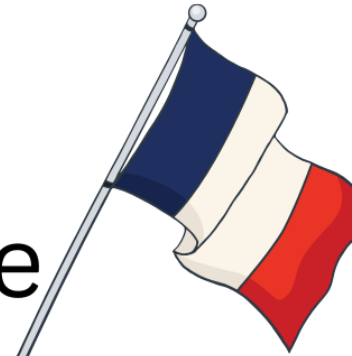


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Class 9 social science

## C1 : The French Revolution



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# **Class 9 History Chapter 1 – The French Revolution**

## **1.1 France Under Louis XVI**

- In 1774, Louis XVI of the Bourbon family became the King of France at the age of 20.
- He was married to Marie Antoinette, the princess of Austria.
- When he became king, he found an empty treasury due to long years of war and royal extravagance.
- The cost of maintaining the royal court at the palace of Versailles was extremely high.
- France had helped the thirteen American colonies in gaining independence from Britain, which added over 1 billion livres to France's existing debt of more than 2 billion livres.
- To meet regular expenses like maintaining the army, court, government offices, and universities, taxes had to be increased.
- However, only the members of the Third Estate were liable to pay taxes.

## **1.2 Division of French Society into Three Estates**

- French society in the 18th century was divided into three estates.
- The First Estate consisted of the clergy, the Second Estate included the nobility, and the Third Estate comprised common people.
- The First and Second Estates enjoyed privileges by birth and were exempted from paying taxes to the state.
- The nobility enjoyed feudal privileges and collected dues from peasants.
- Peasants had to serve the lord by working in his house or fields, or by joining the army and building roads.
- The Church collected a tax from the peasants known as tithes.
- The Third Estate included big businessmen, merchants, court officials, lawyers, peasants, small landowners, labourers, and servants.
- About 90% of the population were peasants, but only a small number owned land.
- Nearly 60% of the land was owned by nobles, the Church, and rich members of the Third Estate.

- All members of the Third Estate had to pay a direct tax called *taille* and many indirect taxes on daily-use items like salt and tobacco.

#### **Key Terms:**

**Livre:** Unit of currency in France, discontinued in 1794.

**Clergy:** People with special functions in the Church.

**Tithe:** Tax levied by the Church, comprising one-tenth of agricultural produce.

**Taille:** Direct tax paid by the Third Estate to the state.

**Old Regime:** Term used to describe the social and political system in France before 1789.

### **1.3 The Struggle to Survive**

- The population of France rose from about 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789.
- Population growth led to higher demand for food grains.
- Grain production did not match demand, leading to a rapid rise in bread prices, the staple diet of the majority.
- Most workers were employed in workshops where wages were fixed by employers.
- Wages did not keep up with rising food prices, increasing the gap between rich and poor.
- The situation worsened when drought or hail destroyed harvests, causing food shortages.
- This resulted in a subsistence crisis, which frequently occurred under the Old Regime.

**Key Term - Subsistence Crisis:** An extreme situation where basic means of livelihood, especially food, are endangered due to factors like poor harvests or high prices.

### **1.4 A Growing Middle Class Envisions an End to Privileges**

- Earlier, peasants and workers protested against high taxes and food scarcity.
- However, they lacked resources and effective programs to bring long-lasting changes.
- Educated and prosperous groups in the Third Estate took responsibility for change.
- The 18th century saw a rise in the middle class who earned wealth through overseas trade and manufacturing.
- This class included professionals like lawyers and administrative officials.
- They believed that no group in society should have privileges by birth.
- They supported merit-based society where social position depended on ability and achievement.

### **1.5 Role of Philosophers in Spreading New Ideas**

- 18th-century philosophers promoted ideas of liberty, equality, and democracy.

#### **John Locke:**

- In *Two Treatises of Government*, he opposed the idea of divine and absolute monarchy.

#### **Jean Jacques Rousseau:**

- In *The Social Contract*, he proposed a government based on a contract between people and representatives.

