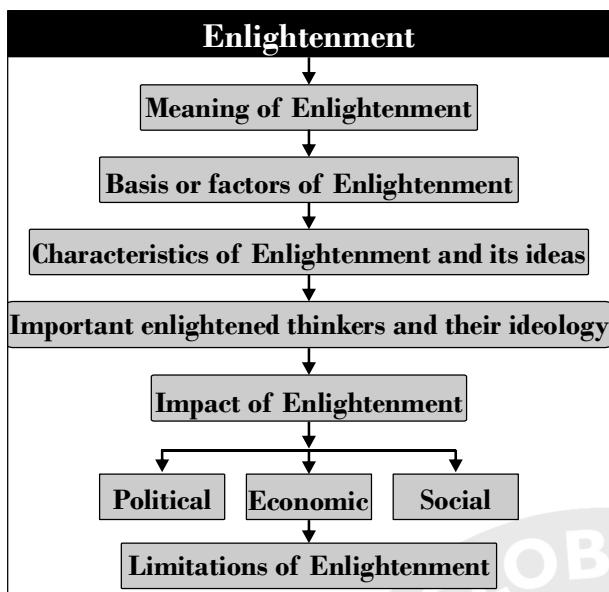


Part II- Liberalisation & Nationalism, Nation-State & Disintegration of Old Empires

- Chapter 4 Enlightenment & Modern Thinkers**
- Chapter 5 American Revolution, American Constitution & American Civil War**
- Chapter 6 French Revolution**
- Chapter 7 Europe after 1815**
- Chapter 8 Disintegration of Old Empires**

All the topics of Part-II are related to each other. You can underline the change in the totality. While reading these, you will be able to underline the following facts: The ambition of middle class is manifested through enlightenment. The American Revolution and the French Revolution occurred to implementation of that ambition and it led major changes in Europe. After the defeat of Napoleon (1815), the Vienna Congress attempted to suppress the ideas of the French Revolution and take u-turn in the course of history, but failed. Ideologies like 'Liberalism' and 'Nationalism' invited revolutions and changes in Europe throughout the 19th century. (But study material has been divided into parts and sub-parts for the convenience of candidates, so that they do not feel much pressure during their study.)

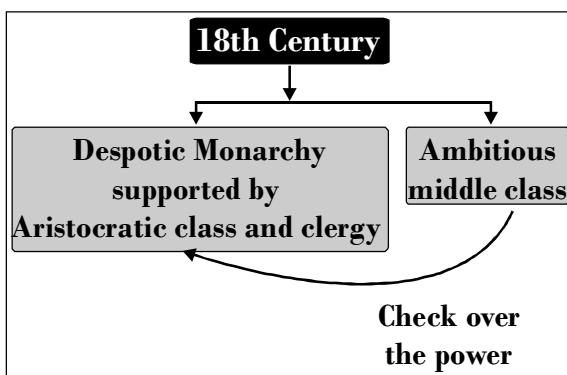


■ Meaning of Enlightenment

- After its rise, modern west moved to another stage of ideological fermentation that was known as enlightenment. Literal meaning of enlightenment was the dawn of light after a long night of darkness i.e. darkness of ignorance, that of superstition, that of intolerance and that of servitude to the past.

■ Basis or factors of Enlightenment

- As the name enlightenment suggests it was an intellectual movement but this intellectual movement had a strong material basis. From the view point of changing class equation following diagram represents the social basis of enlightenment—



- As we have seen earlier as the results of gradual change between 14th century and 18th century two power blocks emerged, one was despotic or absolutist monarchy and the second one was ambitious mercantile class or middle class.
- A powerful middle class put a question mark to the hegemony of monarchy, aristocracy and Church. In order to maintain the despotic power, the monarchy tried to establish a coalition with the old enemy aristocratic class and the Church. However, upto 18th century even the middle class gained strength and self-confidence and put forward demands in front of the aristocracy class and the Church. Hence, in one sense this was enlightenment.

- Scientific revolution of the 17th century shaped up the attitude of human beings to their surroundings. The scientific revolution impacted the human consciousness also. Apart from that, the middle class used this scientific ideology in order to strengthen its demand.

