

Democratic and Nationalist Revolutions

17th and 18th Centuries

England – The Glorious revolution

England like any other country of Europe was ruled by Kings and Queens at the beginning of 17th century. All the regions of Britain (England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland) had been united by the Tudor dynasty kings. The Tudors refused to accept the authority of the Pope who was the head of Roman Catholic church. This was in a sense beginning of British nationalism - the idea that the British were a distinct people who should have autonomous of the Pope and Roman Catholic Church. Soon however, a conflict emerged between the Parliament and the King as to who had the supreme power in the kingdom; landowners and merchants, elected representatives to the Parliament; and the king needed the approval of such Parliament to levy any tax. Let us see how this conflict paved the way for a democratic government in Britain.

In 1603 James I of Stuart Dynasty became the King of England. He disputed the powers of Parliament to question him. He believed that the absolute powers of the king were given by God and Kings ruled by Divine Right and therefore they should not be controlled by the Parliament. He was succeeded by Charles I, who dissolved the Parliament and ruled for 11 years without Parliament. In 1640, he was forced to convene the Parliament for giving special grants as he needed money to fight some wars. This Parliament which continued from 1640 to 1660 (and hence called the Long Parliament) decided to control the despotism of the King and his ministers. The Long Parliament punished the ministers and officers of Charles I. It abolished the special courts created by the King. Charles I took advantage of differences within the Parliament and tried to arrest his opponents. A Civil War started between parliamentary party and the king's party, which lasted for 5 years. Ultimately, Charles I was



Charles I

Civil War: internal war in a country

defeated and executed in 1649 and England became republic. This experiment of republican government did not last long and eventually in 1688, William of Orange and his wife Mary (grand daughter of Charles I) were invited by the Parliament to occupy the throne of England. A new arrangement was worked out by which ministers were responsible to the Parliament. And the powers of the King were restricted. Thus

Parliament supremacy was established and paving way for democracy. Now the power of the king was not a divine right but it was conferred by Parliament. The supreme power was transferred to Parliament. All this took place without shedding a drop of blood or firing a single shot. This transformation therefore is known as '**Glorious' or 'Bloodless Revolution'**.

You may remember that the people with land and property only could vote in the elections to the Parliament. The seats in different areas had not been allocated according to the population. As a result many low population areas had many seats while high population areas did not have any seat. The common people of England began to agitate for the right to vote and for reforms in the system. In 1832, the voting rights were extended to more people and some of the anomalies were removed. The right to vote was gradually extended to different sections of the population and eventually to all adults by 1928. Thus Parliamentary form of government in England grew in stages.

- Write an imaginary dialogue between persons from a king's party and parliamentary party in our context
- What was the effect of the Civil war on the king and the people of the England?

American Independence 1774-1789

England had developed colonies on the eastern coast of North America. Thirteen states of colonisers had been established there. Most of them were occupied by people from England who had settled in America to cultivate land, run small workshops and conduct trade. The English Parliament assumed powers to make laws for the American states but the people of those states did not vote for the Parliament. The Parliament often passed laws that favoured English traders and factories at the cost of the people of the colonies. The American colonies therefore raised the slogan '**No Taxation Without Representation'** In 1774, representatives from all colonies except Georgia met in protest at a Congress at Philadelphia. They requested King George III to restore to the colonies their previous rights. The King's attempts to suppress the colonies led to armed clashes between the British and the American soldiers. The Second Congress also tried for a peaceful solution. They appealed to the King not to impose taxes without their consent. The King regarded this as an act of rebellion and declared war in April 1775. The Americans finally won the war in October, 1781 with the military assistance of France. The War of Independence came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1783). By this treaty, Britain recognised the independence of its thirteen colonies.



Thomas Jefferson

Republic: Where the head of the state is a democratically elected president, not a monarch.



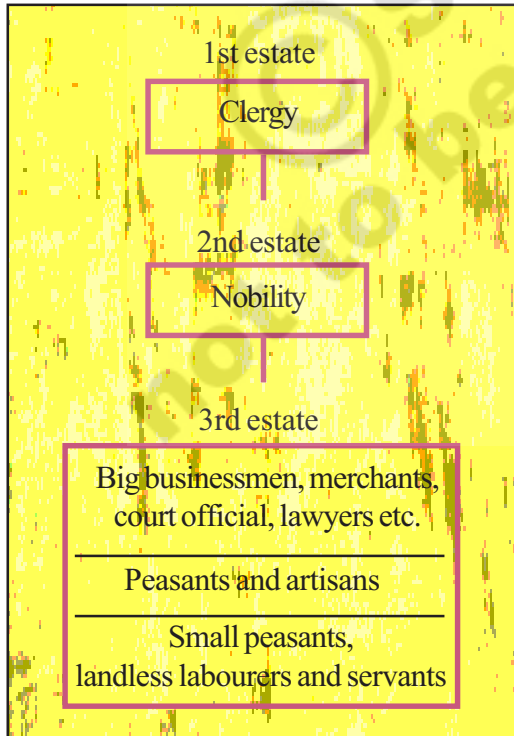
Fig. 13.1: The first image is called 'Columbia'. This was replaced with Statue of Liberty to symbolise USA.

