

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

1. **Nation.** People who share a language, customs and history; a group united into a large political, economic and social unit which recognizes not law or authority above its own i.e. it is sovereign in nature.
2. **Nationalism.** A feeling of intense loyalty and devotion to one's country.
3. **Revolution.** The term means a recognised momentous change in any situation. A revolution can result in the sudden overthrow of an established government or system by force and bloodshed e.g. The French the Revolution. It can also be a great change the comes slowly and peacefully e.g. Industrial Revolution.
4. **First Estate.** French society was dived into classes called Estates. The First Estate consisted of the Clergy which held a vast land, wealth and was exempt from taxation.
5. **Second Estate.** It consisted of the aristocracy and controlled all the top positions in the government, parliament and in the army and navy. They were also exempt from taxation and led an extravagant life.
6. **Third Estate.** This comprised everyone who was neither nobility to clergy and constituted 98% of the population. Town dwellers, the comprised upper middle class (merchants, bankers, doctors, lacked), lower middle class, craftsmen, shockkeepers and peasants comprised the Third Estate. This class lacked political power, social position and was heavily taxed though there were many differences in their wealth and style of living.
7. **The Declaration of Right of Man and Citizen.** In 1789, the French National Assembly adopted a set of basic principle called the Declaration of the Rights of man and Citizen. Proposed by Lafayette and based on the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu and Jefferson, this document stated that "man are born and remain free and equal in rights" and that the "source of power resides in the people". It guaranteed all Frenchmen the basic rights of liberty. security, equal justice, fair taxes, speech, religion and thought.
8. **Physiocrats.** The French economists were called physiocrats. They believed that taxes should be imposed only with the consent of those on whom they are levied. Their beliefs undermined the feudal rights and privileges of the upper classes.
9. **Livre.** Unit of currency used in Franc till 1794.
10. **Clergy.** Group of persons invested with special functions in the Church.
11. **Tithe.** A tax levied by the Church equal to one – tenth of the agricultural produce.

12. Taille. Tax paid directly to the state.
13. Chateau. Castle belonging to a king of nobleman.
14. Manor . An estate consisting of the Lord's lands and his mansion.
15. Sceptre. Symbol of royal power.
16. Nagroes. A term used for the indigenous people of Africa. South of the sahara, A derogatory term not now commonly used.

CHRONOLOGY :

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| 1774 | : Louis XVI become King of France. |
| 1789 | : Third Estate forms National Assembly. The Bastille is stormed. |
| 1791. | : A constitution is framed to limit the powers of the king. |
| 1792/93 | : France become a republic. The king is executed. |
| 1804 | : Napoleon becomes emperor of Franc. |
| 1815 | : Napoleon was defeated at waterloo. |
| 1848 | : Slavery was abolished in all French colonies. |
| 1946 | : French women got the right to vote. |

IMPROTANT PERSONALITIES

1. Maximilian Robespierre : Leads of the Jacobin club whose polices led to the Reign of Terror. In 1794 he was convicted and sent to the guillotine.
2. Napoleon Bonaparte. The military dictator of France who conquered many European countries. He was defeated at the Battle of waterloo.
3. Olympe be Gourges. One of the most important politically active woman in revolutionary France. In 1791.she wrote a Declaration of the Right of Woman and Citizen. Critical of the J acobin government. she was charged with treason and executed.
4. Louis XVI. The king of France when the revolution occurred was a man of average intelligence who disliked any kind of brain work. He staunchly believed in the Divine Right of King and was completely unaware of the new ideas that were sweeping across his country and oblivious to the needs and fears of his subjects. He was obsessed with his beautiful wife and wasted money on festivities. He drove France into useless wars bringing the country of the verge of bankruptcy.
5. Montesquieu. A French thinker and author of he book 'Sprit of Laws" he believed that executive. Legislative and judicial powers should not be concentrated in one person a.s it led to tyrannical rule. He stressed on the principle of separation of power and individual liberty.

6. Jean Jacques Rousseau. His writings played a significant role in bringing about the French Revolution and encouraged people to fight for their rights. He believed that government should be based on the consent of the government. His most famous work 'The Social Contrat' talks of contract between the ruler and ruled whereby that former would guarantee the freedom and happiness of his subjects. Implied in his writings was the belief that man had a right to change their government if they were not satisfied.
7. Voltaire. A famous and influential France writer, he stressed religious toleration and freedom of speech. He is credited with he famous statement on free speech ' I do not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say' it. He savagely attacked all things he considered sham or superstition and was a vehement critic of the Catholic Church.