#### **Montesquieu:**

- In *The Spirit of the Laws*, he suggested separation of power into legislative, executive, and judiciary branches.
- Their ideas influenced political thinkers in France and the US Constitution after the American War of Independence.
- These ideas were discussed in salons and coffee houses, and spread through books and newspapers.
- Such materials were read aloud in public spaces so even the illiterate could understand them.
- News of King Louis XVI's plan to impose more taxes increased public anger and protest against the privileged estates.

**Key Term - Tithe:** A tax collected by the Church, equal to one-tenth of the agricultural produce.

## **Section 2: The Outbreak of the Revolution**

### **2.1 Convocation of the Estates General**

- On 5 May 1789, Louis XVI called a meeting of the Estates General to pass proposals for new taxes.
- The Estates General was a political body to which all three estates sent their representatives.
- It had not been called since 1614.
- The First Estate (clergy) and Second Estate (nobility) each sent 300 representatives.
- The Third Estate sent 600 representatives.

- Peasants, artisans, and women were not allowed, but the Third Estate members were educated and influenced by Enlightenment ideas.
- Traditionally, each estate had one vote, but the Third Estate demanded voting by head (one vote per member).
- The king rejected this demand, which led to anger among the Third Estate representatives.

## **2.2 Formation of the National Assembly**

- On 20 June 1789, representatives of the Third Estate assembled at the indoor tennis court at Versailles.
- They declared themselves the National Assembly and took the Tennis Court Oath.
- They pledged not to disperse until they had drafted a constitution that limited the monarch's powers.
- Some members of the First Estate joined them, and leaders included Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès.
- Mirabeau was a noble who supported equality, and Abbé Sieyès was a priest who wrote "What is the Third Estate?"

## **2.3 The Storming of the Bastille**

- Rumors spread in Paris that the king would use force to dismiss the National Assembly.
- On 14 July 1789, angry citizens stormed the Bastille, a fortress prison symbolizing royal tyranny.
- The mob killed the commander and freed the prisoners.
- The Bastille was demolished, and its stone fragments were sold as symbols of freedom.
- This event marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

## **2.4 Peasant Revolt and Abolition of Feudal Dues**

- In the countryside, peasants heard rumors that lords had hired robbers to destroy their harvests.
- Panic led peasants to attack manor houses, loot granaries, and destroy records of feudal dues.
- Many nobles fled their homes and emigrated to other countries.

- On the night of 4 August 1789, the National Assembly abolished the feudal system of obligations and taxes.
  - Tithes were abolished, and Church lands were confiscated to increase state revenue.
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## Section 3: France Becomes a Republic

### 3.1 Drafting of the Constitution

- The National Assembly completed the draft of the Constitution in 1791.
- Its main objective was to limit the powers of the monarch.
- France became a constitutional monarchy.
- Powers were divided among the legislature, executive, and judiciary.
- The Constitution began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.
- This declaration stated that rights such as liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression were natural and inalienable rights.

**Key Term - Natural Rights:** Rights that belong to every individual by birth and cannot be taken away by any government or institution.

### 3.2 New Political System and Voting Rights

- The Constitution of 1791 granted voting rights only to active citizens.
- Active citizens were men above the age of 25 who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a laborer's wages.
- About 4 million people were eligible to vote.
- The remaining citizens were passive citizens, including women.
- The Constitution did not give equal rights to all individuals.

### 3.3 Formation of Political Clubs

- Political clubs became an important feature of the French Revolution.
- They allowed people to express their opinions and influence political decisions.
- The most successful political club was the Jacobin Club.
- It was named after the former convent of St. Jacob in Paris.
- Members of the Jacobin Club were mostly from the less prosperous sections of society.

- They included small shopkeepers, artisans, and daily wage workers.
- Their leader was Maximilien Robespierre.