The Declaration of Independence was adopted on 4th July 1776, during the Third Congress at Philadelphia. Thomas Jefferson was the author of the Declaration. It declared that all men are created equal and are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. In 1789, the national government of the United States of America adopted a Republican Constitution. The division of powers between states and federal government was introduced with the efforts of Jefferson. A Bill of Rights was adopted

guaranteeing the freedom of speech, religion, and rule of law were enacted. This paved way for the establishment of the United States of America (U.S.A.).

French Revolution

In 1774, Louis XVI ascended the throne of France. He was 20 years old and married to the Austrian princess Marie Antoinette. Upon his accession the new king found an empty treasury. Long years of war had drained the financial resources of France. Added to this was the cost of maintaining an extravagant court at the immense palace of Versailles. Under Louis XVI, France helped the thirteen American colonies to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain. The war added further to the debt. To meet its regular expenses, such as the cost of maintaining an army, the court, running government offices or universities, the state was forced to increase taxes. Yet even this measure would not have sufficed. French society in the eighteenth century was divided into three estates, and only members of the third estate paid taxes. The society of estates was part of the feudal system that dated back to the middle ages of France before 1789.



A Society of Estates.

Note that within the Third Estate some were rich and others poor.

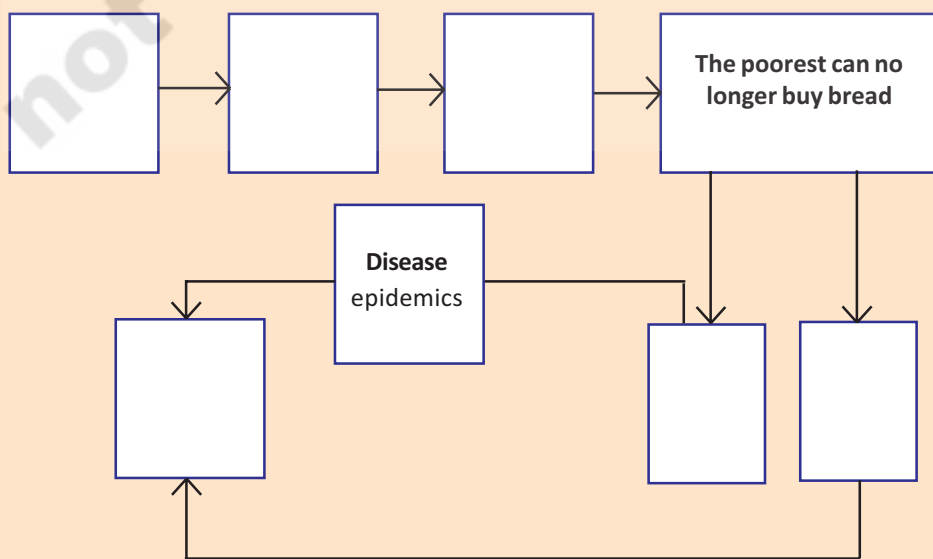
The chart shows how the system of estates in French society was organised. Peasants were about 90 per cent of the population. However, only a small number of them owned the land they

cultivated. About 60 per cent of the land was owned by gentry, the Church and other richer members of the Third Estate. The members of the first two estates, that is, the clergy and the aristocracy, enjoyed certain privileges acquired by birth. The most important of those was the exemption from paying taxes to the state. The nobles further enjoyed feudal privileges. These included feudal dues, which they extracted from the peasants. Peasants were obliged to render services to the lord - to work in his house and fields and to serve in the army or to participate in building roads.

The Church too extracted its share of taxes called 'tithes' from the peasants, and finally, all members of the Third Estate had to pay taxes to the state. These included a direct tax, called 'taille' and a number of indirect taxes which were levied on articles of everyday consumption like salt or tobacco. The burden of financing activities of the state through taxes was borne by the Third Estate alone. This problem was compounded by failure of crops and increased sufferings of the poor during those years.

