

IX SST HISTORY CH-1 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION NOTES

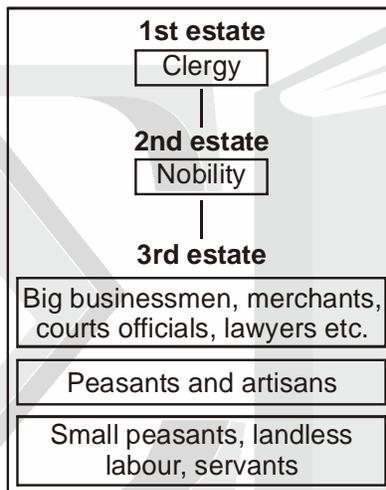
INTRODUCTION

The revolution of France began on 14 July 1789 with the storming of the fortress prison, The Bastille. It was suspected to find hoarded ammunition (quantity of bullets and shells). The Bastille is a fortress prison hated by everybody because it stood for despotic power of king. The fortress was demolished. The beginning of chain of events started by middle class affected and shaken lower class and led the execution of king in France followed by revolt against monarchy. This revolution put up the ideas of liberty, fraternity and equality.

CAUSES OF FRENCH REVOLUTION:

a. Social cause (French society during late 18TH century)

a. The society was divided into 3 estates:



b. The members of first 2 estates i.e., Clergy and Nobility enjoy certain privileges by birth. They are exempted from paying taxes to the state. Nobles also enjoy feudal privileges which include feudal dues extracted from peasants.

c. The church extracts its share of taxes called Tithes from peasants. A direct tax Taille and a no. of indirect taxes are levied on everyday consumption articles like salt and tobacco.

b. Economic cause (The struggle to survive)

i. The population of France increase from 23 million to 28 million in 1789 which led to increment in demand for food grains.

ii. Most workers were employed as labourers in workshops with fixed wages but the wages did not keep pace with rise in prices of food grains.

iii. This led to Subsistence crisis (extreme scarcity of basic means of livelihood) in France due to old regime.

c. Political cause

a. In 1774, Louis XVI becomes the king of France and faces empty treasury due to long years of war which drained financial resources and discontent within the society was increasing.

- b. He helped 13 American colonies to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain. This war added more than 3 billion livres for which the moneylenders began to charge 10% interest on loans.
- c. To meet its regular expenses, such as the cost of maintaining an army, the court, running government offices or universities, the state was forced to increase taxes.

ROLE OF MIDDLE CLASS

- a. The 18th century witnessed the emergence of social groups termed as middle class who may have means and programmes to carry out full scale measures to bring a change in social and economic order and being educated they believe that no group should be privileged by birth.
- b. They earned their wealth through an expanding overseas trade, from manufacture of goods like woollen and silk textiles and professions as lawyers and administrative officials.
- c. They were inspired by the ideas of different philosophers and spread the same through books and newspapers.

SUCH AS:

- a. **John lock** – In his two treatises of govt, lock sought to refute the doctrine of the divine and absolute right of the monarch.
- b. **Rousseau** – Rousseau carried the idea forward, proposing a form of a govt based on a social contract b/w people and their representatives.
- c. **Montesquieu** – In the spirit of law, Montesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislative, executive and the judiciary.

OUTBREAK OF FRENCH REVOLUTION:

- a. Louis XVI called an assembly of estates general (a political body to which 3rd estate that their representatives to pass proposal for new taxes.
- b. The first 2 estates sent 300 representatives each, while 3rd one has 600 members who were more prosperous & educated. However, artisans, peasants & women were denied entry to assembly.
- c. Voting in estate general has been conducted as according to past principle of each state – one vote but members of 3rd estate demanded for each member one vote philosophy.
- d. Due to rejection, they walked out of assembly in protest after this, they declared themselves a national assembly and drafted a constitution for France to limit powers of monarch, which was led by Mirabeau (a noble) and Abbe Sieyès (a priest).
- e. Due to the power of revolt, law 16 finally recognized the national assembly and accepted the constitution.
- f. The assembly passed a law abolishing the feudal system of obligation & taxes (tithes) and the members of clergy were forced to give up their privileges.

