

France Abolishes Monarchy And Becomes A Republic

The situation in France continued to be tensed in subsequent years. Even though Louis XVI had signed the Constitution, he entered into secret negotiations with the King of Prussia.

Rulers of France's neighbouring countries were worried by the developments in France. They made plans to send troops to put down the events taking place since 1789. Before this could happen, the National Assembly declared war against Prussia and Austria in April 1792.

Thousands of volunteers joined army who saw war as a protest of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe. Among the patriotic songs sung by them was the Marseillaise composed by the poet Roget de L'Isle. It later became the National Anthem of France. It was sung for the first time by volunteers from Marseilles as they marched into Paris. This way it got its name.

The Result of Revolutionary Wars

Economic difficulties and losses were the result of the revolutionary wars. While men were busy fighting at the front, women had to earn a living and look after their families. A large segment of the population was convinced that the revolution had to be carried further, as the Constitution of 1791 gave political rights only to the richer section.

Political clubs became popular, where people could discuss government policies and their own plans of action. The most successful of these clubs was that of the Jacobins, which got its name from the former convent of St Jacob in Paris.

The Jacobin Club: Members of the Jacobins club belonged mainly to the less prosperous sections of society. They included shopkeepers, artisans, cooks, shoe-makers, watch-makers, printers, servants and daily-wage workers. Their leader was Maximilien Robespierre.

They dressed differently by wearing long striped trousers similar to those worn by dock workers. They wanted to show themselves apart from the fashionable sections of society, especially the nobles, who wore knee length breeches. It was a way of declaring the end of the power held by the wearers of knee breeches. They came to be known as sans-culottes' meaning 'those without knee breeches'. Sans-culottes men wore a red cap that symbolised liberty.

The Convention

On 10th August, 1792, the Jacobins attacked the Palace of the Tuileries with large number of Parisians. They killed the king's guards and held the king himself as hostage for several hours. Later, the assembly voted to imprison the royal family. Elections were held and now all men above 21 years of age were allowed to vote. The newly elected assembly, called the Convention. It abolished monarchy on 21st September, 1792 and France was declared a 'Republic'.

A republic was a form of government where the people elected the government, including the head of the government. There is no hereditary monarch. Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of treason. On 21st January, 1793, he was executed publicly at the Place de la Concorde. After some time, the Queen Marie Antoinette met with the same fate.

The Reign of Terror

The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the 'Reign of Terror' in France. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. Many people were arrested and tried by a revolutionary tribunal (court). They included all those people who were considered enemies (including ex-nobles, clergy and members of political parties) of republic by Robespierre.

If the court found them guilty, they were guillotined. Robespierre's government made laws placing a maximum ceiling on wages and prices. Meat and bread were



rationed. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at the prices fixed by the government. The use of expensive white flour was forbidden. People were forced to eat the pain d'egalite (equality bread), a loaf made of whole wheat. Instead of Monsieur (Sir) and Madame (Madam), all French men and women were called as Citoyen and Citoyenne (Citizen).

Churches were shut down and their buildings were converted into barracks or offices. Robespierre became a virtual dictator of France. Due to his hard policies, his supporters left him in the end. He was finally convicted by a court and guillotined in July 1794.

A Directory Rules France

After the fall of the Jacobins, the wealthier middle classes seized power. A new Constitution was introduced which denied the vote to non-propertied society. It provided for two elected legislative councils. These councils appointed a Directory, an Executive made up of five members.

It was meant as a safeguard against the concentration of power in a one man executive. Often the Directors clashed with the legislative councils and were dismissed. This political, instability paved the way for the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity remained inspiring ideals that motivated political movements for France and the rest of the Europe.

Role Of Women In Revolution

Women played a very significant role in the French Revolution. It was their active participation which brought important changes in French society. Most of the women belonging to the third estate worked for a living. Their occupations included dress makers, laundry workers, flower vendors, fruit and vegetable vendors etc. Sometimes they worked as maid servants in the houses of the rich, They were not trained for any job and were largely uneducated. Only the daughters of nobles and wealthier members of the third estate could study at a convent. Besides caring for their families, the French women had to cook, fetch water, stand in queues for bread, look after the children etc. Their wages were always lower than the men.

Women Club in France

Women in France were disappointed with the Constitution of 1791. It reduced them to passive citizens who had no political rights, they demanded political rights, viz., Right to Vote, to be elected to the assembly and to hold political office. To express their own views and demands, women started their own political clubs and newspapers. About sixty women's clubs came up in different cities of France, Of them, The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was the most famous.

