UNIT 1

THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

1.1 Meaning of Prehistory and History

- ✓ **History**, derived from the Greek word ***Istoria***, means "***inquiry***" or "an account of one's inquiries."
- ✓ **History** is the story of humans in the past, it tells what they did and what happened to them.
- ✓ **Historians** are people who study and write about the human past.
- ✓ **History** began about 5,500 years ago when people first began to write. However, the story of people begins in prehistory.
  - ➢ **Prehistory** is the study of the distant past.
  - ➢ **Prehistory** was the time before people developed the art of writing.
  - ➢ **Archaeologists** and **Anthropologists** have worked to find clues about early human life (pre-history).
- ✓ History as a body of knowledge is an account of the past based on historical facts and evidence.
- ✓ History is not an opinion or novel writing. Identifying historical facts from opinion requires critical thinking.
  - ➢ **Fact** is a statement that can be proved with supporting information.
  - ➢ **Opinion** is what a writer believes based on his or her viewpoint. History writers can keep their opinions with facts, but an opinion is something that cannot be proved.

❖ The Discipline of History

- ▪ As a body of knowledge, History is a branch of social science that deals with what human beings did in the past. It studies changes in the development of past societies' political, economic, social, and cultural life.

➔ **The importance of History**

- ✓ History helps us know about the past, understand the present, and foresee future developments.
- ✓ It also allows us to understand national and international issues, including democratic principles and nationalism.
- ✓ History can also help us develop the necessary skill for collecting and analysing information to reach conclusions.
- ✓ It helps us live our lives as conscious citizens actively participating in shaping our future.
- ✓ History teaches us critical skills.
- ✓ Studying History helps students to develop essential research skills.

- ✓ History helps us understand the present better and provides a sense of identity.

➔ **Historiography**

- ⇘ Historiography is studying how knowledge of the past is attained and transmitted.
- ⇘ The world's oldest written History comes from China before 1000BC.
- ⇘ Ancient Greek historians, notably **Herodotus** and **Thucydides**, introduced the organized study and narration of the past.
- ⇘ **Herodotus** is the "**father of history."** While**, Thucydides** was wrote history **critically** and **accurately.**
- ⇘ History emerged as an academic discipline in the second half of the 19th century, first in Europe
- ⇘ **Ranke**, the German historian, established History as an independent discipline.
- ⇘ **Ranke** considered as the "***father of modern historiography***".
- ⇘ History emerged as an academic discipline in Ethiopia the 1960s.
- ⇘ This decade is vital in the growth of Ethiopian historiography

➔ **Historical Interpretation** is the process by which we describe, analyse, evaluate, and create an explanation of past events.

➔ Sources of History

- ⇘ History is the study of the past supported by evidence arising from sources.
- ⇘ Where there are no sources, there is no history.
- ⇘ Sources are keys to the study and writing of History.

- ✓ Historians divide sources into two broad groups.
  1. Primary sources
  2. Secondary sources

↳ **Primary sources** are original materials that have direct relations to the events they describe.

- ✓ Primary sources have to be verifying for originality and authenticity to avoid forgery.
  - ⇗ Monuments,
  - ⇗ tools,
  - ⇗ ornaments,
  - ⇗ artefacts (coins, fossils, inscriptions, weapons, utensils, and ruins of buildings),
  - ⇗ written materials (manuscripts or handwritten materials, chronicles, diaries, letters, minutes, codes of laws, court records and administrative files, travel documents),
  - ⇗ Photographs, maps, video and audio-visual materials.

↳ **Secondary sources** are sources that contain information that derived from primary sources.

- ✓ They provide us with second-hand or indirect information.
- ✓ Secondary sources have to be examined for the reliability of their reconstructions
  - ✍ Example articles
  - ✍ Books
  - ✍ Textbooks
  - ✍ Biographies
  - ✍ oral traditions and
  - ✍ Published stories or Movies
  - ✓ Oral data should be cross check with other sources such as written documents to determine its truth.

➔ Dating in History

- ✍ Dating is figures or numerical statements that express the time of historical events
- ✍ Dating in history is expresses in numerical statements such as a decade, century, and millennium.
  - ✓ A decade refers to a period of ten years.
  - ✓ A century is one hundred years.
  - ✓ A millennium refers to a thousand years.

➢ Calendar

- ✍ There are two widely used calendars worldwide are the Gregorian and Islamic.
- ✍ **Gregorian calendar**, time is count forward and backwards from the time of the birth of **Jesus Christ**. BC and AD
  - ✓ Ethiopia uses its calendar, which began on September 11, of the Gregorian calendar.
  - ✓ The Ethiopian Calendar is seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar.
- ✍ **The Islamic Calendar** follows the event called the Hijra to count time forwards and backwards.
  - ✓ The **Hijira** was the flight of the prophet **Mohammed** and his early followers from the town of **Mecca** to **Medina** in 622AD. Hence, BH and AH

➔ The Evolution of Human Beings

- ✓ According to evolutionist theory, all human beings now living in the world belong to the **Homo sapiens**.
- ✓ The earliest hominid to be found in Ethiopia is named **Ardipithecus ramidus**.

