

Revision Notes for Class 9

Social Science - History (India and the Contemporary World-I)

Chapter 1 - The French Revolution

Before the French Revolution

Before the French Revolution, the French territories and society were like an ancient regime. They had feudal lords who had taken over the political system of the country. The French society was divided into three Estates. They were the clergy, the nobility and the peasants and workers. The upper two estates were closer to the royals and hence received favours easily. The others had to pay multiple taxes and had a life of suffering.

The Initial Stage of the Revolution

- When King Louis XVI sat on the throne, the financial condition of France was horrible.
- The king decided to convene the Estates-General to put more taxes on the citizens on the Finance Minister's advice.
- The votes of the Estate General used to happen on a per-estate basis.
- The people of the Third Estate demanded that the votes should happen on a per-head basis.
- The King did not agree with such a proposal so the representatives of the Third Estate walked out of the assembly.

The French Revolution

In 1789, Paris was thrown into chaos early in the morning as rumours circulated that the King planned to attack the citizens. This fear prompted people to assemble and begin attacking government buildings in search of weapons. During these clashes, the commander of the Bastille was killed, and the prison's inmates were freed. The Bastille was despised because it symbolized the king's authoritarian rule. Additionally, protests erupted over the soaring bread prices, which triggered a chain of events that eventually led to the King's execution in France.

French Society in the Late Eighteenth Century

- In 1774, Louis XVI became the King of France. The country's finances were strained due to recent wars and the support provided to the American colonies in their fight for independence from Britain.
- To cover regular expenses, including maintaining the army, the court, and government functions, taxes were raised. Eighteenth-century France was divided into three estates. The feudal system, rooted in the Middle Ages, persisted in these estates.
- The majority of the population, about 90%, were peasants, but only a small fraction owned the land they worked on. Nobles, the Church, and other affluent members of the Third Estate owned 60% of the land.
- The clergy and nobility, belonging to the first two estates, had certain privileges by their birth, including exemption from taxes and special feudal rights. Members of the Third Estate were required to pay various taxes, including a direct tax called taille and numerous indirect taxes on everyday goods like salt and tobacco.

Struggle to Survive

As the population grew, the demand for food grains surged, but grain production could not keep up with this increased need. This imbalance caused bread prices to rise sharply. Low wages for labourers further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The situation deteriorated further whenever droughts or hailstorms damaged the harvest.

A Rising Middle-Class Challenges Privileges

- Peasants frequently rebelled against high taxes and food shortages. During the 18th century, a new, prosperous middle class emerged, having gained wealth through overseas trade and manufacturing textiles such as wool and silk.
- These textiles were either exported or purchased by wealthier individuals. The middle class, which included professionals like lawyers and administrative officials, valued education and new ideas. They believed that social status should be based on merit rather than birthright.
- Educated members of this new middle class supported the idea that no group should have privileges based on their birth. They advocated for a government based on merit. Rousseau proposed a social contract model for governance, where representatives would be accountable to the people.
- Montesquieu suggested a separation of powers within the government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This model was later implemented in the USA. Meanwhile, Louis XVI planned to impose additional taxes to address the financial needs of the state.

The Outbreak of the Revolution

In France, the monarch could not unilaterally impose taxes and had to convene the Estates-General, a political body representing the three estates, to approve any new taxes. On May 5, 1789, Louis XVI called an assembly of the Estates-General to discuss tax proposals. Representatives from the first and second estates attended, while the third estate was represented by its more affluent and educated members. Each estate traditionally had one vote, but the third estate demanded that each member of their group have an individual vote.

France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy

- In 1791, the National Assembly finalized a new constitution aimed at restricting the monarch's powers. The new system separated powers into distinct branches: the legislature, executive, and judiciary, establishing France as a constitutional monarchy.

- Citizens elected electors who, in turn, chose the Assembly. However, voting rights were limited. Only men over 25 who paid taxes equivalent to at least three days' wages could vote.
- The Constitution began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which established rights such as life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, and equality before the law as 'natural and inalienable,' meaning they were inherent and could not be revoked.

France Abolishes Monarchy and Becomes a Republic

- In April 1792, the National Assembly declared war on Prussia and Austria, and the "Marseillaise" became France's national anthem. With many men away at war, women managed household responsibilities.
- There was growing dissatisfaction with the 1791 Constitution, which only granted political rights to wealthier citizens. Political clubs emerged, with the Jacobins becoming the most influential.
- The Jacobin club was composed of small shopkeepers, artisans, and workers, who began wearing long striped trousers similar to dockworkers, earning them the name sans-culottes, meaning 'those without knee breeches.'
- On August 10, 1792, Jacobins stormed the Palace of the Tuileries, temporarily holding the king hostage. Following this, elections were held, granting voting rights to all men aged 21 and older. The monarchy was abolished, and France transitioned to a republic.

Did Women Have a Revolution?

