

Unit 1

Building a Democratic System

Introduction

In Grade 9, you learnt basic ideas about democracy and building a democratic system. In Grade 10, you are going to learn more about the details of democracy and democratic systems. It will be much easier to learn and more interesting if you take part in class enthusiastically.

Lessons

1. Principles and Values of a Democratic System
2. Rights
3. Obligations
4. Tolerance
5. The State in Ethiopia
6. Federalism in Ethiopia
7. Ethiopia's Foreign Relations

What you will learn

You will:

- understand the values and principles of a democratic system.
- recognize what is meant by rights and obligations.
- understand state formation in Ethiopia.

Key words and concepts

- Accountability
- Bilateral relations
- Executive
- Federal government
- Federalism
- Judiciary
- Legislative
- Majority rule
- Minority rights
- Multilateral relations
- Public participation
- Regional governments
- Repression
- Ruling party
- Sovereignty
- The 1960 coup d'état
- Transparency
- Unitary
- Universal suffrage
- Winning party

Voting in elections — One of the pillars of democracy



1

LESSON

Principles and Values of a Democratic System

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe the main principles and values of a democratic system.
- participate in the democratic process of your country within the limit of your capacity.

Did you see any examples of democracy in action during your vacation? Tell the class about them.

In Grade 9, you learnt about ancient and modern forms of democracy. The first form of democracy was direct democracy, while the modern form is indirect democracy. In this lesson, you will learn about the essence of democracy and the main principles and values of a democratic system. This will help you to participate in, and contribute to, the democratic process in your country. Today, the most widely practised form of democracy throughout the world is indirect democracy. When you reach the age to enjoy the right to vote, you will elect representatives to govern the country. The elected representatives make political decisions and formulate laws. This is the essence of modern democracy or representative democracy.

Representative democracy is characterized by the following principles and values:

- Wider public participation;
- The presence of universal suffrage;
- The presence of fair, free and periodic (regular) elections;
- Majority rule and minority rights;
- Transparency and accountability;
- The presence of multiparty competition or pluralism.

Let's see some of the details of the principles:

Public Participation

Democracy exists when you and others actively participate in the politics of our country. This is not limited to towns or major cities like Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Mekele or Baher Dar. The great majority of Ethiopians live in the countryside. They too have to participate to make democracy work in the country. This is what **public participation** means. If you fail to participate, then it will be difficult for democracy to become strong and work well. Public participation is one of the pillars of democracy. There are different forms of participation. Taking part in elections is one way. Debating on issues and policies is part of public participation as is participating in the administration of your kebele.

Principles and Values of a Democratic System



Voting is one of the democratic rights

? Form groups to discuss the ways you can have participation in your community. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

Universal suffrage and Majority rule

One of the features of democracy is universal suffrage. **Universal suffrage** means to have the *right to vote without discrimination*. In Ethiopia, you have the right to vote from *18 years of age and be elected from the age of 21*. Article 38, sub-article 1, of the Constitution says:

Every Ethiopian national, without any discrimination based on colour, race, nation, nationality, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion or other status, has the following rights:

- (a) *To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely chosen representatives;*
- (b) *On the attainment of 18 years of age, to vote in accordance with law;*
- (c) *To vote and to be elected at periodic elections to any office at any level of government; elections shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.*

You may be only three or four years away from

participating in voting. During an election, the party which you support may not win a **majority vote**. So another party becomes the **winning party** in the election. In this case, people like you will be part of the **minority**, which means a smaller number or group.

The party that wins an election is called the winning party. So the **ruling party** is the winning party. As a ruling party, it has to rule the people without thinking about who voted in favour and against it. Both those who voted for the ruling party and those who voted against it are citizens of the same country. The ruling party has to treat all citizens equally. **Minority rights** are protected by the Constitution. This is what is called **majority rule** and **minority rights**. It is not in the nature of democratic government to suppress any group in society. When a minority group is suppressed, then democracy is also suppressed.

? Form groups to discuss what you understand by universal suffrage and majority rule. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

Fair, Free and Periodic Elections

One way to ensure a democratic system is through **fair, free and periodic elections**. **Fair** election is conducted when parties in an election are treated equally. **Free** election is conducted when there is no threat, intimidation, or harassment on party candidates and their followers, and when they are able to campaign without problems. **Periodic** elections means conducting elections regularly. Most democratic countries conduct elections every four years. Some countries have elections every five years, as in Ethiopia.

Fair and free elections are carried out when the Constitution and the rule of law are observed

Principles and Values of a Democratic System

by citizens and government institutions. So, you will have the right to participate in free, fair and regular elections when you are eighteen.

Transparency and Accountability

A democratic government is open and explains what it is doing. The people have the right to get information and inspect how government works. This way, government can be **transparent**. For a government to be transparent, it has to be open to the people, hold public meetings and debates, and allow citizens to attend and participate.

