

CLASS 9th

# FRENCH REVOLUTION

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# CHAPTER TIMELINE

In **1774**, Louis XVI became the ruler of France.

Around the year **1789**, the people of France were feeling very unhappy. They were struggling because they had to pay a lot of taxes because of the Old Tax Regime, there wasn't enough food, and some people had more privileges than others.

On the **5th May 1789**, King Louis XVI had to gather an important meeting called the Estates General. This meeting was to talk about new taxes.

On **June 17, 1789**, a group called the Third Estate said, "We're important too!" and they called themselves the National Assembly. They wanted to make a new set of rules for the country.

Then, on **June 20th**, the members of the Third Estate got together in an indoor tennis court in a place called Versailles.

On **14th July 1789**, a big event happened. The people of Paris were very angry with the king, and they broke into a place called the Bastille. This was a place that showed how the king had too much power.

In **August 1789**, something good happened. The National Assembly decided that everyone should be equal and fair. They abolished feudal privileges of taxes.

In **October 1789**, a group of women walked to Versailles. They wanted bread to eat, and they also wanted the king to come back to Paris. They were very determined!

In **June 1791**, the National Assembly completed the constitution. They said the king couldn't have all the power anymore. Now they were a team, and the king had to follow their rules.

In **April 1792**, things got more complicated. The National Assembly declares war on Austria and Prussia, leading to internal conflicts.

**September 1792**, something big happened. They said, "No more king! We want to run the country ourselves!" France became a Republic.

In **January 1793**, the king, Louis XVI, had to say goodbye. He was executed, which means he was sentenced to death.

From **1793 to 1794**, a man named Maximilien Robespierre had a lot of power. He did some scary things, like punishing people who disagreed with him. This time was called the 'Reign of Terror', and it was a difficult time.

But then, in **July 1794**, Robespierre was arrested and punished. That was the end of the Reign of Terror.

In **1794**, things started to get better. They made a new constitution for the country and they called it the Directory.

A bit later, in the year **1804**, a famous man named Napoleon Bonaparte decided he wanted to be the boss. So, he made himself the emperor of France.

But in **1815**, things changed again. Napoleon got into a big fight and lost. This happened at a place called Waterloo.

**And that's the story of how France changed over time, with different people taking charge and making new rules.**

In 1774, Louis XVI of Bourbon family married to the Austrian Princess Marie Antoinette.

When he became King, he found an empty treasure.

1774 में शादी की, ऊपर से जब राजा बना तो बेचारे को पता चला की खज़ाना तो पूरा ख़ाली है !

But why was the treasure empty?

Ans- Long years of war and maintenance of court of the Palace of Versailles were the main reason of empty treasure.

### French Society During the late 18th Century

1. Under Louis XVI, France helped the thirteen American colonial to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain.
2. This war added lots of debt to French government.
3. So, to meet these expenses like maintaining the army etc, the state was forced to increase the taxes.
4. However this measure was not sufficient as French society divided into three estates in 18th century and only members of the third estate paid taxes.

#### A Society of Estates

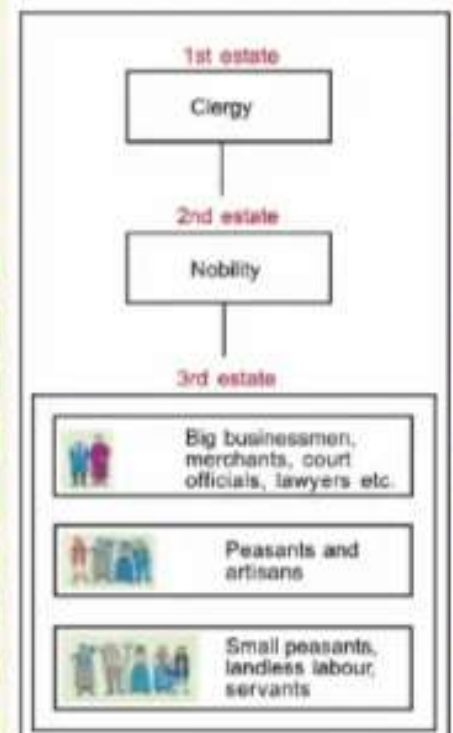
This Figure shows how the system of estates in French Society was organised before 1788.

#### # 1st Estate:

1. This was the clergy, which included priest, bishops and other religious leaders.
2. They were part of church and held lot of power and influence.
3. They were exempted from paying taxes.

#### # 2nd Estate:

1. The second estate was made up of the nobility, which included kings, queens, lords and other aristocrats.
2. They were usually wealthy and had a lot of privileges. These included feudal dues, which they extracted from the peasants.