FRANCE BECOMES A SOCIAL MONARCHY

- a. The national assembly completed the draft of constitution in 1791 with its main objective to limit the powers of monarch. The powers were separated and assigned to different institutions-the legislature, executive and judiciary.
- b. The constitution of 1791 gave the power to make laws in the national assembly, which was indirectly elected.
- c. Active citizens were only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of laborer's wage. The remaining men and women do not have right of vote.
- d. The constitution began with a right of declaration of the rights man and citizen such as right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, equality before law etc.
- e. Various political symbols used by illiterate people in 18th century are:
 - The broken chain: stands for the act of becoming free.
 - The bundle of rods and fasces: shows strength lies in unity.

- The eye within a triangle radiating light: the all-seeing eye stands for knowledge.
- Sceptre: symbol of royal power.
- Snake biting its tail to form a ring: symbol of eternity.
- Red Phrygian cap: cap worn by a slave upon becoming free.
- Blue-white-red: the national colors of France.
- The winged woman: personification of law.
- The law tablet: the law is same for all and all are equal before it.

FRANCE ABOLISHES MONARCHY AND BECOMES REPUBLIC

- a. Louis XVI had signed the constitution but also he entered into secret negotiation with the King of Prussia.
- b. Rulers of neighboring countries were worried by the developments of France and made plans to put down their events. The national assembly voted to declare war against Prussia and Austria.
- c. The patriotic song Marseillaise composed by the poet Roget de L'Isle as sung for the first time by volunteers as they march into Paris which is national anthem of France.
- d. The revolution wars brought losses and difficulties to the people. The constitution of 1791 gave political rights only to the rich people of the society. Political clubs became important from rallying point of view in which most successful club was that of Jacobins. Its leader was Maximilian Robespierre.
- e. Members of Jacobin club were from less prosperous sections of society which includes small shopkeepers, artisans, printers, servants etc. they planned a revolt against people of Paris. Later the assembly voted to imprison the royal family and elections were held.
- f. The newly elected assembly was called the Convection. In 1792 it abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic.

REIGN OF TERROR

- a. The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the regime of terror. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment.
- b. All those whom he saw as being “enemies” of the republic-ex-noble and clergy, members of other political parties even members of his own party who did not agree with his method- were arrested, imprisoned.
- c. If the court found them guilty, they were guillotined. Robespierre’s government issued laws placing a maximum ceiling on wages and prices.
- d. Meat and bread were rationed. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and cells and sell it at prices fixed by the government.

A DIRECTORY RULES FRANCE

- a. A new constitution was introduced which denied the vote to non-propertied sections of society.
- b. It provided 2 elected legislative councils which later pointed a directory (an executive made of 5 members).
- c. The directors often clashed with the legislative council, who then sought to dismiss them.
- d. The political instability of the directory paved the way for the rise of military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.

REVOLUTION OF WOMEN

- a. Women were active participants in the events which brought about changes in French society. They hoped that their involvement would pressurize the revolutionary government to improve their lives.
- b. Most women of the third estate had to work for their living. They worked as seamstresses and laundresses, sold flowers, fruits and vegetables at market.
- c. Working Women also had to care for their families and children. They were disappointed that the constitution of 1791 reduced them to passive citizens.
- d. The revolutionary government did introduced laws to improve their lives by making schooling compulsory for girls, not marrying against their will, making divorce legal etc.

- e. During the reign of terror, the new government issued laws ordering closure of women's clubs and banning political activities. In 1946 women in France won right to vote.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

- a. Slave trade began in 17th century; the colonies in the Caribbean- Martinique, Guadeloupe and San Domingo were important suppliers of commodities like indigo, sugar tobacco and coffee. The slaves were bought from local chieftains. This was met by triangular slave trade between Europe, Africa and America.
- b. The slaves were packed tightly into ships for 3 month long voyage across the Atlantic to Caribbean and there to plantation owners.
- c. The national assembly held long debates for the rights of man to be extended to all French subjects. But it didn't pass any laws fearing opposition of business men whose income depends upon slave trade.
- d. Finally slavery was abolished in French colonies in 1848.