In a democracy, the press and the people have access to information about what is happening in the country and in government. This is called **transparency**. It imposes the responsibility on elected officials to do what is right. Officials have to work by respecting the will of the people. They have to exercise power according to the Constitution. Officials are accountable to the people. **Accountability** is a situation in which elected officials are responsible for their actions and decisions. The Constitution has this to say under Article 12, sub-article 1 and 2:

1. *The conduct of affairs of government shall be transparent.*
2. *Any public official or an elected representative is accountable for any failure in official duties.*



Queuing to vote

Multi-party Democracy

A democratic system is a system of choice. You freely choose from among the parties which contest for power. One requirement of democracy is to have more than one competing party. When many parties are competing during an election, the people have the opportunity to critically evaluate party programs and choose the party which has the best program for the country. This practice is called a **multi-party** democracy or pluralism. **Pluralism** allows more than one party to run for election. Multi-party democracy offers real choice to people. It also offers the opportunity for the parties that are not in the government to challenge the ruling party.



Copy the table on the next page. Make six groups, discuss and list on the copy the characteristics of democracy under each heading. Examples are provided. Pick one heading each to discuss and give feedback to the class.

Principles and Values of a Democratic System

	Public participation	Universal suffrage	Majority rule	Transparency	Accountability	Multi-party democracy
1.	Discussing and issue	Voting	Ability to decide	Open for scrutiny	Answerable to the public	Presence of different choices
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

CASE STUDY

Election for School Council

In November 2008, students in a high school were involved in electing school council leaders. The campaign went on for some days. Out of a dozen students who campaigned, six remained as finalists. The candidates ran a strong campaign with their supporters. The school was busy on those days. They made speeches to all the students using the school's loud speakers.

All, except one, made closing speeches saying "Please vote for me." But the last speaker said "Don't vote to please me, but vote to please you, and the only candidate, who is here to please you, is in fact me." Everyone stood up clapping, and shouted loudly in appreciation of his speech.

Voting was arranged in each class. The classes were converted to voting stations. Students went back to their respective classes. Home room teachers handed the voters the voting cards and told them how to fill them out and to choose whoever they wanted. The students then voted secretly. Voting was closed, then the home room

teachers and class representatives took the ballot box to the student council office. The counting was conducted in the presence of observers and those who campaigned.

Urgessa got 1127 votes, Tenkir got 923 votes, Ayechew got 512 votes, Fatuma got 458 votes, Gedey got 354 votes, and Berkessa got 339 votes. Those who got the top five votes became members of the school council leadership. Thus, Urgessa became the chairman, Tenkir co-chairman, Ayechew secretary, Fatuma cashier and Gedey became an auditor.

The student council with the five elected officials, plus class representatives, formed the school council. The council involved the class representatives on all matters. The class representatives presented the students' cases to the council for discussion and decision. The class representatives also told students about the council's decisions. All students participated in the council through their representatives. This is an example of how representative democracy works.

Principles and Values of a Democratic System

You have seen how representative democracy works in the student council. Now form groups to discuss and compare how representative democracy works in your kebele and woreda councils. Examples are provided. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class. Record your answers on a copy of this table.

Representative Democracy



	School	Kebele	Woreda
1.	Parent teacher association	Kebele administration	Woreda administration
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

REMEMBER

- Public participation is one of the pillars of democracy.
- Universal suffrage means to have the right to vote without discrimination.
- The party that wins an election is called the winning party.
- Minority rights are protected by the Constitution.
- Transparency is a situation in which officials' performance is open to scrutiny.
- Accountability is a situation in which officials are responsible for their actions and decisions.
- Pluralism allows more than one party to run for election.
- The ruling party is the winning party.
- Democracy exists when you and others actively participate in the politics of our country.

LESSON 2

Rights

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe the interdependence between democratic and human rights.
- explain why it is sometimes necessary to limit rights.
- defend your human and democratic rights.

What rights do you think you have as a human being and as a citizen? As a class, with the help of your teacher, prepare a list of your rights on the board.

In Grade 9, you learned about some of your rights listed in the Ethiopian Constitution. In this lesson, you will learn more about these rights and their types. You will also learn about the differences and the interdependency between the different rights. You will also learn ways of using and defending these rights.

Human rights

In the FDRE Constitution there are long lists of human and democratic rights. Human rights include the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to equality. In a democracy, these rights are essential for citizens. You enjoy these rights because you deserve them.

Human rights can be defined as rights that universally belong to people regardless of sex, race,

colour, language, national origin, age, religion or political beliefs. As a citizen, you have the right to life. This means that you have the unconditional right to exist.

Your life is your most valuable possession. You also have the rights to liberty and equality as they belong to others. These rights are important for any democratic citizen, so you can enjoy them. When you are able to defend these rights, you can continue to use them.

The Constitution states the range of human rights citizens have. Article 17, sub-article 2 expresses the right to liberty as follows:

No person may be subjected to arbitrary arrest, and no person may be detained without a charge or conviction against him.



