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## French Revolution: Social & Political Changes

French revolution started in 1789. At that time, France had three social classes, the clergy or the first estate, the nobles or the second estate and the peasants or the third estate. The third estate established the National Assembly and demanded certain rights from the monarchy. The National Assembly soon took over the monarchy. Soon, France saw a shift from the monarchy to a government. Followed by this, France went through a series of events like 'The Storming of Bastille', when an angry mob attacked Bastille (a small prison in Paris) for the ammunitions stored in its prison walls. 'The Storming of Bastille' marked the beginning of the French Revolution. The monarchy was overthrown and republic was established. Another important event was 'The Reign of Terror'. It was led by Maximillian Robespierre and his people. They executed everyone they suspected of opposing the revolutionary movement. There were both political and economic reasons leading to the revolution. However, the revolution marked a very important change in France.

One of the key reasons for French Revolution to take place was the poor economic conditions. The taxation system in France was faulty and unfair. The Clergy and the Nobles were excused of all their taxes but, the peasants were forced to pay 80% of their total earnings as tax. This inequality flamed the anger of the third estate. Also, the revenue system was unorganized. The landlords levied heavy revenues from the peasants and submitted only a part of it to the royal treasury and kept the rest to themselves. Bad weather conditions and crop failure made the price of bread hike up, many from the third estate who were below the subsequent line were left to starve as they couldn't afford a loaf of bread. The French monarchy had funded the Americans during the Seven Years War of American Revolution. The King built up an efficient navy, strong enough to fight against the English. He sent forces to the parts of America where war was raging. This dried up the monarchy's budget. King Louis XVI was unable to get a loan from the parliament to repay its debt. Also, all the royal treasury was used by King Louis for his personal expenses and became empty due to the extravagancy of Queen Marie Antoinette.

There were many outcomes of the French Revolution. However, there were three mains of some legacies. Firstly, 'The Declaration of the Rights of Man' was introduced by the National Assembly on August 26, 1789. The National Assembly constituted people from the Third Estate who established a government and overthrew the monarchy. The declaration believed that every man is born free and equal and had natural rights. Social distinctions should only be subjected to general good. The job of the political associations is to protect the rights of the men. Any law cannot prevent a person from exercising their natural rights until it causes any harm to the society. Although women were not included in the declaration of rights but, they took part in some of the revolutionary movements. Secondly, monarchy was abolished and republic was established on 21 September, 1792. This happened after King Louis and Queen Antoinette were imprisoned in the August of 1792. The abolishment was the consequence of King Louis signing a constitution without verifying. The legislative assembly voted for the abolishment. Thirdly, slavery was abolished. Slavery started in the 17th century. Usually, the French merchants went to Africa and bought slaves and sent them to the Caribbean to be sold to the plantation owners. This helped in maintaining the flow of sugar, coffee and tobacco in Europe. In 1794, the Convention passed a law stating to free all the slaves in French possessions. However, ten years later in 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte reintroduced slavery and

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by 1848 slavery was completely abolished in the France.

The French Revolution changed the social and political orientation of France. The economic backdrop resulted into many unfortunate consequences. Peasants were forced to starve themselves and literally had nothing for themselves. Climate change on the other hand led to crop failure and the peasants had to pay heavy taxes and revenues. It abolished the monarchial rule, feudalism and took over the political control from the Catholic Church. The idea of liberty and equality was introduced to the entire of Europe after the revolution. Equality taught people to live together and the peasants got a chance to uplift themselves in the society. Many political clubs like Jacobins, Giirondins rose to power. The clubs kept an eye on the government and criticized bad politics. The abolishment of slavery was also one of the important impacts of revolution. However, all the revolutions stopped after Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in 1804. But, some of the revolutionary ideas and reforms have helped to shape some of the modern-day government.

## CITATIONS

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