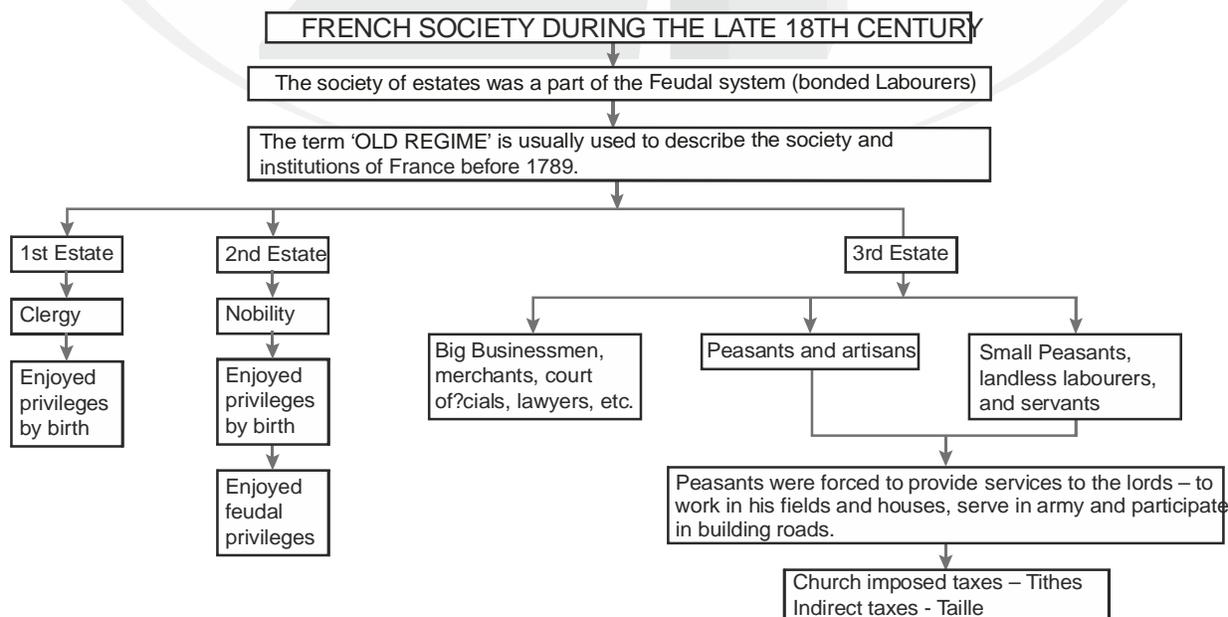
RISE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

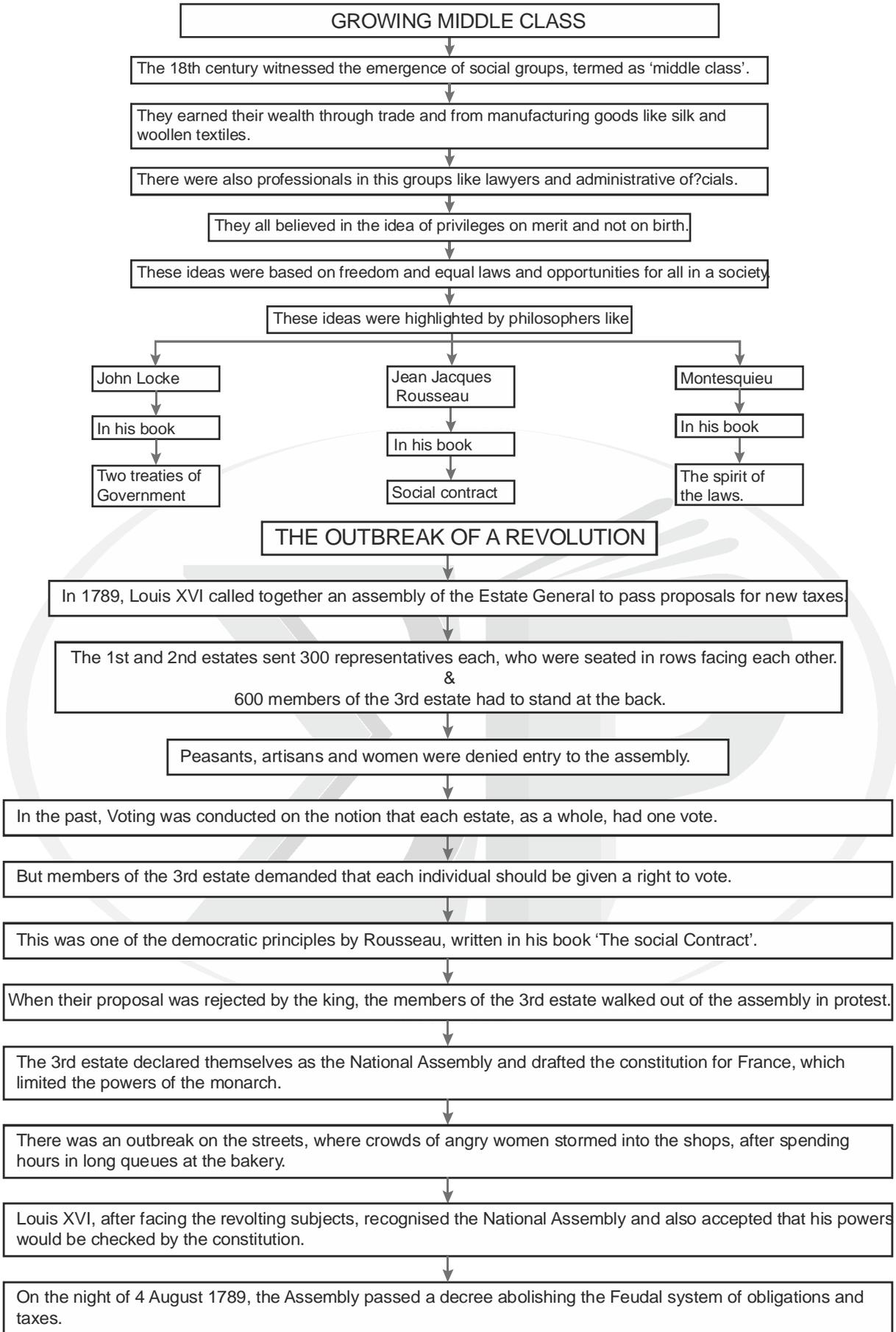
- a. In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself as emperor of France. He conquered neighboring countries, dispossessing dynasties and created kingdoms by placing his family members there.
- b. He saw his role as modernizer of Europe. He introduced many laws such as protection of private property and uniform system of weight and measure provided by decimal system.
- c. Many saw him as a liberator who would bring freedom for the people but soon his armies came to be viewed as an invading force.
- d. Finally Napoleon was defeated at waterloo in 1815.