Life is the most valuable possession — traffic police helping citizens cross a busy road

Rights

? Form groups to discuss in what ways human rights are essential to you. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

Democratic rights

There is a long list of democratic rights in the Constitution. Democratic rights include the right to vote and to be elected, child rights, the right to property and rights of nationality. Regarding the right to property, the Constitution states as under the Article 40, sub-article 1:

Every Ethiopian citizen has the right to the ownership of private property. Unless prescribed otherwise by law on account of public interest, this right shall include the right to acquire, to use and, in a manner compatible with the rights of other citizens, to dispose of such property by sale or bequest or to transfer it otherwise.

The indivisibility of rights

Human and democratic rights are interdependent. For example, your right to life and equality are part of your human rights. The rights to property and child rights are part of your democratic rights. Your right to equality (human right) can be respected when your rights to property and nationality (democratic right) are respected. So, it is not possible to respect your rights to life and equality without respecting your rights to property and nationality. In other words, it is the prevalence of democratic rights that ensures the respect of human rights. This shows that the different rights stated in the Constitution are interrelated, thus indivisible.

Whatever rights you may have, there are always some limitations attached to them. There is no such thing as an absolute right. This is because



Citizens should have equal opportunities to access education

Rights

the rights you have are shared with others. So you can enjoy your rights as long as you do not affect others' ability to use the same rights.

The Ethiopian Constitution expresses human and democratic rights as fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. These rights constitute the fundamental principles of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Ethiopia

has ratified some of the international instruments which are part of UDHR. Article 13, sub-article 2 of the Constitution states:

The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this Chapter shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and International instruments adopted by Ethiopia.

Copy this table. Make groups, then discuss and list on the copy some of your rights and how you use them without affecting the rights of others. Examples are provided.



	Your Human Rights	What you are not allowed to do against others
1	Right to life	Kill anyone
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

	Your Democratic Rights	What you are not allowed to do against others
1	Right to speech	Obstruct others from expressing ideas
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		



Citizens should have the opportunity to own their own property

Rights

CASE STUDY

Use your rights

During a school council election, a Grade 10 student, Emmanuel, quarrelled with a friend called Matios. Emmanuel asked Matios to vote for his relative who was running for the presidency. Matios disagreed with Emmanuel and wanted to elect another candidate of his own choice. The candidate Matios voted for won the election by one more vote.

Emmanuel became bitter and told Matios that, if he had voted for his relative, he could have won the election and become president of the school council. Emmanuel became emotional and insulted his friend and wanted to start a fight with him. Matios left his friend and went home.

Next day, Matios presented this case to the civics and ethical education teacher and the students in his class. The students discussed this issue and criticized Emmanuel for behaving undemocratically.

The teacher also criticized him because he had failed to respect Matios's right to make a free choice.

? Form groups to discuss how Emmanuel and Matios behaved and list down the actions and attitudes of each. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.



Students involved in class discussion

REMEMBER

- ❑ The right to life, liberty and equality are part of your human rights.
- ❑ Democratic rights include the right to vote and to be elected, child rights, the right to property and rights of nationality.
- ❑ Human and democratic rights are interdependent, thus indivisible.
- ❑ Human rights can be defined as rights that universally belong to people regardless of sex, race, colour, language, national origin, age, religion, or political beliefs.
- ❑ Democratic rights could be defined as rights one enjoys as a member of a democratic political community.

LESSON 3

Obligations

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- state what your obligations are as citizens of this country.

Can you list some of your obligations as citizens and share them with the class?

In Grade 9, you learnt some basic ideas related to obligations. You saw that obligations are duties to be fulfilled. You also realized that your obligations are related to the rights you enjoy. In this lesson, you are going to learn more about the need to respect the rights of all citizens.

The Constitution imposes on us the need to respect the rights of others. You can exercise your rights, but you have a duty to fulfill certain obligations. For instance, you have the obligation not to damage school facilities or destroy household or community properties. You have the duty to keep yourself and your surroundings clean and neat. You have the obligation to make your environment a safe place to live in. A democratic citizen fulfils his/her obligations and persuades others to do the same.

You have an obligation to respect the rights of others. As you saw in the previous lesson, respecting the rights of others means respecting their human and democratic rights. It is a constitutional violation to deny your classmates, or those in your kebele, any of their rights.

The right of thought, opinion and freedom of expression are citizens' democratic rights. Thus, you have to respect these rights.

Your friends may belong to different associations and clubs at school. They may choose to join the agriculture club to learn more about how trees grow and help to get more rain. You may prefer to join the literature club to write short stories and poems to read to students. You have made your own free choice as they have made theirs. You have the obligation to respect each others' choices.

You also have to respect the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia as we are all equal. In your class and kebele there are students who belong to different nationalities. You have to respect their rights. The Constitution imposes obligations on citizens to undertake some tasks. You have the constitutional obligation to respect the human rights of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN requires governments and persons to respect such rights.

The UN declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religions or Linguistic Minorities under its Article 1 reads:

States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religions and linguistic identities of minorities within their respective territories and

Obligations

shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

This is part of the international agreement that Ethiopia has ratified and has the duty to promote in the interests of its own people. Others

have the obligation to respect your rights just as you respect theirs. Do not forget that the purpose of learning about your rights and obligations is not only to study them, but to translate them into practice.

