

The French Revolution



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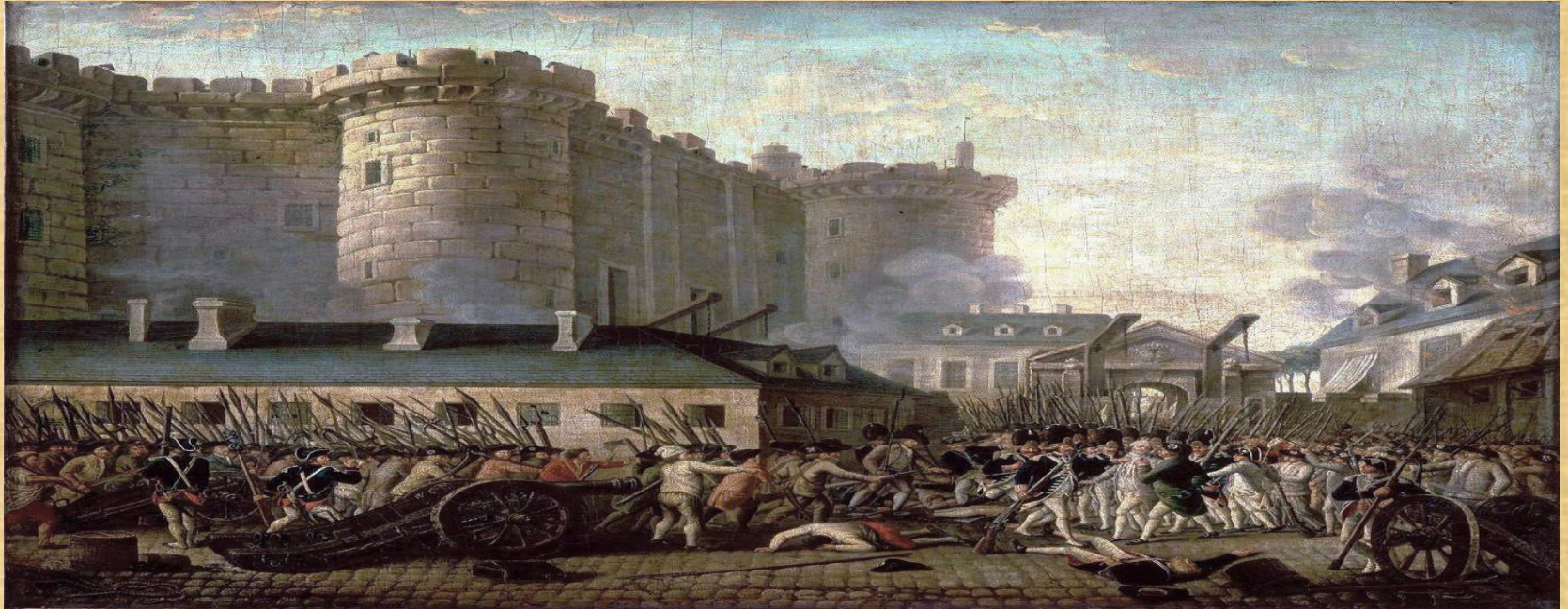
Introduction

On 14 July 1789 city of Paris was in a state of alarm.

- King commanded troops to move into the city.
- Rumours spread that the king would soon order the army to open fire upon the citizens.
- 7,000 men and women gathered outside the town hall to form a people's militia.
- They broke into number of government buildings in search of arms and ammunitions.
- Soon they marched to the Eastern part of the city storming the fortress prison, The Bastille.

Why Was The Bastille Prison Stormed by the French people?

- The Bastille was a fortress prison hated by everybody because it stood for despotic power of the King.
- The French hoped to find hoarded ammunitions (quantity of bullets and shells).
- This led to the demolition of the fortress and the fragments were sold as souvenirs of its destruction.



The Royal Family



In 1774, Louis XVI of the bourbon family of kings ascended the throne of France.

The Royal Family



Louis XVI at the age of 20, married Austrian princess, Marie Antoinette.

Upon His Accession The King Found An Empty Treasury

- Long years of war had drained the financial resources of France.
- Cost of maintaining extravagant court at the immense palace of Versailles.
- France helped 13 American colonies to gain independence from common enemy, Britain.
- Lenders began to charge 10% interest on credit given to the state.
- This forced the state to increase the taxes.

Division of French Society During 18th Century

1st estate - Clergy

2nd estate - Nobility

3rd estate

**Big businessmen, Court officials,
Lawyers, Administrative officials, etc**

Small farmers, Artisans

**Very small farmers,
labours, servants**

Only the members of the 3rd Estate paid taxes

Old Regime: Society and institution of France before 1789

- The system of estates was part of the feudal system that dated back to the middle ages,
- peasants accounted for 90% of the population,
- However, very few owned lands they cultivated.
- About 60% of the land was owned by the nobles, the church and other richer members of the 3rd estate.