LEGACY OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

- a. The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of French revolution. These spread from France to the rest of Europe during 19th century, where feudal system was abolished.
- b. Colonized people reworked the idea of freedom from bandage into their movements to create a sovereign nation state.
- c. Tipu sultan and Raja Ram Mohan Roy are 2 examples of individuals who responded to the ideas coming from revolutionary France.

AT THE TIME OF QUICK REVISION





FRANCE BECOMING A REPUBLIC

(A republic is a form of government where the people elect the government including the head of the government.)
Even though Louis XVI had signed the constitution, he entered into a secret negotiations with king of Prussia.

A war was declared by the National Assembly against Prussia and Austria in April 1792.

As the constitution provided political rights only to a richer section of society, a large section of the population were convinced that the revolution should continue.

People started forming political clubs to discuss government policies and plans.

The most successful of these clubs was of the 'Jacobins'.

The members of the Jacobin club belonged mainly to the less prosperous sections of the society including shopkeepers, artisans and workers.

Their leader was Maximilien Robespierre.

These Jacobins came to be known as the Sans-Culottes, meaning – 'Those without knee breeches'.

In Aug. 1792, the Jacobins stormed inside the palace of Tuileries, and held the king as hostage.

Later the Assembly voted in imprisonment of the royal family.

Elections were held, and the newly elected Assembly was known as the 'Convention'.

THE REIGN OF TERROR (1793-1794)

Robespierre : The leader of the Jacobins – followed a policy of severe control and punishment.