Copy this table. Form groups, discuss and list on the copy the rights and obligations you have in class, school and the community you live in. Examples are provided. Share ideas in a whole class discussion.

	Rights at school	Obligations at school	Rights at home	Obligations at home	Rights at kebele	Obligations at kebele
1	To be free from corporal punishment	To respect the school rules and regulations	Family support for education	Participating in home chores	To be considered as citizens of the kebele	Participating in cleaning campaign
2						
3						
4						
5						

CASE STUDY

Stereotyping — Wrong Behaviour

A group of three students, Tabor, Zeynedin and Megerssa, started joking about the way people of different nationalities talk. They imitated some of them and were joking about how they speak and act. Some students reacted to the jokes and started to do the same on the nationalities of those who started it. The class atmosphere became very uncomfortable.

Fikria, a student known for being fair and sober, asked her classmates to calm down. She said, “In Grade 9 we learned that democracy is based on

the belief that all men are equal, so it is wrong to joke about the way people speak and act.”

Students were listening to her attentively. The class atmosphere became normal by the time the civics and ethical education teacher arrived. Fikria explained to him what had happened. The teacher had to tell to students that stereotyping is a behaviour which is undemocratic and should be avoided. He emphasized to his students that respect for the culture of different nationalities is a fundamental principle of democracy.

Obligations

? Form groups to discuss why it is wrong to joke about other nationalities. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class for discussion.



Ethiopia — Home to different cultural groups

CASE STUDY

GTZ for Clean Addis

Addis Ababa is the capital city of Ethiopia and Africa. Addis Ababa is a unique city. It is a city established and built by its own people with indigenous knowledge. Most African cities were established during the colonial period. Addis Ababa, as a city, is over 120 years old. It is a relatively young city and one of the world's diplomatic hubs. It is home to the Headquarters of the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and others. The number of diplomatic missions residing in Addis is greater in number than in any other African country.

GTZ is a German governmental organization that takes part in a number of development projects in Ethiopia. It is also playing its part to make Addis Ababa cleaner. It has built roadside trash bins in the city. They are colourful and read — “Keep Addis Clean!” This reminds pedestrians to play a role in keeping Addis Ababa clean as the city belongs to them.

It is part of the obligation of the residents of Addis Ababa to keep their city clean when organizations like GTZ play a role as a stakeholder.

Obligations

Copy this table. Form groups to discuss what you can do to keep the local area you live in tidy and list some of them on the copy of the table. One example is provided.

	What you can do to tidy your local area
1	Not dropping rubbish on the street
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	



Keep Addis Clean! (GTZ) bins on the roadsides of Addis Ababa

REMEMBER

- You have an obligation to respect the rights of others.
- You have an obligation to keep yourself and your surroundings clean and neat.
- You have an obligation to respect the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia.
- Respecting the rights of citizens means respecting all their rights.
- You have an obligation to make your environment a safe place to live in.
- Respecting the rights of others means respecting their human and democratic rights.

4

LESSON

Tolerance

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of tolerance of diversity.
- describe the implications of tolerance of diversity for a multicultural country like Ethiopia.
- be tolerant of cultural differences.

How important do you think it is to tolerate diversity in Ethiopia? What will happen if you are not tolerant of cultural diversity in society?

In Grade 9, you learnt the concepts of diversity and tolerance. You know that diversity means to be different from others in culture and in opinions. Tolerance means accommodating these differences and being able to live with others in peace. You were also taught that diversity and tolerance are part of the values of democracy.

In this lesson, you will learn why tolerance is necessary for social change and peace in Ethiopia. Moreover, you will learn how tolerance is particularly important in a multicultural society like Ethiopia. This lesson will help you develop the knowledge and skills you need to help build a tolerant and developing society.

Tolerance is one of the values of democracy. You need to practise it. No two individuals can have identical viewpoints and aspirations in life. This is true with every one of you. But, you

live together with the help of tolerance. You can develop tolerance when you are able to listen to others. In Ethiopia, there are over eighty cultural groups having different languages and ways of life. Although they have different cultures, they have only one homeland that they share in common with others.

So, Ethiopia has to be a comfortable place for them to live in with respect and dignity. This is achieved when citizens give the respect



There are different cultures in Ethiopia of which this is one

Tolerance

that others deserve. In this way Ethiopians can develop shared values and a common destiny. As a citizen you have to be able to see that all cultures are equal. Moreover, you have to respect others' rights to have different opinions to yours. You must learn to accept diversity starting with school life. When you can do this, the school will be a peaceful place of learning. In your community you have to respect the cultures of others. Diversity is valuable and tolerance is a way to create peace and promote development.

Ethiopia will be a land of peace and prosperity when its citizens learn to be tolerant with one another. Ethiopia is the sum total of its different nations, nationalities and peoples, and their ways of life.