- Women played a significant role in the French Revolution, leading to notable changes in the country. Women from the third estate, who needed to work to support themselves and their families, had limited access to education and job training. Noblewomen of the third estate could study at convents, but working women had to balance employment with family care. Their wages were generally lower than men's.
- Women also became politically active by forming their clubs and newspapers. The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was a prominent example,

advocating for equal political rights, including the right to vote and hold office. During the revolutionary period, the government enacted laws to improve women's lives, such as compulsory education, legal divorce, and the ability to run small businesses. However, during the Reign of Terror, women's political clubs were shut down, and their activities were banned. It was only in 1946 that women in France finally secured the right to vote.

The Abolition of Slavery

- One of the most significant reforms of the Jacobin regime was the abolition of slavery in French colonies. The transatlantic slave trade began in the seventeenth century, involving the capture, branding, and transportation of slaves from Africa to the Caribbean, where they were forced to work in harsh conditions. This slave labour was crucial for meeting the European demand for sugar, coffee, and indigo.
- Despite minimal criticism of slavery in France during the eighteenth century, the Convention abolished slavery in French overseas territories in 1794. However, Napoleon reinstated it a decade later. It wasn't until 1848 that slavery was permanently abolished in French colonies.

The Revolution and Everyday Life

The French Revolution brought significant changes to everyday life in France starting in 1789. One major reform was the abolition of censorship, which occurred in the summer of 1789. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen established freedom of speech and expression as fundamental rights. This led to a flourishing of diverse opinions through the press, plays, songs, and festive processions, reflecting a broader range of voices and perspectives in society.

The Tennis Court Oath

- The representatives of the Third Estate formed a National Assembly where they tried to draft a constitution that would limit the powers of the monarchy. The King and the Clergy ultimately conceded to the National Assembly. The legislative powers then shifted from the hands of the King to the National Assembly.
- The newly created Legislative Assembly was divided into various political groups.
- The Constitutionals
- The Republicans (The Girondins and The Jacobins)

The Rise of The Jacobins

Due to war, France faced havoc. The Girondins lost power and the Jacobins became the rulers. They declared France a Republic but it lost its value when they turned into tyrants. It was a brutal period of terror that the French had to face. Their leader, Robespierre was killed in 1794.

The Rise of The Middle Class

- The middle class became powerful in the National Convention after the Jacobins left power.
- The National Convention again created a new constitution.
- Now, the Legislative Assembly has become bicameral.
- There were 5 directors in the Executive.
- Two-thirds of the members were from the National Convention.
- The public did not receive it well and attacked the convention in 1795.
- Napoleon, who stopped this attack later became the commander-in-chief of the French Army and also the supreme leader of France in 1799.

List of Important Dates and Years Related to The French Revolution Class 9 Notes

Event	Date and Year
Louis XVI became the King.	1774
The king calls the Estates-General.	5th May 1789
Tennis Court Oath.	20th June 1789
The razing of the Bastille and the official start of the French Revolution.	14th July 1789
The National Assembly completes the draft of the new constitution where France is regarded as a constitutional monarchy.	1791
The National Convention declared France a Republic.	1792
The Reign of Terror	1793 -1794
Robespierre is killed and the Directory system is introduced.	1794
Napoleon Bonaparte becomes the first consul.	1799

French Revolution - Interesting Facts

- The French Revolution was a significant event in history that brought about radical political and social changes in France during the late 18th century. Here are some interesting facts about the French Revolution:
- The French Revolution began on July 14, 1789, with the storming of the Bastille prison in Paris. This event is considered a symbol of the revolution and is celebrated as Bastille Day in France.
- The French Revolution was fueled by ideas of the Enlightenment, such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. It aimed to overthrow the absolute monarchy and establish a more democratic government.
- The Reign of Terror, which lasted from 1793 to 1794, was a period of intense violence and political repression during the French Revolution. It resulted in the execution of thousands of people, including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.
- The French Revolution introduced the metric system, which is still widely used today. It was implemented to standardize measurements and facilitate trade and communication.
- During the revolution, the French calendar was also changed. The Gregorian calendar was replaced with the French Republican Calendar, which had a ten-day week and new names for the months.
- The French Revolution had a profound impact on the arts and culture. It gave rise to revolutionary ideals in literature, music, and visual arts, with artists and writers expressing their support or criticism of the revolution through their works.
- Napoleon Bonaparte, a military general who rose to power during the revolution, eventually became the Emperor of France. His rule marked the end of the revolution and the beginning of the Napoleonic era.
- The French Revolution inspired similar movements in other countries, spreading the ideals of liberty, equality, and nationalism throughout Europe and beyond.
- Women played a significant role in the French Revolution. They actively participated in political clubs, marched on Versailles to demand bread, and advocated for their rights through pamphlets and petitions.
- The French Revolution had a long-lasting impact on the political landscape of Europe. It led to the rise of nationalism, the spread of revolutionary ideas, and the eventual downfall of monarchies in various countries.