The French Revolution

📙 Introduction

- The French Revolution began in 1789 in France.
- It was not just an event in France but had a major impact on Europe and the rest of the world.
- The revolution ended the absolute monarchy and gave rise to democratic ideas.
- People began to believe that the king is not God and that power should rest with the people.
- The ideas of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" became popular and spread across the world.
- This event inspired people in other countries to fight for their freedom and rights.
- The revolution marked the beginning of a new age where people had the right to choose their own government.

French Society Before the Revolution (Old Regime)

- Before 1789, French society was divided into three estates or classes.
- These estates were part of the Old Regime, which was the political and social system of France before the revolution.

🏛️ The Three Estates:
1. First Estate – Clergy
- These were church officials like priests and bishops.
- They owned a lot of land and paid no taxes.
- They lived a luxurious life.

2. Second Estate – Nobility
- These were rich people like lords and nobles.
- They also did not pay taxes.
- They held high posts in the army, government, and court.

3. Third Estate – Common People
- This included peasants, workers, merchants, and lawyers.
- They made up about 97% of the population.
- They paid all the taxes but had no power in government.

⚖️ Inequality in Society:
- The First and Second Estates enjoyed all privileges – land, money, and respect.
- The Third Estate had to bear the burden of heavy taxes, hard work, and no rights or privileges.
- This unfair system created anger and frustration among the common people.
- It became one of the main reasons for the French Revolution.

The Struggle to Survive

- During the 18th century, France's population increased rapidly.
- With more people to feed, there was a high demand for food grains.
- But food production could not match the growing population, so the price of bread (the main food) rose sharply.
- Most workers earned very low wages, which did not increase even when the prices went up.
- As a result, common people (especially the poor) found it very hard to afford basic food.
- A bad harvest (when crops failed) in any year caused a food shortage and even famine (bhukhmari).
- In 1789, France had a severe food crisis. Many people had no food, and they were angry and hopeless.
- This situation increased the suffering of the Third Estate, who were already paying high taxes and had no rights.
- Their struggle to survive became a major reason for revolt.

A Growing Middle Class Enlightens the People

- In the 18th century, a new group emerged in the Third Estate – the middle class.
- These were people like merchants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, bankers, and other educated professionals.
- They were wealthy and educated but had no political power because they were still part of the Third Estate.
- They believed that a person's social status should be based on ability, not birth.
- They began to question the unfair privileges of the First and Second Estates.

💡 Influence of Enlightenment Thinkers :-
- Many philosophers and writers of the Enlightenment inspired the middle class to fight for change.
- Some important thinkers were:
  - John Locke – Believed in natural rights (life, liberty, and property). He said that government should protect people's rights, or people could remove it.
  - Jean-Jacques Rousseau – Believed that government should be based on the general will of the people. He said, "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains."
  - Montesquieu – Believed in division of powers in government into three branches: legislature, executive, and judiciary.

📚 Impact of Enlightenment :-
- These ideas were spread through books, newspapers, and speeches.
- People started discussing rights, freedom, and equality in coffee houses and salons.
- The middle class began to lead the demand for a new political and social system in France.

The Outbreak of the Revolution

👑 Louis XVI and Financial Crisis :-
- Louis XVI became the king of France in 1774.
- France was already in deep debt because of long wars and helping America in its war of independence.
- The king and queen, Marie Antoinette, lived in luxury and spent a lot of money on the palace and celebrations.
- To solve the money crisis, Louis XVI planned to increase taxes.

🏛 The Estates-General Meeting (5 May 1789)
- To approve the new taxes, the king called a meeting of the Estates-General (a political body that had not met in 175 years) on 5 May 1789.
- All three estates attended this meeting, but voting was unfair:
  - Each estate had one vote.
    So, the First and Second Estates (minority) could always outvote the Third Estate (majority).
- The Third Estate demanded that voting should be done by head (one person = one vote), but the king refused.