Think about Ethiopia as a human body. A

person remains healthy and active when all his body parts function in a healthy way. A small wound on any part of the body could affect one's health seriously, so it needs treatment. Untreated, the person could suffer and even die.

In a similar way, if members of a certain cultural group in Ethiopia believe that they are not treated fairly and equally, this is a sign of social sickness. This could lead to serious social problems. Therefore, solutions should be put in place to avoid these social ills. The treatment of such problems has to start with every citizen.

You should learn to respect the rights of every individual. You have the responsibility to be sensitive on such matters. You should play the role that contributes to bringing people together rather than setting them apart.

Copy this table. Form groups to discuss the diversities you see in your school and surroundings and ways of handling them. An example is provided. Write your answers on a copy of the table.



	Diversity	Tolerance/way of handling
1	Gender differences	Avoiding discrimination between boys and girls
2		
3		
4		
5		

CASE STUDY

Culture meets culture

In 2008, during the semester break, students organized an educational trip to Agere Mariam on the road to Moyale. The students fixed their tents and camped on the football field of the school. One of their plans was to learn more about the different cultures of Ethiopia in local villages.

They visited Kelenso on Wednesday, the weekly market day of the village. They had the chance to see many people coming from the surrounding area to buy and sell goods in the market. The students saw camels. For most, it was the first time to see such a huge animal. They saw people eating camel

Tolerance

meat in the open-market. Some of them tasted camel milk but did not taste the meat.

A farmer called Gemede Elema was happy to see them coming to visit the place and invited them to his home. A variety of food was presented to them including injerra and wat. There was also worque,

a favourite local food. Only a few tried it but didn't like it. But the students behaved positively towards the food so as not to offend their hosts. Before departing, they thanked Ato Gemede and his family. They departed with a memory that lived with them for a long time.

Copy this table. Form groups to discuss and list down what possible lessons the students could have learnt from this visit. An example is provided. Write your answers on a copy of the table.

	Cultural similarities	Cultural differences
1	Members of a family live together	The way of dressing
2		
3		
4		
5		

CASE STUDY

Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi (1869 – 1948), a great leader who taught tolerance as a way for social peace

Mohandas Gandhi was the world's leading exponent of the strategy of passive resistance — the attempt to change unjust laws through non-violent civil disobedience. Gandhi began his political activism not in India, but in South Africa, where he was a successful lawyer and leader in the Indian community.

It was in South Africa, in 1907, that he organized his first campaign of civil disobedience, and this *satyagraha*, or “clinging to the truth”, was so successful that the South African government agreed to alleviate anti-India discrimination. In 1915, Gandhi returned to India a famous man.

He became known as *Mahatma*, or “great soul”,

and his influence was so considerable that he could exact democratic concessions from the British government of India by merely threatening to fast to death. Not only was he the spiritual leader of the Indian people, but he was the leader of the Indian National Congress and was a principal participant in the post World War II conferences that led to India's independence and the creation of a separate Muslim state, Pakistan.

When there was violence between Muslims and Hindus, Gandhi used his influence to help control it, often resorting to fasts and prayer meetings. It was during one such prayer meeting that he was assassinated. Gandhi altered the courses of nations:

Tolerance

his extraordinary power came not through guns, but through his ability to bring out the best in people by setting the highest standards for his own life.

Source: Brooke Noel Moore and Kenneth Bruder: Philosophy: *The Power of Ideas*. 6th ed. 2005.

? Form groups to discuss what lessons you learn from Mahatma Gandhi's role to keep young India a peaceful country.

REMEMBER

- ❑ Tolerance is one of the values of democracy.
- ❑ In Ethiopia, there are over eighty cultural groups with different languages and ways of life.
- ❑ Diversity is valuable and tolerance is a way to create peace and promote development.
- ❑ Ethiopia is the sum total of its different nations, nationalities and peoples and their ways of life.
- ❑ Ethiopia will be a land of peace and prosperity when its citizens learn to be tolerant with one another.

5

LESSON

The State in Ethiopia

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain the history of state formation in Ethiopia.
- describe the kind of governments that existed in Ethiopia until 1991.
- explain the struggle that Ethiopian people had against autocratic governments.
- explain the transition to democracy and its contribution to transparency and accountability.

Can you say something about the history of state formation in Ethiopia and the struggle of the people against autocratic governments?



The church of Lalibella — One of the legacies of the Zagwe dynasty

In Grade 9, you were taught about the different autocratic governments which existed in Ethiopia before 1991. These governments were repressive because the human rights of the people were seriously violated.

In this lesson, you will learn more about the types of governments that existed in the past. You will also examine the struggles made against autocratic rules and the transition to democracy.

Ethiopia, as one of the ancient states in the world, has a long history which goes back to well before the time of Axum. Axum was one of the many civilizations of Ethiopia. The monuments of Axum and other historical landmarks in the north were built during the period when Axum was the centre of power. From Axum, there was a shift of power southward to Wag and then to Lasta. Hence, the establishment of the Zagwe Dynasty.