### # 3rd Estate:

1. The third estate was the largest group and included common people like farmers, merchant and the workers.
2. The burden of financing of the state through taxes was borne by third estate alone.
3. Peasants made up about 90 per cent of the population. However, only a small number of them owned the land they cultivated.
4. About 60 per cent of the land was owned by nobles, the Church and other Richer members of the third estate.
5. They were forced to work in the house of nobles.

### The struggle to survive

1. The population of France rose from about 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789 and this led to a rapid increase in the demand for foodgrains.
2. As the demand increased, price of breads also increased.
3. But wages did not keep pace with the rise in prices.
4. So the gap between the poor and the rich widened.
5. Things became worse whenever drought or hail reduced the harvest.

This led to a subsistence crisis, something that occurred frequently in France during the Old Regime.

### A Growing Middle Class:

1. The middle class of eighteenth century became educated and therefore believed that no group in society should be privileged by birth.
2. They earned their wealth through an expanding overseas trade and from the manufacture of goods such as woollen and silk textiles that were either exported or bought by the richer members of society.
3. Some philosophers also considered that middle class was sole responsible for revolution.
4. The ideas of philosophers were discussed intensively in salons and coffee-houses and spread among people through books and newspapers. These were frequently read aloud in groups for the benefit of those who could not read and write.

5. The news that Louis XVI planned to impose further taxes to be able to meet the expenses of the state generated anger and protest against the system.

And this causes the outbreak of revolution.

### The Outbreak of Revolution

1. 5th May 1789- Louis XVI called together a meeting of the Estates General to pass the proposals for new taxes.
2. The first and second estate sent 300 representatives each, who were seated in rows facing each other on two sides.
3. While, the 600 members of third estate (represented by its most educated and prosperous members) had to stand at the back.
4. Voting in the Estate General in the past had been conducted according to the principle that each estate had one vote.
5. But, members of third estate demanded that voting now be conducted by the assembly as a whole, where each member would have one vote.
6. King rejected this proposal.
7. Members of third estate protested and walked out of assembly. Which led to formation of National Assembly.

### Formation of National Assembly

1. 20th June 1789, members of third estate assembled in the hall of an indoor tennis court in the ground of Versailles.
2. They declared themselves a National Assembly and swore not to disperse till they had drafted a constitution for France that would limit the powers of the monarch.
3. They were led by Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès.
4. Mirabeau born in noble family while Abbé Sieyès was a priest who wrote a book named "What is third estate"

The Tennis Court



## Bastille Revolt

1. While the National Assembly was busy at Versailles drafting the constitution, the rest of France was filled with intense unrest.
2. Due to severe winter there were poor harvest in the country which led to crisis.
3. Often bakers exploited the situation by storing the supplies.
4. After spending hours in long queues at the bakery, crowds of angry women stormed into the shops.
5. On 14 July, the agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille.
6. In the countryside rumours spread from village to village that the lords of the manor had hired gang of robbers to destroy the ripe crops.
7. Due to fear, peasants in several districts attacked the castle of nobles, looted stored grains and burnt down documents containing records of manorial dues.
8. Due to all these, Nobles had to flee from their homes and many migrated.
9. Whole country was in the mood of revolt.
10. As a result, Louis XVI finally recognised the National Assembly and accepted the constitution.
11. On the night of 4th August 1789, the assembly demolished the feudal systems of taxes and all the privileges were withdrawn.

## France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy !!

1. National Assembly completed the draft of the constitution in 1791.
2. Powers were now separation and assigned to different institutions and the legislature, executive and Judiciary. This made France a constitutional monarchy.
3. The National Assembly was elected by a group of electors, which were chosen by active citizens.

### Types of Citizens

Active Citizens

Men above 25yrs who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of labourer's wage entitled to work.

Passive Citizens

Remaining men and women.

## France Abolishes Monarchy and Becomes a Republic

1. Louis XVI secretly planned to overthrow the National Assembly with the King of Prussia (Germany).
2. Before this could happen, the National Assembly voted in April 1792 to declare war against Prussia and Austria.
3. Thousands of volunteers joined the army.
4. They saw this as a war of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe.
5. The patriotic song sung by volunteers was the Marseillaise sung by poet Roget de L'Isle later became the National Anthem of France.
6. Revolution further demanded greater political equality i.e. voting rights to the weaker section.
7. Political clubs became an important rallying point for people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action.
8. The most successful of these clubs was that of the Jacobins'.

### Jacobin Club

1. Got its name from convent of St. Jacob in Paris.
2. Members of this club were mainly people from less prosperous section of society.
3. Leader: Maximilian Robespierre
4. Dress Code: Long striped trousers, they came to be known as "sans-culottes" meaning - people without knee breeches.
5. These sans-culottes men wore red caps to symbolise liberty.