### **3.4 Changes Introduced by Jacobins**

- Jacobins wore long striped trousers similar to those worn by dock workers.
- They were known as sans-culottes, meaning ‘those without knee breeches.’
- They also wore red caps symbolizing liberty.
- In 1792, the Jacobins planned an uprising against the king.
- On 10 August 1792, they stormed the palace of the Tuileries and held the king hostage.
- Elections were held for a new assembly called the Convention.
- All men aged 21 and above, regardless of wealth, got the right to vote.
- On 21 September 1792, the monarchy was abolished, and France was declared a republic.

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## **Section 4: The Reign of Terror**

### **4.1 Rule of the Jacobins**

- After the fall of the monarchy, the Jacobins under Robespierre came to power.
- Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment.
- The period from 1793 to 1794 is known as the Reign of Terror.

### **4.2 Measures Taken by Robespierre**

- Robespierre arrested and tried all those he considered enemies of the republic.
- Those found guilty by the Revolutionary Tribunal were guillotined.
- Nobles, clergy, and even members of his own party were executed.
- Laws were issued to set maximum limits on wages and prices.
- Meat and bread were rationed to ensure equal distribution.
- The use of expensive white flour was forbidden.
- Equality was promoted in daily life—people were addressed as “citizen” and “citoyenne.”

- Churches were shut down and used as barracks or offices.

**Key Term - Guillotine:** A device with a heavy blade used for beheading. It was named after Dr. Guillotin who invented it.

#### 4.3 Fall of Robespierre

- Robespierre's harsh policies made him unpopular among people.
- He was arrested in July 1794 and executed by guillotine.
- After his death, the Jacobin government came to an end.

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## Section 5: A Directory Rules France

### 5.1 Formation of the Directory

- After the fall of Robespierre, a new Constitution was introduced in 1795.
- It denied voting rights to non-propertied sections of society.
- The new government was called the Directory.
- The Directory consisted of two elected legislative councils.
- These councils appointed an executive body of five members known as Directors.

### 5.2 Problems Faced by the Directory

- The Directory faced constant political instability.
- It clashed with the legislative councils, leading to corruption.
- The political situation remained uncertain.
- This created an opportunity for the rise of a military dictator.

### 5.3 Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte

- In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte, a military general, overthrew the Directory.
- He became the ruler of France and later crowned himself Emperor.

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## Section 6: The Revolution and Social Changes

### 6.1 Did Women Have a Revolution?



- From the very beginning, women were active participants in events that brought about important changes in French society.
- They hoped their involvement would pressure the revolutionary government to improve their lives.
- Most women of the Third Estate had to work for a living and lacked access to education or job training.
- Their wages were lower than those of men.
- To express their interests, women started their own political clubs and newspapers.
- About sixty women's clubs emerged in various French cities, with the Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women being the most prominent.
- They demanded the same political rights as men, including voting and holding public office.
- Women were disappointed when the Constitution of 1791 declared them passive citizens.
- Revolutionary laws established state schools and made schooling compulsory for all girls.
- Fathers could no longer force their daughters into marriage against their will.
- Marriage became a civil contract entered into freely and registered under law.
- Divorce was made legal and could be requested by both women and men.
- Women could now train for jobs, become artists, or run small businesses.
- Despite progress, the struggle for equal political rights continued.
- During the Reign of Terror, women's clubs were closed, and many prominent women were arrested and executed.
- Women's movements for voting rights and equal pay continued worldwide for the next 200 years.
- The political activities of French women during the revolution remained a lasting inspiration.
- Women in France finally gained the right to vote in 1946.

## **6.2 The Abolition of Slavery**

- One of the most revolutionary social reforms by the Jacobins was the abolition of slavery in French colonies.

- Colonies like Martinique, Guadeloupe, and San Domingo were major suppliers of tobacco, indigo, sugar, and coffee.
- Europeans' reluctance to work in distant colonies led to a triangular slave trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.
- The slave trade began in the 17th century.
- French merchants sailed from ports like Bordeaux and Nantes to the African coast to buy slaves from local chiefs.
- Slaves were branded, shackled, and packed tightly into ships for a three-month Atlantic voyage to the Caribbean.
- There, they were sold to plantation owners.
- The economic prosperity of port cities like Bordeaux and Nantes depended on the slave trade.
- Despite its cruelty, slavery was rarely criticized in 18th-century France.
- The National Assembly debated whether the rights of man should apply to colonial subjects but passed no laws due to business opposition.
- The Convention abolished slavery in French colonies in 1794.
- However, Napoleon reintroduced slavery ten years later.
- Slavery was finally abolished in French colonies in 1848.