Laws Passed to Improve Women Lives

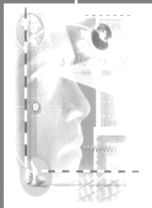
Women were active participants in revolutionary activities. In the early years, laws were passed to improve their lives. These changes were

- They gained access to education with the introduction of state schools and a system of compulsory education for girls.
- Women could no longer be forced into marriage by their fathers. They could marry at will.
- Marriage was now a contract which could be registered under civil law.
- Divorce was made legal. Both men and women could apply for it.
- Women could train for jobs, become artists or run small business.

French Women Got Right to Vote

Women's struggle for equal political rights was continued through the next two hundred years in many countries of the world. During the Reign of Terror, the government ordered for the closure of women's clubs and banned their political activities. Many prominent women were arrested and executed. Women's struggle for voting and equal political rights was carried on through an international suffrage





movement during the late 19th and early 20th century. Finally in 1946, French women won the Right to Vote.

The Life of a Revolutionary Woman Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793)

Olympe de Gouges was one of the most important of the politically active women in revolutionary France. She protested against the Constitution and the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. In 1791, she wrote a Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen, which she addressed the Queen and the members of the National Assembly. She demanded that they should act upon it. In 1793 Olympe de Gouges criticised the Jacobin government for forcibly closing down women's clubs. She was tried by the National Convention, which charged her with treason. Soon after, she was executed.

The Abolition Of Slavery

The greatest social reform made by the Jacobin government was to abolish slavery in French colonies. The French colonies in the Caribbean like Martinique, Guadeloupe and San Domingo were important suppliers of tobacco, indigo, sugar, coffee etc.

The French needed workers for plantations in these areas, but the Europeans did not want to work in distant, unknown lands. Thus, a three way trade in slaves started between Europe, Africa and America in the 17th century. This was known as triangular slave trade, French merchants sailed from the ports of Bordeaux or Nantes to the African coast, where they bought slaves from local chieftains. They were branded, shackled and packed tightly into ships for three-month long voyage. Throughout the 18th century, there was little criticism of slavery in France.

Abolition of Slavery in Colonies

After long debates, the National Convention passed a law in 1794. It declared slavery illegal and freed all slaves in France's overseas colonies. After ten years, Napoleon reintroduced slavery to please the plantation owners who considered enslaving African blacks as their right. The slaves were known as African Negroes. Finally, slavery was abolished in the French colonies in 1848.

The Revolution And Everyday Life

After 1789, many changes took place in the lives of women, men and children in France. The revolutionary governments took it upon themselves to pass laws that would translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice. One important law that came into effect after the storming of the Bastille in the summer of 1789 was the abolition of censorship. According to censorship, all written material and cultural activities could be performed or published only after they had been approved by the censors of the king.

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

With the abolition of censorship and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, freedom of speech and expression became a natural right of man. This led to the growth of newspapers, pamphlets, books and printed pictures. They all discussed and described the events and changes taking place in France. Freedom of the press gave voice to opinions and counter opinions. Plays, songs and festive processions attracted a large number of people. This was one way they could grasp and identify with ideas such as liberty or justice.

Conclusion

In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte, a famous French General, crowned himself Emperor of France. He conquered neighbouring European countries and forced out dynasties. He saw himself as 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.

Many people saw Napoleon as a liberator who would bring freedom for the people. But soon his army came to be viewed everywhere as invader force. Finally, Napoleon was

9th – French Revolution II



defeated at the Waterloo in 1815. Even after his defeat, ideas of Napoleon on liberty and modern laws continued in other parts of Europe.

The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution, which spread all over Europe. This led to abolition of feudal systems and freedom of colonised nations.

Tipu Sultan and Raja Rammohan Roy are some of the Indians who were inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution.

Exercise III

1. In context of France, the volunteers from Marseilles sang Marsellaise, a patriotic song, when they marched into Paris. Who composed this song?
2. Who were known as 'Sans-culottes'?
3. Who was defeated at Waterloo in 1815?
4. Fill in the blanks by appropriate words.
 - 1) The National Assembly declared war against Prussia and Austria in _____
 - 2) Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of _____
 - 3) A Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen was written by _____
 - 4) The ideas of _____ and _____ were the most important legacy of the French Revolution.

Timeline

Year	Important Event
21 st Sep., 1792	Monarchy abolished and France declared a republic.
21 st Jan., 1793	Louis XVI executed.
1793-1794	All slaves in French overseas possessions freed, but decision overturned by Napoleon ten years later.
Sep 1793-July 1794	'Reign of Terror'.
July 1794	Robespierre arrested and executed.
1804	Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of France.
1815	Napoleon finally defeated at Waterloo.
1848	Slavery finally abolished in French colonies.
1946	Women in France won the right to vote.