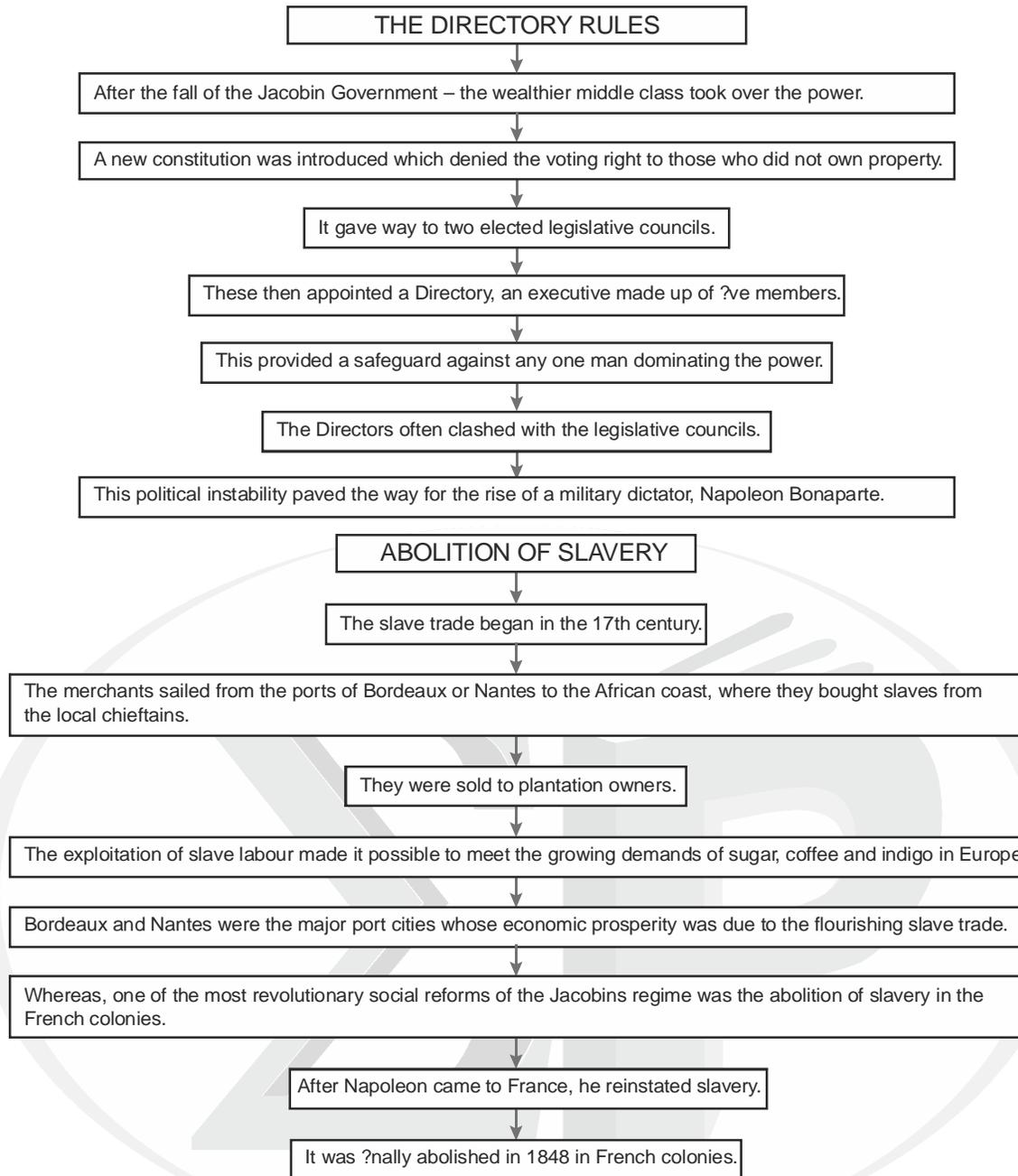
All those whom he considered as his enemies – including his club members and anyone who did not agree to his methods – were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal.

If the court found them 'guilty', they were 'guillotined' (Guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded).

Laws were introduced in placing maximum ceiling on wages and prices by Robespierre's government.

Robespierre pursued his policies so relentlessly that even his supporters began to demand moderation.

He was convicted by a court in July 1794, arrested and guillotined.



ASSIGNMENT

SOLVED NCERT QUESTIONS

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

Ans. There were some causes which led to the outbreak of revolutionary protest. They are as follows –

- i. **Privileges based on birth:** There were rich people in the society who received privileges by birth leading to resentment among common people.
- ii. **The war with Britain for an independent America:** Due to this war, there was a high debt on the French monarchy. For the repayment of those debts, many new taxes were imposed on the common people.
- iii. **Concentration of power among the privileged:** There was no equal division of power in the society. The 3rd estate was depended on the 1st and the 2nd estate for money.
- iv. **Subsistence Crisis:** There was a demand supply gap of bread due to the increasing population and less production of grain.

v. Growing middle Class: A new class emerged due to the increase in overseas trade. This class was wealthy because of its ability to utilise opportunities and not because of birth right. As the people of the middle class were educated and believed in the idea of equal distribution of wealth they began raising their voice to end the privileges on the basis of right of birth.

