



The French Revolution had a great impact on the world. Before the 18th century, society was broadly divided into estates and orders. Economic and social powers were controlled by the church and the aristocracy. New ideas about individual rights and who controlled the social power began to be discussed in Europe, Asia and many parts of the world. In India, Raja Rammohun Roy and Derozio talked about the significance of the French Revolution. Others debated the ideas of post-revolutionary Europe. All these ideas were reflected in the development of the colonies.

THE AGE OF SOCIAL CHANGE: The social and political changes that took place all over Europe can be traced to the French Revolution. But not everyone in Europe wanted a complete transformation of society. Some were 'conservatives', others were 'liberals' and 'radicals'. The French revolutionary ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity became inspiring ideals that motivated political movements in the world in 19th and 20th centuries.

Liberals, Radicals and Conservatives:

Liberals: One of the groups which looked to change society were the liberals. They wanted a nation which support all religions. In 19th and 20th century, European states generally discriminated in favour of one religion or another. Austria and Spain favoured the Catholic Church, while Britain favoured the Church of England. They also opposed unrestricted absolute power of the monarch. They favoured religious tolerance and wanted to safeguard individual rights against governments. They argued for a representative and elected parliamentary government. They favoured a well-trained Judiciary that was independent of rulers and officials. They were not democrats and did not favour universal adult franchise (the right of every citizen to vote). They wanted voting rights to be given only to men not to women.

Radicals: They supported women's rights and organised the various **suffragette movements**. Radicals wanted a nation in which the government was based on the majority of a country's population. Radicals opposed the privileges of the wealthy landowners and factory owners. They were not against the existence of private property, but disliked the concentration of it in the hands of few people.

Conservatives: They were opposed views of radicals and liberals. In the 18th century, conservatives had been generally opposed to the idea of change. But after the French Revolution, conservatives felt the need for change. By the 19th century, conservatives accepted that some change was necessary, but believed that the past had to be respected.

Industrial Society and Social Change: The political trends were the signs of a new time and it was the time of deep social and economic changes. During the Industrial Revolution, new industrial regions and new railway lines were developed. It brought men, women and children to factories. But still the problem of unemployment was common. People were forced to accept long working hours and poor wages. With urbanisation, housing and sanitation problems were growing.

Outlooks of Nationalists, Liberals and Radicals: Almost all industries were privately owned. However, many of the liberals and radicals had their own property and were also employers. They had made their wealth through industrial ventures. They believed that benefits could be achieved, if the workforce in the economy was healthy and citizens were educated. They believed in the value of





individual effort, labour and enterprise. Some nationalists, liberals and radicals wanted revolutions to put an end to the kind of governments existing in Europe in 1815. In France, Italy, Germany and Russia, they became revolutionaries and worked to overthrow existing monarchs. Nationalists talked of revolutions that would create 'nations' where all citizens would have equal rights. After 1815, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian nationalist, conspired with others to form Italy where all citizens would have equal rights.

The Coming of Socialism to Europe: By the mid-19th century, socialist ideas spread through Europe and attracted widespread attention. Socialists believed that the propertied class were only concerned with their personal gain and not with the welfare of those who made the property productive. So, they suggested and campaigned that instead of individual control, property should be controlled collectively. A leading English manufacturer, Robert Owen (1771-1858), demanded to build a cooperative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA). French socialist Louis Blanc (1813-1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalist enterprises. These cooperatives were to be associations of people who produced goods together and divided the profits according to the work done by members.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Karl Marx (1818-1883) argued that the industrial society was capitalist and the profit of capitalists was produced by workers. The conditions of workers could not improve till the profit was accumulated by private capitalists. He believed that to overthrow capitalism, workers had to construct a radically socialist society where all property was socially controlled, i.e., all production unit should be nationalised. This society will be a communist society. Friedrich Engels (1820- 1895) joined with Marx to suggest that workers have to overthrow capitalism and the rule of private property.

Support for Socialism: Socialists formed an international body called "Second International" to coordinate their efforts and their ideas spread through Europe by the 1870s. In England and Germany, workers formed associations to fight for better living and working conditions. They set up funds to help members. They demanded reduced working hours and the right to vote. In Germany, these associations worked with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and helped to win parliamentary seats. By 1905, socialists and trade unionists formed 'Labour Party' in Britain and 'Socialist Party' in France. 'However, till 1914, socialists did not succeed in forming a government in Europe. But they were represented by strong figures in parliamentary politics and their ideas shaped legislation. Governments continued to be run by conservatives, liberals and radicals.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: The government in Russia was taken over by the socialists through the October Revolution of 1917. The fall of monarchy in February 1917 in Russia and events of the October Revolution are normally called the Russian Revolution.

The Russian Empire in 1914: In 1914, Tsar (means king) Nicholas II ruled Russia and its empire. Besides the territory around Moscow, the Russian empire included present day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. The empire stretched to the Pacific comprising the Central Asian states and present-day Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The major religion of Russia





was Russian Orthodox Christianity which grew out of Greek Orthodox Church. The empire also included Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists.

Economy and Society: At the beginning of the 20th century, 85 per cent of Russian population were agriculturists. In France, 40 per cent and in Germany, 50 per cent people were agriculturalists. In the Russian empire, cultivators produced for the market as well as for themselves. Russia was a major exporter, of grain.