🏛 Formation of the National Assembly :-
- Angry and frustrated, the Third Estate representatives walked out of the meeting.
- On 20 June 1789, they gathered at a Tennis Court and took an oath called the Tennis Court Oath.
- They declared themselves the National Assembly and promised to write a new constitution for France.

🏰 Fall of the Bastille (14 July 1789) :-
- On 14 July 1789, people in Paris attacked the Bastille, a prison and symbol of royal power.
- They believed weapons were stored inside to be used against the people.
- The fall of the Bastille became the symbol of the French Revolution.
- It is now celebrated every year in France as Bastille Day (National Day of France).
- The revolution had officially begun – people started attacking tax offices, burning feudal documents, and fighting for liberty and justice.

France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy

📜 A New Constitution :-
- The National Assembly started working to draft a Constitution in 1789.
- Their aim was to limit the powers of the king and make France a constitutional monarchy.
- The Constitution was completed in 1791.
- It declared that power no longer belonged only to the king, but to the elected National Assembly.

🗳️ Who Could Vote?
- The Constitution made France a constitutional monarchy, but it still did not give equal rights to all.
- Only men above 25 years of age who paid a certain amount of taxes were called active citizens – they could vote.
- The rest of the men and all women were called passive citizens – they had no voting rights.

⚖️ Separation of Powers
- The Constitution divided power into three branches (inspired by Montesquieu):
  - Legislative – Made the laws (National Assembly)
  - Executive – Implemented the laws (King and ministers)
  - Judiciary – Applied the laws (Courts)

🧱 Achievements
- The nobles lost their privileges and feudal dues (like forced labour and taxes to the nobles) were abolished.
- A new society based on the principles of equality before the law was starting to form.

But even after this change, many people were not happy – they wanted complete freedom, and the revolution continued.

France Abolishes Monarchy and Becomes a Republic

⚔️ France at War
- In 1791–1792, many European kings and nobles got scared that revolutionary ideas might spread to their countries.
- So, Austria and Prussia (neighboring kingdoms) attacked France to support King Louis XVI.
- The National Assembly declared war in April 1792.

🔥 Anger Among the People
- French people were angry with the king because they believed he was secretly helping enemies.
- On 10 August 1792, a large crowd of men and women attacked the king's palace in Paris.
- King Louis XVI was arrested and later put on trial by the newly elected National Convention.

⚖️ Monarchy Abolished
- In September 1792, the monarchy was officially abolished.
- France was now declared a Republic, meaning:
  - No king or queen
  - Government is elected by the people

🪓 Execution of the King and Queen
- King Louis XVI was sentenced to death by guillotine on 21 January 1793.
- His wife Marie Antoinette was also executed in October 1793.

👬 Achievements of the Republic
- The new Republic gave more power to common people.
- All men (not just rich ones) were given the right to vote.
- The government tried to bring equality, justice, and liberty in every part of life.

This period marked a huge change in history – from a king-ruled nation to a people-powered republic.

The Reign of Terror (1793–1794)

💁 Rise of Robespierre
- After the king's execution, Maximilien Robespierre, a leader of the Jacobins, came to power.
- He believed that violence and strict control were necessary to protect the revolution.
- From 1793 to 1794, he ruled France in a period known as the Reign of Terror.

⚖️ Harsh Laws and Punishments
- Robespierre targeted anyone he considered an enemy of the revolution – nobles, priests, former supporters, and even innocent people.
- A Revolutionary Tribunal (court) was set up to punish opponents.
- Thousands of people were arrested and executed without fair trials.
- The main method of execution was the guillotine, a machine that cut off heads quickly and "equally."

🪓 Famous Victims
- Even people who helped in the revolution but disagreed with Robespierre were killed.
- Queen Marie Antoinette, revolutionary leaders like Danton, and many ordinary citizens died during this time.

💂 Rules Under Robespierre
- Prices of food were fixed, hoarding of food was banned, and farmers were forced to sell grain at low prices.