- Characteristics of Enlightenment and its ideas**— Newly discovered ideas about God, nature and universe came to be applied in political, economic, social and religious spheres as well. Hence, Enlightenment gave emphasis over the following factors-

1. Scientific method could be applied in solving the basic problems in political, economic, social as well as ecclesiastical fields.
2. Rationalism is the basis of knowledge and the future of man guided by rationalism is bright.
3. Very much like nature, even political, economic and social institutions should

work according to their own eternal laws and there should be no scope for outside intervention.

4. It had a great optimistic attitude and there was emphasis over ‘happiness’ in life.

■ Important enlightened thinkers and their ideology -

- It was assumed that the evolution of enlightenment started when a French thinker Voltaire traveled to Britain. He compared the liberal society of Britain to the conservative society of France. France and Britain were influenced the most by the ideology of enlightenment and later it spread in other parts of Europe.
- Enlightened thinkers are those thinkers who believed in the fundamental ideology of enlightenment. In other words, they emphasized rationalism and scientific methods for human development. Among them, French philosopher **Voltaire** criticised the despotic nature of monarchy, superstition of Church and stupidity of aristocracy. He was a great advocate of individual freedom. Likewise, **Diderot** in his encyclopedia mentioned monarchical despotism. The enlightened scholar, **Montesquieu**, in his famous text ‘Spirit of Laws’, pleaded for the separation of power among three organs of the government i.e. legislative, executive and judicial power in order to preserve individual freedom. To protect the individual freedom **John Locke** enshrined the idea of limited monarchy. In this way, the enlightenment proved to be an important step in the evolution of modern constitutionalism.
- The matter of fact was that all contemporary thinkers did not recognize the ideology of enlightenment. Though Rousseau belonged to the same era but he was ideologically different from the contemporary thinkers. He questioned rationalism of enlightenment, instead it gave emphasis over emotions. He rejected the method of science and declared that in the name of civilization man has lost proximity to himself. While the enlightened thinkers believed in constitutional monarchy, Rousseau envisaged democracy. He declared General Will is the sovereign Will.
- Rousseau has told every one of us are having two wills, one is sublime higher will and another is selfish instinct. What we know as the General Will is the aggregate of the higher sublime will of the members of the community. So he emphasised the power of community. Therefore, he came to be known as the father of socialism and modern nationalism.

■ Impact of Enlightenment -

- Enlightenment gave a new ideological twist to contemporary political, economic and social structure –
- **Political field** - It presented a model of limited monarchy. British scholar John Lock envisaged a new model of monarchy. Limited monarchy implied a monarch who governed with the support of an elected assembly, although on limited franchise. Having been inspired by enlightenment, many European monarchs adopted certain progressive ideas of the enlightenment. Therefore, they came to be known as enlightened monarchs e.g. Fredrick II of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria, Catherine the great of Russia, etc.
- **Economic field** - In economic field it was opposed to mercantilism instead it advocated for free trade. One of the great economists of the time was British economist, Adam Smith. He, in his

magnum opus ‘The wealth of Nations’, talked about how did wealth of nations grow better through the policy of free trade (Laissez-faire). Having been inspired by rationalism and promoted by enlightenment, he equated laws of nature with the laws of market. In other words, as nature functions according to its own laws so does the market, the laws of demand and supply. Adam Smith is characterized as the father of classical economics.

- **Social field-** In social sphere enlightenment promoted the idea of individualism and individual freedom. The Enlightened scholar, Montesquieu, in his famous text ‘Spirit of Laws’, pleaded for separation among three organs of the government in order to preserve individual freedom. In this way, the seeds of so-called republican or democratic ideas were sown during the period of enlightenment. So, under the influence of enlightenment, even the legal system and different organs of administration underwent a change. Apart from this, slavery system was attacked and ultimately its abolition became inevitable. Furthermore, enlightenment gave support to technological upgradation and also supported medical research as a result of which disease like Pox could be eliminated. Lastly, it also encouraged human passion for material pursuit.

