

Class 9 History – Chapter 1: The French Revolution

The French Revolution

Introduction

The French Revolution began in **1789** and was one of the most important events in world history. It marked the end of monarchy in France and introduced the ideas of **Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity**. The revolution inspired people across the world to fight for justice, freedom, and equal rights.

French Society Before the Revolution

The Three Estates

French society was divided into three groups called **Estates**:

- **First Estate:** Clergy (Church officials)
- **Second Estate:** Nobility (Kings, Queens, and Nobles)
- **Third Estate:** Common people such as farmers, workers, merchants, and businessmen.

The First and Second Estates enjoyed special privileges and paid very little tax, while the Third Estate had to pay almost all taxes despite being the largest section of society.

Causes of the French Revolution

Main Causes

The Revolution took place due to several reasons:

- Heavy taxes on the Third Estate.
- Social inequality between the three estates.
- Financial crisis caused by wars and extravagant spending.
- Poor harvests and rising food prices.
- Spread of ideas of freedom and equality by philosophers like **John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu**.

The Beginning of the Revolution

Storming of the Bastille

On **14 July 1789**, angry citizens attacked the **Bastille**, a prison that symbolized the king's absolute power. This event is considered the beginning of the French Revolution and is celebrated as **Bastille Day** in France.

Declaration of the Rights of Man

Human Rights

In **1789**, the National Assembly adopted the **Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen**, which declared that:

- All men are born free and equal.
- Every citizen has equal rights before the law.
- Freedom of speech and expression should be protected.
- The government should work for the welfare of the people.

The Reign of Terror

Robespierre's Rule

From **1793 to 1794**, **Maximilien Robespierre** ruled France during the **Reign of Terror**.

During this period:

- Thousands of people were arrested.
- Many were executed using the **guillotine**.
- Strict laws were introduced to punish anyone suspected of opposing the Revolution.

Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte

End of the Revolution

In **1799**, **Napoleon Bonaparte** became the ruler of France. He introduced several reforms, including the **Napoleonic Code**, which established equality before the law and protected private property. Although he later declared himself Emperor, many revolutionary ideas continued to influence Europe.

Impact of the French Revolution

Importance

The French Revolution:

- Ended feudal privileges.

- Promoted liberty, equality, and fraternity.
- Inspired democratic movements across the world.
- Encouraged people to fight against injustice and monarchy.
- Influenced the freedom movements in many countries.

Key Points

- The French Revolution began in **1789**.
- French society was divided into **three estates**.
- The **Third Estate** suffered the most due to heavy taxes.
- **14 July 1789** is known as the **Storming of the Bastille**.
- The Revolution promoted **Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity**.
- **Napoleon Bonaparte** came to power in **1799**.

Chapter Summary

The French Revolution transformed France by ending monarchy and feudalism. It introduced democratic ideals, equal rights, and the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Its impact spread far beyond France and continues to influence modern democracies across the world.