- Churches were closed and religion was discouraged.
- People lived in fear, as anyone could be accused and executed.

⬅️ End of the Reign of Terror
- People began to turn against Robespierre because of his cruelty.
- On 28 July 1794, Robespierre was arrested and executed by the guillotine.
- His death marked the end of the Reign of Terror.

This period showed how extreme power and fear can destroy even a revolution started with good intentions.

A Directory Rules France

🏛️ After the Reign of Terror
- After Robespierre's death in 1794, the Reign of Terror ended.
- A new system of government was introduced – called the Directory.
- The Constitution of 1795 was made to prevent one person from having too much power again.

👥 What Was the Directory?
- The Directory was a 5-member executive committee that held power.
- These five members were called Directors, and they were chosen by voting.
- The Legislature (law-making body) was elected separately.

⚖️ Weaknesses of the Directory
- The Directory had to work with the Legislature, which often disagreed with them.
- There was a lot of corruption, fighting, and inefficiency.
- The Directory failed to solve economic problems like food shortages and unemployment.
- It was also unable to control the army, which became more powerful.

⚔️ Rise of Napoleon
- As the Directory grew weaker, a strong general named Napoleon Bonaparte became popular.
- In 1799, Napoleon overthrew the Directory in a coup (illegal takeover of power).
- He established a new form of government and later became Emperor of France.

The period of the Directory shows that revolution needs good leadership, or it can be taken over by force.

Did Women Have a Revolution?

👩‍⚖️ Role of Women in the Revolution
- Women were active participants in the French Revolution from the very beginning.

- They joined clubs, meetings, and protests, and even stormed the Bastille.
- On 5 October 1789, thousands of women marched to Versailles to demand bread and justice from the king.
- Women demanded:
  - Lower food prices
  - Equal rights
  - The right to vote
  - Education for girls

🗣️ Demands for Equality
- Women formed political clubs, like the Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women.
- They published newspapers and spread revolutionary ideas.
- A famous woman, Olympe de Gouges, wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen (1791).

📜 What Did Olympe de Gouges Say?
- She demanded that:
  - Women should have the same rights as men
  - Women should be allowed to vote, own property, and take part in the government
  - Women should get education and job opportunities

🚫 Women's Rights Denied
- Despite their efforts, women did not get equal rights after the revolution.
- In 1793, most women's political clubs were banned and leaders like Olympe de Gouges were executed.
- Women were told to stay at home and care for the family.

✅ Later Progress
- It was only many years later (in the 20th century) that women in France got the right to vote – in 1946.
- Still, the French Revolution helped start the fight for women's equality, which grew stronger over time.

The Abolition of Slavery

🔗 What Was Slavery?
- In the 18th century, France had many colonies (like the Caribbean islands – Martinique, Guadeloupe, and San Domingo).
- In these colonies, slaves were used to work on sugar, coffee, and cotton plantations.
- These slaves were brought from Africa through the triangular slave trade:
  - Europe → Africa (goods)
  - Africa → America/colonies (slaves)
  - Colonies → Europe (raw goods like sugar)
- Slaves were treated cruelly, had no rights, and were bought and sold like property.

🗣️ Voices Against Slavery
- During the revolution, many groups in France began to say that slavery was against liberty and equality.
- Enlightenment thinkers also criticized slavery.
- Some people demanded that "men are born free and equal" should apply to all humans, including slaves.

📜 Abolition of Slavery
- After many debates and revolts in the colonies, the National Convention finally abolished slavery in French colonies in 1794.
- This was a big victory for human rights.

👑 Napoleon Brings It Back
- Sadly, when Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in 1804, he reintroduced slavery in the French colonies.

✅ Final End of Slavery
- Slavery was finally abolished in 1848 (many years after the revolution).

🧠 **Key Point :-**
Although slavery was not completely removed during the revolution, it was the first major step towards freedom and equality for all human beings.