■ **Limitations of Enlightenment -** In spite of its unique character enlightenment had some limitations as well -

- Enlightenment had a strong male, paternalistic, elitist and white racist flavor. It would be callous to ignore the fact that enlightened scholars had little

consideration for women, lower class people and the colonial people.

- Being the promoter of middle class interest enlightened scholars emphasized the dictum that the government should be for the people but not by the people. So, these scholars were opposed to democracy. Infact, enlightened thinkers preferred the limited franchise.
- According to the idea of enlightenment, human rights and individual freedom were exclusively meant for Europe, not to the colonies.

■ **Challenges to Rationalism -**

- Jean Jacquis Rousseau questioned rationalism of enlightenment instead it gave emphasis over emotions.
- Presently, post modernism gave challenge to modernism based on enlightenment’s rationalism. Enlightenment has declared scientific method as a full proof method for reaching the truth and attaining man’s perfectibility. But war, racial conflict and environmental degradation all put a question mark to enlightenment’s claim. Hence, post modernism declared that there is neither a single truth nor any single route leading to the truth.

■ **Enlightenment and American Revolution:**

- Enlightenment definitely gave ideological support to the American Revolution. In fact, American scholars were widely attracted to enlightenment it is due to the fact that the enlightened scholars of Europe highlighted American society as a model of enlightened society. Later some American scholars got so much attracted to European enlightenment that at least two scholars, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson visited Europe as well.

■ **Enlightenment and French Revolution :**

- Enlightenment gave ideological support to French Revolution so much that later even

Napoleon Bonaparte was compelled to declare that, 'If there were no Rousseau, there would have been no Revolution'

Inter-Disciplinary Approach

Development of Modern Constitutionalism:

Enlightenment laid the basis of elected legislative assembly and constitutional monarchy and then, paved the way for development of modern constitutionalism.

In Britain, this process had started even before the Enlightenment. The British monarchy was trying to establish itself as an autocratic ruler, but an institution called 'Parliament' developed there, which came into existence after a long conflict with the monarchy. As a result, the power of the parliament gradually increased and the monarchy went on losing its power. It is important to underline that the British king John had to sign a Charter of Rights in 1215 CE which came to be known as the 'British Magna Carta'. It is considered as the source of human rights in the world. Then in the 17th century, the Parliament strengthened its position and in 1688 CE, there occurred a 'Glorious Revolution' and the Parliament removed the existing monarch, James II and installed on the throne its favourite monarch. Thus constitutionalism developed in Britain. Now it became necessary to have a legislature because without legislature, the executive could not function.

In a way, the British model had a profound influence on the thinkers of this age. Therefore, some thinkers favoured constitutionalism and they demanded to curb despotic rule of monarchy. Montesquieu, a French thinker, presented the concept of 'Separation of Power' to protect the freedom of people. Further it also influenced the nature of the US Constitution.

Changes in economic policy:

As we have seen, Adam Smith laid the foundation of classical economics. He believed that the market has its own rational, so the economy should be left to the market forces. Therefore he advocated for 'free economy'. According to him, there is a natural harmony among the interests of producers, workers and consumers. If the producer increases price of his product, then consumers will not buy it. Similarly, if the consumer wants to buy the goods at a rate below a certain limit, the producers will not sell their products to them. On the other hand, if producers do not give reasonable wages to workers, then workers will not work. On the contrary, if workers demand more wages, producers will not employ them. Through this way, interests of each other will continue to be balanced in the free economy. In this sequence, he gave the principle of 'equilibrium'. Further his free economy (Laissez Faire) theory was also gained support from other economists like David Ricardo. Thus, classical economics developed. Classical economics considered the market to be the most rational. In his view, there is a natural balance between production and consumption. More production means more employment and more employment means more demand creation. But subsequent events put a question mark on this theory.

Food for Thought

- Why enlightenment is treated as a middle class world view?
- To what extent do you think it is appropriate to consider the enlightenment as the harbinger of modern Age?
- How did the enlightenment lay the foundation for the idea of constitutionalism?
- How is enlightenment supposed to be seminal to modernism in Europe and how is post-modernism redefined modernism established by European Enlightenment?

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