New words	
Livres	- Unit of currency in France, discontinued in 1794.
Clergy	- Group of persons invested with special functions in the church.
Tithes	- A tax levied by the church, comprising one-tenth of the agricultural produce.
Taille	- Tax to be paid directly to the state.

- Fill in the blank boxes in the figure below with appropriate terms from among the following: **Food riots, scarcity of grain, increase number of death, rising food prices, weaker bodies.**



A Growing Middle Class: Envisages an End to Privileges

In the past, peasants and workers had participated in revolts against increasing taxes and food scarcity. But they lacked the means and programmes to carry out full-scale measures that would bring about a change in the social and economic order. This was left to those groups within the Third Estate which had become prosperous and had access to education and new ideas.

The eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of new social groups, collectively termed the middle class. They earned their wealth through expanding means of overseas trade and from the manufacture of goods such as woollen and silk textiles. In addition to merchants and manufacturers, the Third Estate included professions such as lawyers or administrative officials. All of these were educated and believed that no group in society should be privileged by birth. Rather, a person's social position must depend on his merit. Philosophers such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau envisaged a society based on freedom and equal laws and opportunities for all. In his **Two Treatises of Government**, Locke sought to refute the doctrine of the divine and absolute right of the monarch. Rousseau carried the idea forward, proposing a form of government based on a social contract between people and their representatives. In **The Spirit of the Laws**, Montesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. This model of government was put into force in the USA, after the thirteen colonies declared their independence from Britain. The American constitution and its guarantee of individual rights was an important example for political thinkers in France.

The ideas of these 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. The news that Louis XVI planned to impose further taxes to meet the expenses of the state generated anger and protest against the system of privileges.

The Outbreak of the Revolution



Fig. 13.2: Opening ceremony of the Estates General at Versailles on 5th May 1789.

Louis XVI had to increase taxes for reasons you have learnt above. How do you think he could have gone about doing this? In France of the Old Regime, the monarch did not have the power to impose taxes according to his



Fig. 13.3: The Tennis Court Oath.

Sketch of a large painting by Jacques-Louis David. The painting was intended to hung in National Assesmbly.

will alone. Rather he had to call a meeting of the Estates General which would then pass his proposals for new taxes. The Estates General was a legislative body to which the three estates sent their representatives. However, the monarch alone could decide when to call the meeting of this body. The last time it was done was in 1614.

On 5 May 1789, Louis XVI called together an assembly of the Estates General to pass proposals for new taxes. A resplendent hall in Versailles was prepared to host the delegates. The First and Second Estates sent 300 representatives each, who were seated in rows facing each other on two sides, while the 600 members of the Third Estate had to stand at the back. The Third Estate was represented by its more prosperous and educated members. Peasants, artisans and women were denied entry to the assembly. However, their grievances and demands were listed in some 40,000 letters which the representatives had brought with them.

Voting in the Estates General in the past had been conducted according to the principle that each estate had one vote. This time too Louis XVI has determined to continue the same practice. But members of the Third Estate demanded that voting now be conducted by the assembly as a whole, where each member would have one vote. This was one of the democratic principles put forward by philosophers like Rousseau in his book **The Social Contract**. When the King rejected this proposal, members of the Third Estate walked out of the assembly in protest.

The representatives of the Third Estate viewed themselves as spokesmen for the whole French nation. On 20 June, 1789 they assembled in the hall of an indoor tennis court in the grounds of Versailles. 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.

While the National Assembly was busy at Versailles drafting a Constitution, the rest of France seethed with turmoil. A severe winter had meant a bad harvest;

Manor: An estate consisting of the lord's lands and his mansion.

Chateau : Castle or stately residence belonging to a king or a nobleman.