QUESTION BANK (2 Marks)

1. What do you understand by the word 'Revolution' ? For what kind of situations can be term Revolution be used ?
Ans. The term 'Revolution' means a recognizable momentous change in any situation. It can be used to describe a sudden overthrow of an established government by force and bloodshed, e.g. the French Revolution or to describe a great change the comes slowly and peacefully, e.g the Industrial Revolution.
2. Mention two activities of the French monarchy which hastened the Revolution.
Ans. (a) France was a centralized monarchy and the people had no share in decision – making
(b) The extravagant lifestyle of the monarchy brought France to the verge of bankruptcy.
3. Name the three main social classed in 18th Century France.
Ans. French the society was divided into three main classes called 'estates. The clergy constituted the flrst estate and the nobility formed the second estate. The third estate consisted of the rest of the population comprising the peasants artisans and the middle class like the merchants, traders and professionals
4. What were the conditions of the third estate ?
Ans. The burden of taxation was shouldered by the third estate. Among the 3rd estate. the conditions of the peasants were the worst. The workers and artisans were also miserable because they had to work for long hours with less pay.
While the middle class had wealth and intellect yet they were frustrated because the did not enjoy any social status or position.

5. Who was Rousseau ? Name the famous work by Rousseau which lays down the main principle of democracy.

Ans. (a) Jean Jacques Rousseau was a French philosopher whose writing played a significant role in the outbreak of the revolution.

(b) His famous work was the Social Contract which believed that government should be based on the consent of the governed.

6. Describe the incident which sparked the Revolution

Ans. On 14th July, 1789, the people of the third estate attacked the Bastille State Prison and freed all the prisoners signaling the start of the revolution.

7. Describe the main ideas contained in the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen.

Ans. The declaration of Rights of Man Citizen upheld the equality of before law, eligibility of all of public

Offices. Freedom from arrest or punishment without a proven cause and right to freedom of speech and expression.

8. Who was the Sans – Culottes ?

Ans. (a) Sans – Culottes were the common people of Paris.

(b) They were anti – monarchical and radical in their views but were allied with the Jacobins.

9. What was the main aim of the National Assembly ?

Ans. (a) The main aim of the National Assembly was to limit the powers of the monarch.

(b) His powers were now separated and assigned to different institutions – the legislature, executive and judiciary. France thus became a constitutional monarchy.

10. What were the meanings of the following symbols – The broken chain, scepter, blue- white – red, the bundle of rods of fasces.

Ans. (a) Chains were used to fatter slaves. A broken chain thus stands for the act of becoming free.

(b) It is a symbol of royal power.

(c) These are the national colours of France.

(d) It implies that strength in lies in unity as one rod can be easily broken but not an entire bundle.

11. What was the National Anthem of France ? Who composed it ?

Ans. (a) The Marseillaise is the National Anthem of France.

(b) It was composed by the poet Roget de isle.

12. Which was the popular political club of France ? Who was its leader ?

Ans. (a) The most successful club was that of Jacobins which got its name from the former convent of St. Jacob in Paris.

(b) Its leader was Maximilian Robespierre.

13. What is a guillotine ? Who invented it ?

Ans. (a) The guillotine a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded.

(b) It was named after Dr. Guillotin who invented in .

14. What work did women of the third estate do ?

Ans. (a) Women worked as seamstresses laundresses sold flowers, fruits and vegetable at the market or served as domestic servants.

(b) Most women did not have access to education or job training. Working women also had to care for their families and their wages were lower than that of men.

15. State any two laws passed by Napoleon.

Ans. (a) Napoleon passed laws for the protection of private property and for the establishment of uniform system of weight and measures.

(b) He also codified French Law which is also known as 'the Napoleonic code'

16. How would you explain the rise of Napoleon ?

Ans. (a) The fall of the Jacobin club led to the establishment of the 'Directory' which consisted of an executive made up of five members.

(b) But the Directions often clashed with the legislative councils who then sought to dismiss them. The political instability of the Directory led to the rise of the Napoleon.

(3/4 Marks)

1. Analyse the causes the French Revolution.

Or

Describe the circumstances leading to the outbreak of revolutionary protest in France

Ans. (a) The French government was an absolute monarchy whose ruler Louis XVI was pleasure loving and extravagant. Hence devoted to his wife he constantly interfered with the administration Louis XVI drove France into useless wars bringing the country to the verge of bankruptcy.

(b) French society was divided into 3 main classes called estates. The first estate constituted the clergy, the nobility constituted the second estate and rest of the population constituted third

estate. The first two estates were the privileged ones, exempted from all taxes while the third estate shouldered the burden of taxation and had few privileges.

(c) In French people had to share in decision – making. The French Parliament known as the Estates General had not been called for the last 175 year. Administration was corrupt, disorganized and inefficient.

(d) The economic bankruptcy of the French government aggravated the crisis and hastened the revolution. The defective system of tax collection and oppression created discontentment.