Industries in Russia: In Russia, prominent industrial areas were St Petersburg and Moscow. Craftsmen undertook much of the production, but large factories existed alongside craft workshops. In 1890s, many factories started due to the expansion of the railway network and there was an increase in foreign investment. As a result, coal production doubled and iron and steel output increased four times. In some areas, factory workers and craftsmen were almost equal in number by 1900.

Most industry was privately owned. Government supervised large factories to ensure minimum wages and limited hours of work. In craft units and small workshops, the working hours were sometimes 15 hours, compared with 10 to 12 hours in factories.

Situation of Workers: Workers were a divided social group. Some workers had strong links with the villages from which they came and some others had settled in cities permanently. Workers were divided by skill. A metalworker of St Petersburg recalled that metalworkers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers. Their occupations demanded more training and skill. Women made up 31 per cent of the factory labour force by 1914, but they were paid less than men. A few associations were formed to help members in times of unemployment and hardships. Workers were sometimes united to participate in strikes. Many strikes took place in the textile industry during 1896-1897 and in the metal industry during 1902.

Peasants in the Countryside: In the countryside, peasants cultivated most of the land. The nobility, the crown and the Orthodox Church owned large properties. Peasants were divided and they were deeply religious. Except in a few cases, they had no respect for the nobility. Nobles got their power through their services to the Tsar, not through local popularity. In France, during French Revolution in Brittany, peasants respected nobles and fought for them. But in Russia, peasants wanted the land of the nobles to be given to them. They refused to pay rent and even murdered landlords. In 1902, this occurred in a large scale in South Russia but later in 1905 such incidents spread all over the Russia. Russian peasants were different from other European peasants. They pooled their land together periodically and their commune (mir) divided the land according to the needs of the peasant families.

Socialism in Russia: All political parties were illegal in Russia before 1914. The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party was founded in 1898 by socialists who respected Marx's ideas. Due to government, policing, it had to operate as an illegal organisation. It started a newspaper, mobilised workers and organised strikes. Some Russian socialists recognised that the Russian peasant custom of dividing land periodically made them natural socialists. Therefore, peasants rather than workers would be the main force of the revolution and Russia could become socialist more quickly than other countries. In the countryside, socialists were active by the late 19th century. The Socialist Revolutionary Party was formed in



1900 by the socialists who struggled for peasants' rights. They demanded that land belonging to nobles be transferred to peasants.

Lenin and Socialist Movement: Lenin felt that peasants were not one united group. Some were poor and others were rich. Some worked as labourers while others were capitalists. Due to these 'differentiation', i.e. they could not all be a part of socialist movement. The Social Democratic Party was later divided over the strategy of the organisation. The party split into two wings the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Vladimir Lenin led the Bolshevik group. He was in the view that in Tsarist Russia the party should be disciplined and control its quality and number of members. On the other hand, Menshevik group viewed that party should be open to all, as in Germany.

A Turbulent Time: The 1905 Revolution: In the beginning of the 20th century, Russia was still an autocracy and the Tsar was not subject to Parliament. During the revolution of 1905, social democrats and socialist revolutionaries worked with the peasants and workers to demand a Constitution. They were supported in the empire by nationalists (e.g. In Poland) and in Muslim-dominated areas by jadidists, who wanted modernised Islam to lead their societies.

A Bad Time for Russian Workers: The year 1904 was bad for Russian workers because of increase in prices of essential goods. Then the real wages declined by 20 per cent. The membership of workers' associations rose dramatically. When four members of the Assembly of Russian Workers (formed in 1904) were dismissed at the Putilov Iron Works, there was a call for industrial action. Over the next few days, over 110000 workers in St Petersburg went on strike. They demanded a reduction in the working hours to eight hours, an increase in wages and improved working conditions. **The Incident of Bloody Sunday:** In 1905, on one Sunday, the procession of workers, led by Father Gapon, reached the Winter Palace of the Tsar in order to present a petition. But, they were attacked by police and the Cossacks. In this incident, more than 100 workers were killed and about 300 wounded. This incident was known as Bloody Sunday. It started a series of events that became known as the 1905 Revolution.

Effects of Bloody Sunday

- Strikes took place all over the country
- Universities closed down when student bodies staged walkouts, complaining about the lack of civil liberties.
- Doctors, lawyers, engineers and other middle-class workers established the Union of Unions and demanded a Constituent Assembly.
- During the 1905 Revolution, the Tsar allowed the creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma.
- A large number of trade unions and factory committees made up of factory workers also existed for short time.
- After 1905, most committees and unions worked unofficially because they were declared illegal. Severe restrictions were placed on political activity.

Reaction of the Tsar: The Tsar dismissed the first Duma within 75 days and the re-elected second Duma within 3 months. The Tsar did not want any questioning of his supreme authority. He changed the voting laws and packed the third Duma with conservative politicians, keeping out liberals and revolutionaries.



The First World War and the Russian Empire: In 1914, the First World War started between two European alliances – Germany, Austria and Turkey (the Central powers) and France, Britain and Russia (later Italy and Romania also). Each country had a global empire. So, the war was fought outside Europe as well as in Europe. Initially, the war was popular in Russia and the people supported Tsar Nicholas II. The Tsar had decided to take the command of the Russian army into his own hand. So, he left his court and went to the battlefield. Anti-German sentiments became strong. The Tsarina Alexandra's German origins and her advisor Rasputin's influence made the autocracy unpopular.

War on the Eastern and Western Front: The First World War on the 'Eastern Front' differed from that on the 'Western Front'. In the West, armies fought from trenches stretched along Eastern France. In the East, armies moved a good deal and fought battles leaving large casualties.