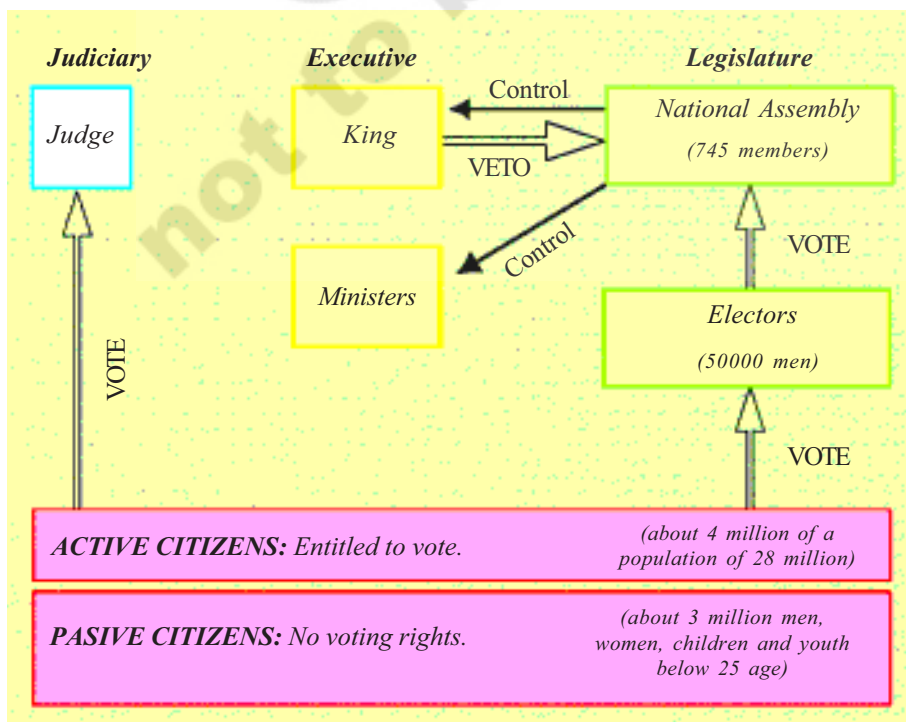
the price of bread rose. Bakers exploited the situation and hoarded supplies. After spending hours in long queues at the bakery, crowds of angry women stormed into the shops. At the same time, the King ordered

troops to move into Paris. On 14 July, the agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille, a hated prison that had come to represent the absolutist monarchy.

In the countryside rumours spread from village to village that the lords of the manor had hired bands of brigands who were on their way to destroy the ripe crops. Caught in a frenzy of fear, peasants in several districts seized hoes and pitchforks and attacked chateau. They looted hoarded grain and burnt down documents containing records of manorial dues. A large number of nobles fled from their homes, many of them migrating to neighbouring countries. Faced with the power of his revolting subjects, Louis XVI finally accorded recognition to the National Assembly. He accepted the principle that his powers would from now on be checked by a Constitution. On the night of 4 August 1789, the Assembly passed a decree abolishing the feudal system of obligations and taxes. Members of the clergy too were forced to give up their privileges. Tithes were abolished and lands owned by the Church were confiscated. As a result, the government acquired assets worth at least 2 billion livres.

France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy

The National Assembly completed the draft of the Constitution in 1791. Its main object was to limit the powers of the monarch. These powers instead of



The political system under the Constitution of 1791

being concentrated in the hands of one person, were now separated and assigned to different institutions - the legislature, executive and judiciary. This made France a constitutional monarchy.

The above figure explains how the new political system worked. The Constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the National Assembly, which was indirectly elected. That is, citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the Assembly. Not all citizens, however, had the right to vote. Only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens, that is, they were entitled to vote. The remaining men and all women were classed as passive citizens. To qualify as an elector and then as a member of the Assembly, a man had to belong to the highest bracket of taxpayers.

The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen



1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.
2. The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man. These are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.
3. The source of all sovereignty resides in the nation; no group or individual may exercise authority that does not come from the people.
4. Liberty consists of the power to do whatever is not injurious to others.
5. The law has the right to forbid only actions that are injurious to society.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to participate in its formation, personally or through their representatives. All citizens are equal before it.

7. No man may be accused, arrested or detained, except in cases determined by the law.

11. Every citizen may speak, write and print freely; he must take responsibility for the abuse of such liberty in cases determined by the law.

12. For the maintenance of the public force and for the expenses of administration a common tax is indispensable; it must be assessed equally on all citizens in proportion to their means.

17. Since property is a sacred and inviolable right, no one may be deprived of it, unless a legally established public necessity requires it. In that case a just compensation must be given in advance.

(Note: Important rights are given)

- Compare the political rights which the Constitution of 1791 [See box on page 159] gave to the citizens with Articles from 1 to 6 of the Declaration (see page 160). Are the two documents consistent? Do the two documents convey the same idea?
- [Look at chart on page 159] Which groups of French society would have gained from the Constitution of 1791? Which groups would have had reason to be dissatisfied?
- Imagine the impact of the events in France on neighbouring countries such as Prussia, Austria-Hungary or Spain, all of which were absolute monarchies. How would the kings, traders, peasants, nobles or members of the clergy here have reacted to the news of what was happening in France?

The Constitution began with a Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Rights such as the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, equality before law, were established as 'natural and inalienable' rights. This means that the rights belonged to each human being by birth and could not be taken away. It was the duty of the state to protect the citizen's natural rights.