- ✓ It was discovered at **Aramis** in the Middle Awash of the Afar Regional State.
- ✓ It is described by a team of **Palaeontologists** led by **Tim White**.
- ✓ It is dated to around 4.4 million years ago.
  - ➢ This species was follows by another fossil called **Australopithecus afarensis**.
  - ➢ In 1974, **Donald Johnson** found the oldest complete human skeleton in Ethiopia.
  - ➢ He named his find **'Lucy'** after a Beatles' song..

↳ The three different species that belong to the genus Homo are:

1. **Homo Habilis**:- the oldest human beings
   - ✓ Found in the Omo valley in Ethiopia.
2. **Homo erectus**:- upright human being
   - ✓ Emerged around 2 million years ago
   - ✓ Made use of larger and more varied tools.
   - ✓ The first to leave Africa and move into Europe and Asia.
   - ✓ It discovered a fire.
   - ✓ Found in the Omo Basin, Melka-Kunture, Konso – Gardula, and Middle Awash in Ethiopia.
3. **Homo sapiens** :-Were wise human beings
   - ✓ Very similar to modern human beings.
   - ✓ Found in the Awash and Omo valleys and the areas near Dire Dawa.
   - ✓ Appeared about 100,000 years ago.

↳ **Modern Human beings**: - appeared about 40,000 years ago.

- ✓ They are different in many ways from their ancestors.
- ✓ They have large brains, are bipedal and walk upright.
- ✓ They think and execute complicated ideas.
- ✓ They use language, develop culture, invent tools and use them effectively.
- ✓ They transmit knowledge from generation to generation.

➔ Theories of Human Evolution

↳ **There are two major opposing theories on the origin of human beings**.

I. The **creationist** view advocates the notion that GOD or a supernatural being created man, including all living things.

II. The **scientific theory** explains that all living things, including humans, result from a gradual succession process and variation from earlier forms.

- ✓ This slow and natural process is call evolution.
- ✓ This theory is called evolutionist.
- ✓ The English scientist Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882) formulates this theory.

- ✓ Eventually, it was widely accepted by the scientific communities.

❖ **The Stone Age:** The earliest tools were made of stone.

- ✓ There are three stone age:- those are:

1) **Palaeolithic Age:- the oldest stone age**
   - ⎚ The longest of stone age
   - ⎚ It began around 11,000 years ago and lasted 9,000 years ago
   - ⎚ Made the first crude stone tools known as hand – axes
   - ⎚ Lived in caves and discovered fire.
   - ⎚ They also began to use language.
2) **Mesolithic Age**:- middle stone age
   - ⎚ a transitional period between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Ages.
   - ⎚ It lasted from 9,000 to around 8,000 years ago.
   - ⎚ Stone tools were slightly improved and more adaptable.
3) **Neolithic Ages**:- **New stone age**
   - ⎚ Started around 8,000BC and lasted until about 4,000BC.
   - ⎚ A great revolution took place during this age.
   - ⎚ It was so-called Neolithic Revolution or Agricultural revolution.
   - ⎚ The real change in the Neolithic Revolution was the shift from the hunting of animals and gathering food to keeping animals and growing crops regularly, which we call systematic agriculture.
   - ⎚ Agriculture was introduced
   - ⎚ Human beings began to produce food.
   - ⎚ Stone houses built.
   - ⎚ Religious places and granaries were constructed.
   - ⎚ New and better tools; - like the hoe, the yoke, and the wheel appeared, and the use of animals in farming helped human beings produce more food.

- ➢ The Neolithic revolution occurred at different times in various places. The earliest evidence of the Neolithic comes from the Middle East.
- ➢ The major archaeological sites found in Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Nile valley in Egypt, Tropical Africa, the Yangtze Kiang valley in China, the Indus valley in India, and parts of the Americas.
- ➢ The Neolithic age took place in parts of Ethiopia about 7000 years ago.
- ➢ Domesticated plants in Ethiopia were teff, Degussa, nug and enset.
- ➢ People also started making and using pottery.
- ➢ Several archaeological sites in Ethiopia are representative of the Neolithic age.
- ➢ These archaeological sites found in Aksum, Labella, and near Chercher in Hararghe and Metehara.

❖ Emergence of States

- **State is** define as a politically organised body of people occupying a defined territory with an organised legitimate government and free from all forms of external control to exercise its sovereignty within its area of rule.
- **State is** differs from a kingdom and an empire.
  - ⇘ The major Features of state:
    A. Population
    B. Territory
    C. Government
    D. Sovereignty and
    E. Recognition
- Regarding the emergence of states, scholars put forward different theories.
  - ✓ One of these theories is related to religion. As religion developed, priests appeared in early societies.
  - ✓ Others say that agriculture was the major reason for the emergence of the state.
  - ✓ Others insist that control over trade and trade routes were the principal reason for the emergence of the state.
  - ✓ War or conflict might also have occurred when small villages combined to establish states under powerful local chiefs by force.