many functions. The major ones include protecting

and defending the constitution; organizing and administering public and national defence and security forces and the Federal police force; administering the national bank; printing money and minting coins; controlling foreign exchange rates; deciding foreign relation policies; expanding air; rail; sea transport facilities and telecommunication services.

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Key Words

Federal:	A state established by the association of self-governing regional states
Democracy:	A system of government in which the people are sources of ultimate political power. It is ruled by officials elected by the free will of the people
Republic:	An indicator of the government being publicly elected
Protocol Agreement:	Agreements for cooperation in economic, cultural, educational etc., areas signed between countries
Censorship:	Control or investigation of messages of electronic or print media to check their political and moral effects before they are disseminated to the public
Asylum:	The protection given by a country to political refugees of another country

Unit Review Exercises

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

I. Write "True" if the statement is correct and write "False" if the statement is incorrect

1. Free and fair, competitive election for political power is one of the principles of democracy.
2. In a democratic system, the right to life shall never be limited.
3. In exercising their right to assembly, people shall do it peacefully and legally.
4. Tolerance in diversity encourages mutual respect, cooperation, peace and love.
5. Making and implementing foreign policy and negotiating and ratifying international treaties are functions of regional states.

II. Match words or phrases under column 'A' with correct items of column 'B'

- | A | B |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The pillar of a democratic system | A. Rule of law |
| 2. The right of association | B. Individual human right |
| 3. The right of assembly in a peaceful manner | C. Collective human right |
| 4. The right to practice any religion | D. Individual democratic right |
| 5. The right of Nations and Nationalities for self-administration | E. Collective Democratic right |
| 6. Freedom of expression | |
| 7. The right to life | |

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III. Copy the following questions on your exercise book and fill the correct answer on the space provided

1. The major principles of democratic systems are _____ and _____.
2. The three branches of government are _____ and _____.

IV. Choose the correct answer for the following questions

1. Which democratic principle says that the decisions made by officials shall be at the will of the people and not in their personal interest?
(a) Transparency (b) Accountability (c) Rule of law (d) All are correct.
2. Which one is not the power and function of the federal government?
(a) Printing money
(b) National defence, security and National Bank
(c) Postal and telecommunication service
(d) None of the above.
3. What is the importance of tolerance in diversity?
(a) The development of inter-personal relations
(b) To cooperate for effective work
(c) To live peacefully in unity in diversity
(d) All of the above.

V. Give short answers for the following questions

1. What are the three branches of government? What is the importance of the separation of power among the three branches? Explain with examples.
2. Compare and contrast the powers and functions of the Federal and Regional States.