### Summer of 1792

1. Parisians were angered by short supply and high price of food.
2. On the morning of August 10 they (through Jacobin's Club) attacked the Palace of the Tuileries, killed the King's Guards and held the king himself as hostage for several hours.
3. Later Elections were held and now all men of 21 years old and above got the Right to Vote.
4. The newly elected assembly was called the Convention.

5. On 21 September 1792, monarchy was abolished and France was declared as Republic
6. Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of treason (betrayal of own's country)

### Reign of Terror

1. The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the Reign of Terror.
2. This was due to the policy of severe control and punishment by Robespierre.
3. Ex-Nobles, Clergy, members of other political parties, even of his own political party who did not agree with his methods were arrested and imprisoned.
4. If the court found them guilty, they were "guillotined".
5. Guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded.
6. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at prices fixed by the government.
7. Churches were shut down and their buildings converted into barracks or offices.
8. Due to the hard policies of Robespierre, even his supporters left him at the end and finally he was convicted by court and guillotined in July 1794.

### A Directory Rules France

1. The fall of the Jacobin government allowed the wealthier middle classes to seize power.
2. A new constitution was introduced which denied the vote to non-propertied sections of society.
3. It provided for two elected legislative councils.
4. These three appointed a Directory, an executive made up of 5 members.
5. The political instability of the Directory paved the way for the raise of military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.
6. Through all these changes in the form of government, the ideals of freedom, of equality before the law and of fraternity remained inspiring ideals that motivated political movements in France and the rest of Europe.

## Women in Revolution

Women from the beginning were active participants and brought many changes in the French society.

1. Most of the women of the third estate had to work for living, such as, seamstresses or laundresses, sold flowers, fruits and vegetables or were employed as household servants.
2. Most of them did not have access to job or education and only daughters of nobles or wealthy families members of third estate could study.
3. Working women along with the work, had to also care for their family and perform daily household work.
4. The wages of women were lower than that of men.
5. To raise their interest and voices, they started their own political clubs and newspaper. As a result, about 60 clubs came up in different French cities.
6. 'The Society of Revolutionary and Republic Women' was the most famous one.
7. They were disappointed by constitution of 1791 and demanded some political rights as men, such as right to vote, to be elected to the assembly and to hold a political office.
8. As a result, revolutionary government did introduce some laws to help improve their lives, by:
  - Creation of state schools and schooling compulsory for all girls.
  - They could not be forced to marry against their wish.'
  - Divorce was made legal.
  - They were allowed to train for job, become artist or run small business.
9. However their struggle for political rights continues, new government issued laws ordering closure of women's club and banning their political activities. Many prominent women were arrested and none of them were executed.
10. Their movement for equal political right continued for the next two hundred years. It was finally in 1946, that women in France won the right to vote.

## The Abolition of Slavery

One of the most revolutionary social reforms of the Jacob regime was the abolition of slavery in the French colonies.

The slave trade began in 17th century.

### Background:

1. The colonies in the Caribbean like Martinique, Guadeloupe and San Domingo were important suppliers of tobacco, indigo, sugar and coffee.
2. The reluctance of European to go and work in distant, unfamiliar lands was one of the reason for shortage of labour on plantations.
3. This problem was solved by triangular slave trade between Europe, Africa and the America.
4. French merchants bought slaves from local chieftains of African coast and sold them to plantation owners.
5. This exploitation of slaves made it possible to meet the growing demand in European market.
6. Throughout 18th century there were only a little criticism of slavery in France.
7. The government did not pass any law fearing opposition from businessmen whose income dependent upon these slaves.
8. In 1794, they legislated to free all slaves in French colonies. However, their legislation were short lived.
9. After 10 years, Napoleon reintroduced slavery.
10. It was finally abolished in French colonies in 1848.

## The Revolution and Everyday Life

The years following 1748 saw many revolutionary changes with government passing law that would translate the ideas of liberty and equality into everyday practice. Another important revolutionary change was the abolition of censorship .

1. In old regime only those written material and cultural activities- books, magazine, newspaper, play could be performed after they had been approved by the censor of the King.

2. After which, declaration of the rights of man and citizen proclaimed freedom of speech of expression to be a natural right.
3. Newspaper, books, pamphlets, printed picture were now free from censor which meant opposing views of events could be expressed.
4. Plays, song, festive procession attracted audiences in large number and bridge the gap between people who could not read written material- newspaper, pamphlets, magazines etc.

### Conclusion

1. In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself emperor of France and set out to conquer neighbouring European countries.
2. He saw himself as moderniser of Europe and introduced many laws such as protection of private property and a uniform system of weights.
3. Many saw him as a liberator but soon his armies came to view as invading force.
4. He was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815.
5. The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were most important revolutionary of the French were most important revolutionary of the French Revolution and soon spread to the whole of the Europe.
6. Tipu Sultan and Rajmohan Roy are two examples of individual who responded to the ideas coming from revolutionary France.