### **6.3 The Revolution and Everyday Life**

- Revolutionary governments enacted laws to bring liberty and equality into daily life.
- One major reform was the abolition of censorship, allowing free printing of written material.
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression as a natural right.
- Freedom of the press enabled the expression of opposing views and debates.
- Plays, songs, and festival processions attracted large crowds and helped spread revolutionary ideas like liberty and justice.

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## **Section 7: Napoleon Bonaparte and His Legacy**

### **7.1 Rise and Ambitions of Napoleon**

- In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of France.
- He aimed to conquer neighboring European countries and replace monarchies with kingdoms ruled by his family.
- Napoleon viewed himself as a modernizer of Europe.

## **7.2 Reforms Introduced by Napoleon**

- He introduced several laws to protect private property.
- Established a uniform system of weights and measures based on the decimal system.
- At first, many people welcomed him as a liberator who brought freedom.
- However, Napoleonic armies were soon seen as an invading force.
- Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.
- Many of his reforms, including those supporting liberty and modern laws, had a lasting impact on Europe.

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# **Section 8: Conclusion and Timeline of Events**

## **8.1 Conclusion of the Revolution**

- The French Revolution ended absolute monarchy and challenged the privileges held by the First and Second Estates.
- It gave rise to the idea of equality, liberty, and fraternity as the foundation of a new society.
- Although it did not ensure equal rights for all—such as women and non-propertied men—it introduced the concepts of democracy and citizenship.
- The revolution inspired movements for freedom and justice across the world.

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## **Timeline of the French Revolution – Class 9**

**1774:** Louis XVI became the King of France and inherited an empty treasury due to years of war and lavish royal expenses.

**1789 (May 5):** Louis XVI called a meeting of the Estates General to propose new taxes to tackle the financial crisis.

**1789 (June 20):** The Third Estate representatives declared themselves the National Assembly and took the Tennis Court Oath to draft a new constitution.

**1789 (July 14):** The people of Paris stormed the Bastille prison, marking the start of the French Revolution.

**1789 (July–August):** The Great Fear spread across the countryside as peasants attacked manor houses and burnt feudal records.

**1789 (August 4):** The National Assembly abolished feudal privileges, dues, and tithes through a historic decree.

**1791 (September):** The National Assembly completed the Constitution of 1791, which limited the power of the monarch and established a constitutional monarchy.

**1792 (August 10):** Jacobins and sans-culottes stormed the Tuileries Palace, took the king prisoner, and suspended the monarchy.

**1792 (September 21):** The newly elected National Convention abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic.

**1793 (January 21):** King Louis XVI was executed by guillotine on charges of treason.

**1793 (October):** Queen Marie Antoinette was executed by guillotine.

**1793–1794:** Reign of Terror under Robespierre; thousands of people, including nobles and revolutionaries, were executed.

**1794 (July):** Robespierre was arrested and executed, ending the Reign of Terror.

**1795:** A new Constitution was adopted, and a five-member executive body called the Directory was established.

**1799:** Napoleon Bonaparte overthrew the Directory and seized power, ending the revolutionary phase in France.

**1804:** Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of France.

**1804–1815:** Napoleon expanded French control across Europe and introduced modern reforms like protection of private property and uniform weights and measures.

**1815:** Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo and exiled. His reforms and revolutionary ideas had a long-lasting impact on Europe.

**1846:** Women in France finally gained the right to vote after years of struggle and activism inspired by the Revolution.

**1848:** Slavery was finally abolished in all French colonies, ending centuries of exploitation through the transatlantic slave trade.