The situation in France continued to be tense during the following years. Although Louis XVI had signed the Constitution, he entered into secret negotiations with the King of

Prussia. Rulers of other neighbouring countries too were worried by the developments in France and made plans to send troops to put down the events that had been taking place there since the summer of 1789. Before this could happen, the National Assembly voted in April 1792 to declare war against Prussia and Austria. Thousands of volunteers thronged from the provinces to join the army. They saw this as a war of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe.

Large sections of the population were convinced that the revolution had to be carried further, as the Constitution of 1791 gave political rights only to the richer sections of society. Political clubs became an important rallying point for people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms 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.

Convent: Building belonged to a community devoted to a religious life.

The members of the Jacobin club belonged mainly to the less prosperous sections of society. They included small shopkeepers, artisans such as shoemakers, pastry cooks, watch-makers, printers, as well as servants and daily-wage workers. Their leader was Maximilian Robespierre.

In the summer of 1792 the Jacobins planned an insurrection of a large number of Parisians who were angered by the short supplies and high prices of food. On the morning of August 10 they stormed the Palace of the Tuileries, massacred 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. From then on, all men of 21 years and above, regardless of wealth, got the right to vote.

The newly elected assembly was called the Convention. On 21 September 1792 it abolished the monarchy and declared France a Republic. As you know, a republic is a form of government where the people elect the government including the head of the state. Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette were sentenced to death by a court for treason in 1793.

The Reign of Terror

The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the Reign of Terror. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. All those whom he saw as being 'enemies' of the republic - ex-nobles and clergy, members of other political parties, even members of his own party who did not agree with his methods - were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal. If the court found them 'guilty' they were guillotined.

Robespierre's government issued 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 prices fixed by the government. The use of more expensive white flour was forbidden. All citizens were required to eat the pain d'égalité (equality bread), a loaf made of whole wheat. Churches were shut down and their buildings converted into barracks or offices. Robespierre pursued his policies so relentlessly that even his supporters began to demand moderation. Finally, he was convicted by a court in July 1794, arrested and on the next day sent to the guillotine.

Guillotine: beheaded by a machine

A Directory Rules France

The fall of the Jacobin government allowed the wealthier middle classes to seize power. A new Constitution was introduced which denied the vote to non-propertied sections of society. It provided for two elected legislative councils. These then appointed a Directory, an executive made up of five members. This was meant as a safeguard against the concentration of power in a one-man executive as under the Jacobins. However, the Directors often clashed with the legislative councils, who then sought to dismiss them. The political instability of the Directory paved the way for the rise of a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon finally captured powers declared himself the Emperor of France. Most democrats saw this as a betrayal of France revolution.

Through all these changes in the form of government, the ideals of freedom, of equality before the law and fraternity remained inspiring ideals. These ideals motivated political movements in France and the rest of Europe during the following century.

Women and French Revolution

From the very beginning women were active participants in the events which brought about so many important changes in French society. They hoped that their involvement would pressurise the revolutionary government to introduce measures to improve their lives. Most women of the Third Estate had to work for a living. They worked as seamstresses or laundresses, sold flowers, fruits and vegetables at the market, or were employed as domestic servants in the houses of prosperous people. Most women did not have access to education or job training. Only daughters of nobles or wealthier members of the Third Estate could study at a convent, after which their families arranged a marriage for them. Working women had also to care for their families, that is, cook, fetch water, queue up for bread and look after the children. Their wages were lower than those of men.

In order to discuss and voice their interests women started their own political clubs and newspapers. About sixty women's clubs came up in different French cities. The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was the most famous of them. One of their main demands was that women enjoy the same political rights as men. Women were disappointed that the Constitution of 1791 reduced them to passive citizens. They demanded the right to vote, to be elected to the Assembly and to hold political office.

In the early years, the revolutionary government did introduce laws that helped improve the lives of women. Together with the creation of state schools, schooling was made compulsory for all girls. Their fathers could no longer force them into marriage against their will. Marriage was made into a contract entered into freely and registered under civil law. Divorce was made legal, and could be applied for by both women and men. Women could now train for jobs, could become artists or run small businesses.

Women's struggle for equal political rights, however, continued. During the



Fig. 13.4: Parisian women on the way to Versailles. This print is on the many political representations of the events of 5th October 1789 when women marched and brought the king back with them to Paris.

Reign of Terror, the new government issued laws ordering closure of women's clubs and banning their political activities. Many prominent women were arrested and a number of them executed. Women's movements for voting rights and equal wages continued through the next two hundred years in many countries of the world. The fight for the vote was carried