Revolution and Everyday Life

🧠 Big Changes in People's Lives
- The French Revolution didn't just change the government – it also changed how people thought and lived.
- The revolution spread new ideas of freedom, equality, and justice into daily life.

🗣️ Language and Symbols
- The royal symbols like the crown were removed.
  Instead, new revolutionary symbols were used:
    - The tricolour (three-colored flag – blue, white, red)
    - The cap of liberty
    - The guillotine (as a symbol of justice)
    - The female figure of liberty
- The title 'Monsieur' (Sir) and 'Madame' (Ma'am) replaced royal titles like "Your Majesty".
- Equality was taught in schools, and the national anthem (La Marseillaise) was written and sung.

🏠 Education and New Ideas
- The revolutionary government focused on educating citizens, especially in ideas of liberty and equality.
- New laws promoted free and compulsory schooling, at least for boys.
- The aim was to create educated citizens who understood their rights and duties.

🕰️ A New Calendar
- A new revolutionary calendar was introduced:
  Months were renamed
  Each year started from September 1792, the year France became a Republic
  Sundays and religious holidays were removed to break the link with the Church
- This calendar didn't last long, but it showed how seriously the revolution tried to change old traditions.

🔚 Summary
The French Revolution changed not only the political system but also people's thinking, customs, language, calendar, and education.
It tried to build a completely new society based on freedom, equality, and fraternity.

The Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte

👦 Early Life
- Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 on the island of Corsica.
- He studied in a military school and joined the French army.
- He rose quickly in the army due to his intelligence, bravery, and leadership.

⚔️ Rise to Power
- In 1799, after the failure of the Directory, Napoleon led a military coup and overthrew the government.
- He took full control and became the First Consul of France.
- In 1804, he crowned himself Emperor of France, showing he was more powerful than even the Church.

🛠️ Reforms by Napoleon
- Napoleon brought many reforms to make France strong and stable:
  Introduced the Napoleonic Code (1804), which ensured:
  - Equality before the law
  - Protection of property
  - End of feudal privileges
  - Improved education, administration, and tax collection
  - Built roads, bridges, and public buildings

🌍 Napoleon's Empire
- Napoleon expanded the French empire by conquering many parts of Europe.
- He spread the ideas of the revolution – liberty, equality, modern laws – in other countries.
- But he also acted like a dictator and sometimes ignored people's freedoms.

⚔️ His Downfall
- Many countries united against Napoleon because they saw him as a threat to their power.
- He lost badly in the Battle of Leipzig (1813) and Battle of Waterloo (1815).
- He was captured and exiled to the island of Saint Helena, where he died in 1821.

🔚 Final Thought
Napoleon first appeared as a savior of the revolution, but later became a dictator.
Still, his legal and administrative reforms left a lasting legacy in France and other parts of Europe.

The Legacy of the French Revolution

🌍 A Global Impact
- The French Revolution became a symbol of hope and change for people across the world.
- It showed that ordinary people could challenge and defeat a powerful monarchy and build a new system based on rights and justice.

🗽 New Ideas Spread
- The ideas of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity became global principles.
- These ideas inspired future revolutions in Europe, Asia, and South America.
- People started to believe in:
    - Democracy
    - Equal rights for all
    - End of monarchy and feudalism

🏛️ End of Absolute Monarchy
- The revolution ended the idea that kings ruled by divine right.
- It proved that people have the right to choose their leaders and control their government.

📜 Influence on Laws and Constitution
- The revolution inspired new laws and constitutions in other countries.
- The Napoleonic Code (introduced later by Napoleon) became a model legal system for many nations.

⚖️ Social Changes
- It promoted the end of feudal privileges, more fair taxation, and citizenship for all.
- People learned to demand justice, rights, and equality as a normal part of life.

🔚 Final Summary
Even though the revolution faced many problems and failures, it changed the course of world history.
Its legacy lives on in the form of modern democracy, human rights, and justice.