The Zagwe Dynasty, under king Lalibella in Lasta, constructed the wonderful monolithic stone churches. Then the centre of power shifted from Lasta to Shewa and eventually to Gondar. For a long time, Gondar was the power centre. The kings of Gondar constructed the imperial castles. Many of these castles are found in the centre of Gondar itself. There are a number of castles outside the city and as far away as the western side of Lake Tana. One such castle is Susenios castle.

The State in Ethiopia



Tewdros II

The coming into existence of the modern Ethiopian state is more closely related to, and dependent on, the events that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The three empire builders of the 19th century played a significant role to bring back and reunite some of the ancient parts, consolidate, and expand Ethiopia to its present form. The emperors were Tewdros II, Yohannes IV and Menelik II. The history of Ethiopia predominantly bears the names of these emperors.

The fourth emperor who ruled Ethiopia was Haile Selassie I. He ruled Ethiopia for a period longer than that of the three emperors put together.

During Haile Selassie's rule, the demand by the people for freedom and improved living conditions was met with repression. The Emperor's autocratic rule made the situation of the country even worse. Peasant uprisings and students' movements spread throughout Ethiopia.

The recurrence of the peasant uprisings and the spread of the students' movements made the



Yohannes IV

Emperor's regime very shaky. Unable to stop the uprisings and the students' movements, the regime's foundations began to crack. In 1960, the Imperial Bodyguard staged a failed military coup d'état and killed important officials of the king. This in turn added more fuel to the movements against the autocracy. This was followed by the popular uprising of 1974.

However, the revolution was hijacked by the military junta called the Derg. Derg is known for its repression and bloody rule. It became even more cruel than Haile Selassie's rule.

The repressive rule of the Derg forced many to take arms and engage in fighting. Pockets of armed struggle began to attract more people and become forces to shake the regime. In the final years of the Derg, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Forces (EPRDF) was formed to coordinate the armed struggle of different groups against the military dictatorship. After seventeen years of dictatorial and autocratic rule, the Derg disintegrated and its rule collapsed in 1991. After the fall of the Derg, which was followed by a

The State in Ethiopia



Menelik II



Emperor Haile Selassie I

transitional government, democratic rule was established in the country.

In the 1995 Constitution, the government expressed its commitment to uphold democracy and declared Ethiopia a democratic country.

Hence, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) was set up. As a result, political parties were established and a free press began to circulate for the first time. This has created political inspiration among the people.

Copy this table. Form groups to discuss and list down the differences between the autocratic, dictatorial and the rule under the FDRE. Examples are provided. Write your answers on a copy of the table.

	Autocratic rule	Dictatorial rule	Rule under the FDRE
1	Rule by a feudal king	Rule by the military clique	Rule by winning party
2			
3			
4			
5			

CASE STUDY

The Opposition Parties in the Parliament

The 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia established a two-house parliament. The House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) and the House of Federation

(HF) constitute the Ethiopian Parliament. Members of the HPR, the legislative body, are elected by the people. Those elected to the HPR are members of

The State in Ethiopia

the ruling party and the opposition parties.

For the opposition parties to make a difference, they need to have many more members in the

parliament. For democracy to hold in society, parties in opposition should be strong to influence the policies of the ruling party.

? Form groups to discuss the role of the opposition party in the parliament and its contribution to democracy. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

REMEMBER

- ❑ Ethiopia has a long history but a great deal was not recorded.
- ❑ Ethiopia was one of the ancient states in the world.
- ❑ The coming into existence of the modern Ethiopian state is more closely related to, and dependent on, the events that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- ❑ The recurrence of the peasant uprisings and the spread of the students' movement made Haile Selassie's regime very shaky.
- ❑ In 1960, the Imperial Bodyguard staged a failed military coup d'état and killed important officials of the king.
- ❑ Derg is known for its repression and bloody rule.
- ❑ After the fall of the Derg, a democratic rule was established in the country.



Derg's attempt to suppress peoples' claim for their legitimate human and democratic rights

6

LESSON

Federalism in Ethiopia

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain the political status of the federal and regional states of Ethiopia.
- describe the structure set up to avoid the abuse of power by the government.
- list the instruments which are in place to safeguard the rights of citizens in Ethiopia.

Can you describe how federalism works in Ethiopia?

The collapse of the Derg brought change in Ethiopia. After the Derg, the unitary system of government was replaced by the federal system of government. Federalism is the principle that promotes the division of power between Central (federal) and Regional Governments. Federalism coordinates the central and regional authorities so that they work together for a common goal. The Federal (central) and Regional Governments in Ethiopia have specific areas of authority. The functions and authority assigned to the Federal and the Regional Governments are stated in the Constitution. Today, in Ethiopia, there are nine Regional Governments which form the Federation.

The Federal Government and the Regional Governments (states) have legislative, executive

and judiciary branches. The Regional Governments have their own constitutions and flags.

The states are:

1. The State of Tigray.
2. The State of Afar.
3. The State of Amhara.
4. The State of Oromia.
5. The State of Somale.
6. The State of Benshangul Gumuz.
7. The State of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples.
8. The State of the Gambela Peoples.
9. The State of the Harari People.