(e) The emergence of political philosophers like Voltaire. Rousseau roused people from inactivity instilling a revolutionary spirit in them to root out social inequalities and set up a new government responsive to their needs.

2 What role did the philosophers play in bringing about the French Revolution ?

Ans. (a) The French philosophers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Diderot revolutionary ideals and inspired people to fight for their rights. They exposed the inefficiency of the monarch and his government and aroused the people to challenge monarchy.

(b) Voltaire attacked the Catholic Church. He believed that destiny was in one's hand not in heaven. His ideas encouraged people to fight against the Church without any guilt.

(c) Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that government should be based on the consent of the governed. In his book 'Social Contract' he talks of a contract between the ruler and ruled whereby the ruler is responsible for the happiness of his subjects. Implied in his writings was the belief that men had a right to change their government if they were not satisfied.

Principle of separation of powers and individual liberty.

(e) Thus emergence of philosophers roused people from inactivity and instilled in them a desire to root out social inequalities and set up a government responsive to their needs.

3 Why is the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen regarded as a revolutionary document ?

Ans. **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.**

(a) This document abolished the privileges and power given to the French feudal classes.

(b) It provided equitable distribution of the burdens of taxation and of rights to public property.

(c) The Declaration provided for equality before law and freedom of speech and press.

(d) The document was of great revolutionary importance for every government in Europe at that time was based on privilege. If the ideas contained in the declaration were applied to Europe, the old order of Europe would be destroyed.

4. What role did Louis XVI play in bringing about the revolution ?

- Ans. (a) Louis XVI, the ruler of France, was a pleasure loving, extravagant ruler who believed in the Divine Right of Kings.
- (b) He was ignorant and indifferent to the conditions of the poor.
- (c) He was obsessed with his wife Marie Antoinette who constantly interfered in the administration.
- (d) Both squandered money on festivities gradually emptying the royal treasury. The king drove France into useless wars bringing the country to the verge of bankruptcy.

5. Give an estimate of Napoleon Bonaparte as the First Consul.

- Ans. (a) In 1799 Napoleon Bonaparte became the First Consul and was immense powers. As First Consul, he introduced a number of reforms.
- (b) Inflation was checked by a series of financial measures which culminated in the establishment of the Bank of France.
- (c) He also resolved the persisting dispute with the Papacy which had emerged due to the confiscation of Church lands in 1789.
- (d) He codified French Law which has remained the basis of the French legal system.

6. What was the impact of the French Revolution on the world ?

or

Describe the legacy of French Revolution for the peoples of world during the 19th and 20th centuries.

- Ans. (a) The French Revolution is a milestone in the history of mankind.
- (b) It inspired revolutionary movements in almost every country of Europe and South America.
- (c) The social and political change that took place in different parts of Europe can be traced to the French Revolution.
- (d) When France occupied many areas of Europe, they spread new ideas among the people of the occupied areas.
- (e) Thus, the greatest effect was the stirring of mass movements all over the world and instilling a spirit of nationalism among the people.

7. Which groups of French society benefited from the revolution ? Which groups were forced to relinquish power ? Which sections of society would have been disappointed with the outcome of the revolution ?

Ans. (a) The middle class benefited from the French Revolution.

(b) These were merchants, manufactures and professions such as lawyers and administrative officials,

(c) The feudal lords and clergy were forced to relinquish power.

(d) The peasants and workers were disappointed with the outcome of the Revolution

8. Drew up a list of democratic rights we enjoy today whose origins could be traced to the French Revolution.

Ans. (a) Right to speech and expression.

(b) Equality before law.

(c) Right to life

(d) Right to vote These are the rights whose origins can be traced to the French Revolution.

9. How was French society organized? What privileges did certain sections of society enjoy?

Ans. French society consisted of the estates.

(a) French society consisted of three estates.

(b) The second estate consisted of the nobility. The third estate consisted of merchants, court officials, lawyers and big businessmen. It also consisted of the peasants, artisans, landless labourers and servants.

(c) The members of the first two estates enjoyed certain privileges by birth – these being exemption from paying taxes and collection of feudal dues generally extracted from the peasants.

(d) The burden of paying taxes was borne by the third estate. These included a direct tax called the 'taille' and a number of indirect taxes which were levied on articles of everyday consumption like salt or tobacco.

10. What measures were taken by Robespierre's government?

Ans. (a) Robespierre passed laws placing a ceiling on wages and prices.

(b) Meat and bread were rationed. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at fixed prices.

(c) Equality was to be practiced through forms of speech and address. French men and women were hitherto known as Citoyen and Citoyenne (Citizen) instead of the traditional Monsieur (Sir) and Madame (Madam)

(d) All citizens had to eat pain d'egalite (equality bread) which was a loaf made of whole wheat and use of white flour was forbidden.