The above circumstances led to the outbreak of a revolution. There were also few thinkers during this period that by their books spread the idea of democracy and equality.

2. 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. It was the 3rd estate of common people who mainly benefitted from the revolution as they gained equal socio-economic rights and status. Whereas, the Clergy and nobility were forced to surrender powers. Their privileges were taken away. The moderates who wanted a Constitutional Monarchy were also disappointed because ultimately, Napoleon came into power.

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

Ans. There were two most important legacies of the French Revolution:

- i. The ideas of democratic rights and liberty with equality and fraternity.
- ii. It was France from which these ideas were spread to the rest of Europe and the rest of the world during the 19th century. These ideas were interpreted and moulded according to the respective needs of the colonised people.
- iii. India's struggle for independence was also inspired by the ideas of the great French philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau. It was the French Revolution that spread out the idea of freedom sovereignty.

4. Draw up a list of democratic rights we enjoy today and whose origins could be traced to the French Revolution.

Ans. The following fundamental rights given in the Indian constitution can be traced to the French Revolution –

- The right to equality
- The right to freedom of speech and expression
- The right to freedom from exploitation
- The right to constitutional remedies.

5. Would you agree with the view that the message of universal rights was beset with contradictions? Explain.

Ans. The contradiction that follows in the message of universal rights as per the French Constitution of 1791 was women being completely ignored. Women were struggling for equal political rights. All the rights at that time were given to men. Apart from that the presence of huge number of people as passive citizens, without voting rights, was like not putting into practice what you preach. It could also be said that the declaration of universal rights was a good beginning but it left much to be desired.

6. How would you explain the rise of Napoleon?

Ans. After the fall of the Jacobin government the wealthier class came in power. A new constitution was introduced. According to the new constitution, those members of society did not own property were not given rights to vote. It provided for two elected legislative councils. These elected legislative councils, appointed a Directory which consisted of five members. This was done to safeguard against the possibility of any one man dominating the power. Members of the directory often fought among themselves leading to political instability and chaos. This led to creating a vacuum in France. Napoleon Bonaparte took advantage of the situation and the reign of power as a military dictator.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

ONE MARK QUESTIONS

1. Which ruler came to power in France in 1774?

Ans. Louis XVI of Bourbon family, ascended the throne of France in 1774.

2. What was 'tithe'?

Ans. It was a tax levied by the church, comprising at least one tenth of the agricultural produce by the farmers.

3. What was taille?

Ans. It was also a kind of tax which was paid by the people of third estate directly to the state.

4. What does 'subsistence crisis' mean?

Ans. It is an extreme situation where the basic means of livelihood were endangered.

5. Who was Mirabeau?

Ans. Mirabeau was born in a noble family and was a representative of third estate, who delivered speeches to the crowds assembled at Versailles. He was born in a noble family but was convinced of the need to do away with a society of feudal privilege.

6. What do you know about Abbé Sieyès?

Ans. Abbé Sieyès was originally a priest. He wrote an influential pamphlet called 'What is the Third Estate'?

7. What does 'Chateau' mean?

Ans. It was a castle or stately residence belonging to a king or a nobleman.

8. What was a 'Manor'?

Ans. Manor was an estate consisting of the lord's lands and his mansion.

9. Who were 'Sans-Culottes'?

Ans. Those Jacobins were known as Sans-Culottes, who were without knee breeches and who wore red caps to symbolise liberty.

10. What was Guillotine?

Ans. Guillotine was a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person was beheaded. It was named after Dr. Guillotine, who invented it.

11. What was 'Directory'?

Ans. 'Directory' was an executive made up of five members. They were appointed by two elected legislative councils.

12. What was the most important legacy of the French Revolution?

Ans. The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution.

THREE MARKS QUESTIONS

1. What was the role of the philosophers in the French Revolution?

Ans. Ideas of having a society based on freedom and equal laws and opportunities for all were put forward by the French philosophers.

a. **John Locke:** Locke wrote, 'Two Treatises of Government'. In this book, he criticised the divine and absolute rights of the rulers.

b. **John Jacques Rousseau:** Rousseau had written his viewpoints in his book, 'The Social Contract'. He had put forward the idea of formation of a government based on a social contract between people and their representatives.

c. **Montesquieu:** His ideas were proposed in his book, 'The Spirit of the Laws'. According to him, there should be a division of power between the three important organs—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

The ideas of these philosophers were discussed by common people in salons and coffee houses and inspired them to fight for their rights

2. Differentiate between Active and Passive Citizens.

Ans. Active Citizens: Only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens. Only they had the right to vote.