Map of Ethiopia showing the Regional States

Federalism in Ethiopia



One of the federal states - Harari

There are exclusive authorities assigned to the Federal and Regional Governments. The distribution of power between the Federal and Regional Governments helps to control the abuse of power because it is believed that one checks the power of the other. In the classical sense, the system of checks and balances operates between the three branches of government. According to this principle, the legislative, executive and judiciary branches work together to avoid the monopoly of power by any one of them. In this regard, the Federal Constitution under Article 72, sub-articles 1 and 2, has this to say:

1. *The highest executive powers of the Federal Government are vested in the Prime Minister and in the Council of Ministers.*
2. *The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are responsible to the House of Peoples' Representatives. In the exercise of State functions, members of the Council of Ministers*

are collectively responsible for all decisions they make as a body.

This shows an aspect of checks and balances. The Prime Minister (PM) is head of the Executive organ of government. The HPR is the Legislative organ of government. The above article gives the HPR authority to check the workings of the PM and members of his cabinet.

Regarding the Judiciary, Article 79, sub-articles 1, 2 and 3 state:

1. *Judicial powers, both at Federal and State levels, are vested in the courts.*
2. *Courts of any level shall be free from any interference of influence of any government body, government official or from any other source.*
3. *Judges shall exercise their functions in full independence and shall be directed solely by the law.*

In order to safeguard the rights of citizens, and as a result of the federal democratic system, different institutions are in place. They include the Human Rights Commission, the office of the Ombudsman and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission which contribute to check the abuse of power and corruption by officials.

? In groups, undertake research into the roles of the three institutions and present your findings to the class.

CASE STUDY

The State of the Harari People

The Harari Regional state is found in the eastern part of Ethiopia. It is a city-state encompassing the nearby kebeles of farmers. It is the smallest

of the nine Regional States that form the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Like all the other Regional states, the Harari Regional state has its

Federalism in Ethiopia

own constitution and flag. The state of the Harari people is surrounded by the Oromia state. The capital city of the state is Harar, a city which is one of the ancient cities in this part of Africa.

The government of the Regional state manages most of its domestic matters on its own. The state collects most of the tax revenue and runs a police force and the judiciary system. It also undertakes development projects to improve the condition of

the people. The Harari people have the right to administer themselves due to the federal system set up in the wake of the 1995 Constitution.

? Form groups to discuss and list what the Harari Regional State is doing to improve the living conditions of its people. What more do you think the state of the Harari People could do for the people? Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

Copy this table. In these groups, examine how the State of the Harari People exercises its constitutional rights to administer the region. List on the copy with the help of your teacher, some of the rights that the state enjoys. One example is provided.

The constitutional rights of the state of the Harari People	
1	To administer themselves
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

REMEMBER

- The collapse of the Derg brought change to Ethiopia.
- Federalism is the principle or idea regarding the division of power between Central (federal) and Regional Governments.
- The Federal and Regional Governments in Ethiopia have specific areas of authority.
- Today, in Ethiopia, there are nine Regional Governments which form the federation.
- The Federal Government and the Regional Governments (States) have legislative, executive and judiciary branches which check one another.
- The office of the Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission contribute to check the abuse of power by officials.

7

LESSON

Ethiopia's Foreign Relations

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of international conventions and agreements in guiding foreign relations.
- describe one of the main purposes of Ethiopia's foreign relations in promoting the development of the country.

What do you know about international conventions, agreements and sovereignty?

Ethiopia has a long tradition of foreign relations. Beginning in the 20th century, Ethiopia's foreign relations started expanding a great deal. The second half of the 20th century showed the growing trend for the need to develop international conventions and agreements. These are international instruments that help agreements between countries to be more binding and effective.



The Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti

Ethiopia has signed a number of international conventions and agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Conventions on Child Rights and the Rights of Women. These help countries work together to consolidate and promote international peace and stability.

Foreign relations help countries work for mutual benefits. Ethiopia's foreign relations have helped to attract foreign investment. With foreign investment, new technology comes into Ethiopia. At present, in Ethiopia, there are many foreign companies that have invested in infrastructural development such as roads and hydroelectric power. When companies of different countries enter into economic and cultural relations, the principle that guides them is mutual benefit. In doing so, they support each other's peace and stability and this benefits both. They support each other's sovereignty to protect their mutual interests. Sovereignty refers to the preservation of a country's independence and its unrestricted rights to deal with other countries. Such relationships are the foundations for world peace and for the promotion of mutual development of countries.

Copy the table on the next page. Form groups to list on the copy some of the international conventions and agreements that Ethiopia has ratified (accepted) and their benefits to the country. One example is provided.