11. What role did women play during the revolutionary years ?

Ans. (a) In order to discuss and voice their interests, women started their own political clubs and newspapers. About sixty women clubs emerge in different French cities.

(b) The most famous was the Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women.

(c) They wanted to enjoy the same political rights as men i.e right to vote to be elected to the Assembly and to hold political office.

(d) Women's struggle for equal political rights the revolutionary years inspired French women during the late 18th and early 19th century. Finally in 1792 French women won the right to vote.

12. What laws were passed by the revolutionary government for the benefit of women ?

Ans. (a) State schools were opened and attendance was made compulsory for all girls.

(b) They could not be married against their will by their fathers. Marriage was now a contract which could be registered under civil law.

(c) Divorce was now legal and both men and women could apply for it. (d) Women could now be trained for jobs and even become entrepreneurs.

13. How did the revolutionary government translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice ?

Ans. (a) The Declaration of the Rights of man and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression to be a natural right.

(b) Censorship was abolished. Newspapers, books and pamphlets flooded French towns and reached the countryside as well.

(c) Events and changes taking place in France were frankly discussed.

(d) Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large numbers of people. Thus people could identify with ideas of liberty and equality easily.

[5/6 Marks]

1. How did the teachings of Rousseau lay the foundations of democracy ?

Ans. (a) Jean Jacques Rousseau's teachings helped to lay the foundation of democracy because he upheld the doctrine of popular sovereignty.

(b) He believed that government should be based on the consent of the governed.

(c) He stated that people are the real sovereign and kings rule only with their consent.

(d) His famous work social Contract talks of a contract between the ruler and the ruled whereby the former would guarantee the freedom and happiness to his subjects.

(e) He believed that man had a right to change their government if they were not satisfied which is another cardinal principle of democracy.

(f) Rousseau's revolutionary ideal paved the way for the French Revolution and encouraged people of fight for their rights.

2. List the accomplishments of the National Assembly from 1787 to 1791.

Ans. (a) The most important achievement of the National Assembly was to adopt the Declaration of Rights of

Man and Citizen.

(b) The declaration upheld the equality of all before law, eligibility of all for public office, freedom from arrest or punishment without a proven cause and right to freedom of speech and expression.

(c) It stressed that the burden of taxation must be borne by all without distinction and thus the nobles and clergy were denied their special privileges.

(d) The Church was nationalized and the people were guaranteed religious freedom

(e) A new Constitution formed providing for a constitutional monarchy with limited powers to the monarch. Legislative powers were vested in the Legislative Assembly.

(f) The jury system was introduced for criminal cases. This was the first genuinely democratic Constitution of France.

3. What was the impact of the French Revolution on France ?

Ans. (a) The French Revolution marked the end of absolute monarchy and paved for a republican government

(b) It upheld the theory of popular sovereignty and laid the foundation of the most important democratic principle i.e. government should be based on the consent of the governed.

(c) The slogans of equality, liberty and fraternity became the watchwords of freedom loving people all over the world.

(d) Feudalism and serfdom were abolished and the power of the clergy checked.

(e) The Jacobins gave the people the right to vote and right of Insurrection.

(f) New reforms were introduced in education, administration and the judiciary

4. Write short notes on :

(a) French slave trade

(b) Reign of Terror.

(c) Fall of Napoleon.

Ans. (a) French slave trade. An acute shortage of labour in the French Caribbean colonies – Martinique, Guadeloupe and San Domingo led to a triangular slave trade between Europe, Americas and Africa in the 17th century. Slaves were captured in Africa and sold them to plantation owners in the Caribbean. Slave labour enabled the Caribbean colonies to meet the demand for sugar, coffee and indigo. The Convention in 1794 passed laws freeing slaves in the French overseas possessions. However ten years later, slavery was reintroduced by Napoleon. It was finally abolished in 1848.

(b) The Reign of Terror was unleashed by the Jacobins and lasted nearly a year. Tribunals were set up to try persons who opposed the government. Eventually more than 15,000 persons including the Queen Maria Antoinette were guillotined. But under public pressure the special courts identified with terror were wound up and the Jacobin club was closed.

(c) The fall of Napoleon can be traced to his ill – fated Russian campaign. In 1812, Napoleon invaded Russia in winter with a large army. Though his entry into Moscow was triumphant, it soon turned into one of the most terrible military disasters in history. His army was reduced to half a million due to scarcity of food, clothes, the excessive cold and disease.

The European nations now rose against him and in 1813 he suffered a decisive defeat in a battle near Leipzig. The Allied powers restored the Bourbon dynasty by enthroning Louis XVIII, Napoleon attempted to make a comeback but was finally defeated in the famous battle of Waterloo. He was imprisoned in the island of St. Helena where he died six years later.



Important Notes