Passive Citizens: Whereas, the remaining men as well as all the women of France who were not entitled to vote were called Passive Citizens.

FIVE MARKS QUESTIONS

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

OR

Which incident had led to the outbreak of the revolution in France?

Ans. The incidents leading to the outbreak of the revolution were:—

a. **Meeting of the Estates General:** On 5 May 1789, Louis XVI called for a meeting to propose new taxes. Representatives of all the three estates reached there, but members of the third estate had to stand at the back, as they were not offered any seat. Peasants, artisans and women were denied entry to the assembly.

b. **Demand for Universal Adult Franchise:** Members of the third estate demanded the power for each member to vote. When the King rejected the demand, members of the third estate walked out of the assembly to protest.

c. **Meeting of the newly formed National Assembly:** Since the percentage of the third estate was more, they considered themselves as spokesmen for the whole French nation. They assembled in an indoor tennis court of Versailles and declared themselves as the 'National Assembly'. They believed in removing the feudal privileges of the nobles and clergy.

d. **Revolt by peasants:** The countryside rumours spread from village to village that their ripe crops would be destroyed by hired bands of lords of manors. Peasants in several districts seized hoes and attacked the residences of their manors. They looted, hoarded grain and burnt down documents containing records of manorial dues.

e. **Fall of Bastille prison:** During this political turmoil, the French had experienced severe winters leading to bad harvest. It increased the price of bread, which was hoarded in the market. Angry women attacked the shops. At the same time, the King ordered troops to move into Paris. On 14 July 1789, the agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille prison.

2. Who was Napoleon Bonaparte? Why was he called a 'liberator'?

Ans. a. Napoleon Bonaparte was the Emperor of France in 1804, who reintroduced monarchy in France.

b. He conquered his neighbouring countries and created kingdoms, where he placed his own family members.

c. He was called a moderniser of Europe. He introduced many laws such as the protection of private property and a uniform system of weights and measures provided by the decimal system.

d. Initially, many people believed that Napoleon was a liberator who would bring freedom for the people.

- e. But soon his army was viewed as an invading force. So, he was finally defeated in 1815, in the famous 'Battle of Waterloo'.
- f. Many of his measures that carried the revolutionary ideas of liberty and modern laws to other parts of Europe had an impact on people long after Napoleon had left.

3. What was the role of middle classes in ending the privileges?

Ans. In the past, peasants and workers had participated in the revolts against increasing taxes and food scarcity. But they could not change the social and economic order. This was left to those groups within the Third Estate who had become prosperous and had access to education and new ideas. The 18th century witnessed the emergence of social groups termed as middle class who earned their wealth through an expanding overseas trade and from manufacturing goods and exporting them. In addition to merchants and manufacturers, the Third estate included professions such as that of lawyers or administrative officials. All of these were educated and believed that no group in society should be privileged by birth. Rather, a person's social position must depend on his merit.

4. What led to subsistence crisis in France?

Ans. Population of France rose from about 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789.

This led to a rapid increase in the demand for foodgrains.

Production of grains could not keep pace with the demand. So the price of bread, which was the staple diet of the majority, rose rapidly.

Most of the workers were employed as labourers in workshops, whose owners fixed their wages. But wages did not keep pace with the rise in the prices. So the gap between rich and poor widened.

Things became worse whenever draught or hail reduced the harvest. This led to the subsistence crisis, something that occurred frequently in France during the old regime.

5. Explain any five features of the constitution of 1791, framed by the National Assembly in France.

Ans. The five features of constitution of France are:

- a. **Constitutional Monarchy:** The constitution made France a constitutional monarchy. In this system, monarch would remain monarch but all legislative powers would be transferred to the National Assembly.
- b. **National Assembly:** It was indirectly elected. In it, citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the assembly. Once chosen, National Assembly would keep a control on the country.
- c. **Right to Vote:** However, not all citizens had the right to vote, only men above 25 years of age, who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens. They were only entitled to vote.
- d. **Powers of National Assembly:** National Assembly had the power to make laws. It is voted by about 50,000 electors and constituted of 745 members. It could keep control on both king and the ministers.
- e. **Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizens:** The constitution began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens. Rights such as the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, equality before law, were established as natural and inalienable rights.