Ethiopia’s Foreign Relations

	International conventions and agreements	Benefits
1	Convention on the Rights of the Child	Children’s rights are protected by law
2		
3		
4		

CASE STUDY

The Kuwait Fund in Ethiopia

One of the richest states in the Persian Gulf region is Kuwait. Its wealth is based on oil. It has a small population, whose per capita income is one of the highest in the world. Its leaders have earmarked billions of dollars to help people in poor countries. The organization in charge of this task is called the “Kuwait Fund.” It has the slogan that says “The

Kuwait Fund helps people to help themselves.” The Kuwait Fund has been involved in Ethiopia in helping a number of projects. The construction of the new International Terminal built at Bole is one that the Kuwait Fund financed. This has been possible because of the good foreign relations that Ethiopia has with Kuwait.

Copy the table below. Form groups to discuss and list down some of the mutual benefits that Ethiopia and other countries obtain from their relationships. One example is provided. Write your answers on a copy of the table.



The modern International Terminal of Bole

	Trade relation and projects undertaken	Benefits for Ethiopia	Benefits for other countries
1	Kuwait Fund – Construction of new terminal at Bole Airport	Enhances the Ethiopian airlines system	Better air service in Ethiopia
2			
3			
4			

Ethiopia's Foreign Relations

CASE STUDY

Resources mobilized from bilateral donors from the year 1991/92 – 2000/01

Fiscal year	Million USD		
1991/92	253.00	1998/99	346.90
1992/93	409.20	1999/00	166.93
1993/94	97.24	2000/01	157.76
1994/95	259.40	Total	2,500.60
1995/96	314.30		
1996/97	265.73		
1997/98	230.14		

Source: Merewa, A Quarterly Magazine. Jun, 2002.



Why do you think Ethiopia received these resources? Discuss in groups. Group leaders should present their ideas to the class.

REMEMBER

- ❑ Ethiopia has a long tradition of foreign relations.
- ❑ Sovereignty refers to the preservation of a country's independence and its power to deal with other countries.
- ❑ Beginning in the 20th century, Ethiopia's foreign relations expanded.
- ❑ The second half of the 20th century showed the growing trend for the need to develop international conventions and agreements.
- ❑ Ethiopia has signed a number of international conventions and agreements.
- ❑ Foreign relations help countries to work for mutual benefits.



Ethiopian Airlines connects Ethiopia with the rest of the world

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt more about democracy and how a democratic system works. You have learnt about the essence of democracy and the principles and values of a democratic system. Your knowledge of the interdependence and differences of human and democratic rights will help you to play a constructive role in society. Your knowledge about rights and tolerance are key to living in peace with others. You have learnt how the Ethiopian state has evolved. You have also seen that repressive rule forced Ethiopian people into armed struggle. Through armed struggle, a democratic system was eventually established. You have learnt how the federal form of government in Ethiopia contributes to checking the abuse of power by officials. You have also seen that foreign relations are tools to promote development and maintain the sovereignty of the country.

GLOSSARY

Accountability:	When officials are responsible for their actions and decisions in a democracy.
Bilateral relations:	Relations between two countries.
Executive:	The branch of government that implements laws.
Federal government:	The government at the centre which works closely with regional governments.
Judiciary:	The branch of government that interprets laws.
Legislative:	The branch of government that formulates laws.
Majority rule:	When government's decision is made on the basis of a majority vote in a democracy.
Minority right:	Respecting the rights of a minority in a democracy.
Multilateral relations:	Relations between more than two countries.
Regional government:	Governments which have power to undertake matters at a regional/state level.
Ruling party:	The party that rules democratically because it has won the election.
Sovereignty:	The preservation of a country's independence and its power to establish relations with other countries.
Transparency:	Allowing people to know what is happening in their country under democracy.
Unitary:	When only one layer of government exists and the central government controls everything.
Universal suffrage:	The act of voting during elections by all citizens who are above a given age limit in democratic societies, e.g., eighteen in Ethiopia.

UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

Part I – Multiple choice

1. Which one of the following is not a value of a democratic system?
 - (a) citizens rights
 - (b) tolerance
 - (c) duties of citizens
 - (d) none
2. Which one of the following is not an essential principle of democracy?
 - (a) public participation
 - (b) irregular elections
 - (c) universal suffrage
 - (d) multiparty competition
3. Democracy does not protect one of the following:
 - (a) the majority
 - (b) the minority
 - (c) losing parties in elections
 - (d) none
4. Which one of the following statements about democracy is not correct?
 - (a) rights of citizens are limited
 - (b) rights involve obligations
 - (c) rights have no limits in a democracy
 - (d) respecting the rights of others is essential

5. Which type of government accepts cultural equality?
 - (a) feudalism
 - (b) democracy
 - (c) dictatorship
 - (d) autocracy

Part II – True or false

1. Human and political rights are linked together.
2. The culture of tolerance will help development in Ethiopia.
3. Knowing one's own obligations is a good way to respect the rights of others.
4. Federalism in Ethiopia will lead the people to a common understanding.
5. At present, Ethiopia is attracting more investment than ever.

Part III – Short answers

1. State some of the principles of democracy.
2. List some of your rights and obligations.
3. What do you understand by federalism?
4. What benefits do you think that Ethiopia has gained from its foreign relations? Why?