Privileges enjoyed by the first two estates

- Privileges enjoyed by birth.
- Exemption from paying taxes to the state.
- Nobles enjoyed feudal privileges like extracting feudal dues from the peasants and asking them to render services to the lord like work in his house and fields, serve in the army or participate in building roads.

Types of Taxes in France

- Tithe : A tax extracted from the peasants by the church.
- Taille : A direct tax paid to the state.
- Indirect tax: There were a number of indirect taxes on everyday consumption items like salt and tobacco.

Struggle to Survive

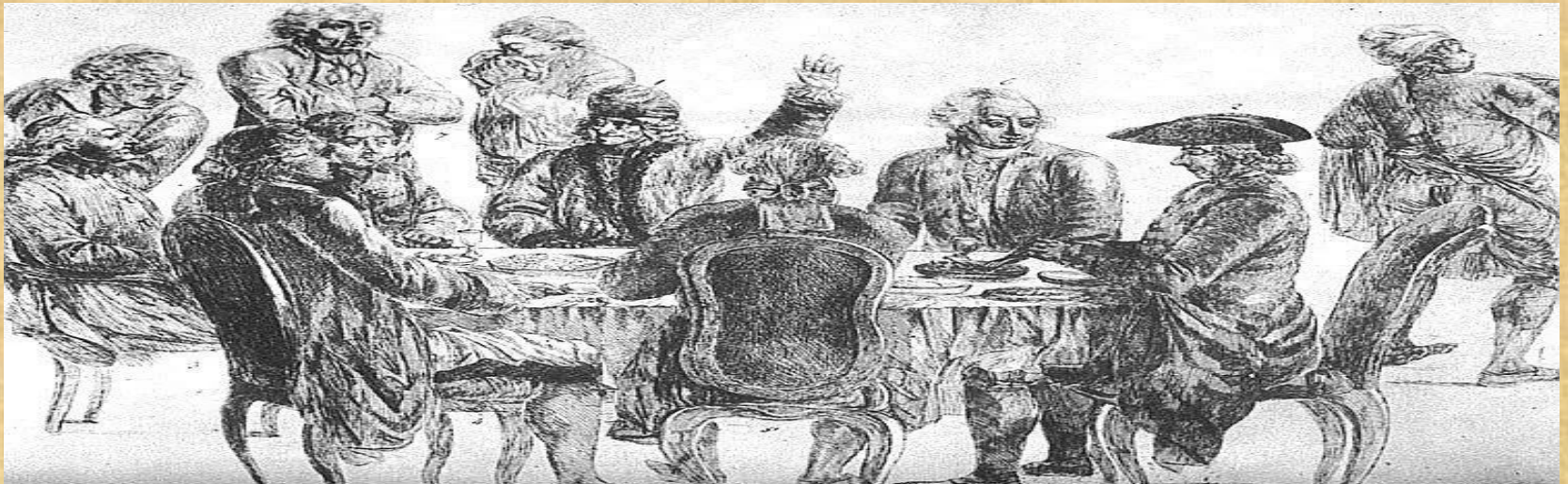
- Population of France was 28 Million in 1789,
- The supply of food grains could not sufficiently meet the rapid increase in the demand,
- Price of Bread(staple diet),kept on rising rapidly,
- Wages of laborer's was fixed, and was not able to keep pace with this rise of prices,
- Number of natural calamities reduced the harvest,
- All this led to a subsistence crisis occurring frequently during the Old Regime.

The Growing Middle Class

- A group within the 3rd Estate had become prosperous through education and new ideas,
- These social groups were termed as the “Middle Class”
- These were:
 1. Merchants,
 2. Manufacturers,
 3. Professionals, such as lawyers,
 4. Administrative officials.
- They believed that no group in society should have privileges by birth.

The Role of Philosophers

- The ideas of a society based on freedom, equal laws and opportunities for all, were put forward by philosophers such as John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Montesquieu.
- Their ideas were discussed in salons and coffee houses.
- Spread among people through books and newspapers.
- Read aloud in groups for those who could not read and write.

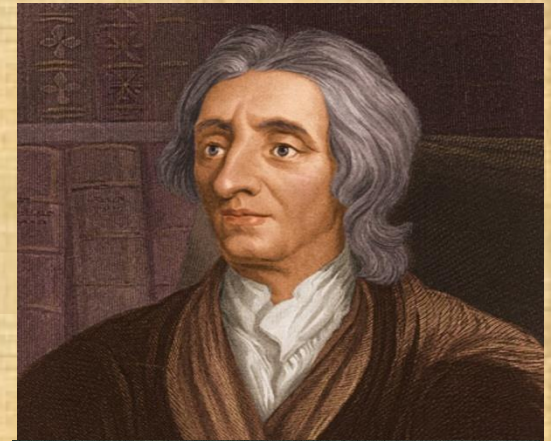


John Locke

English philosopher

Book: Two Treatises of Government.

Idea: He criticized the divine and absolute powers of the rulers.

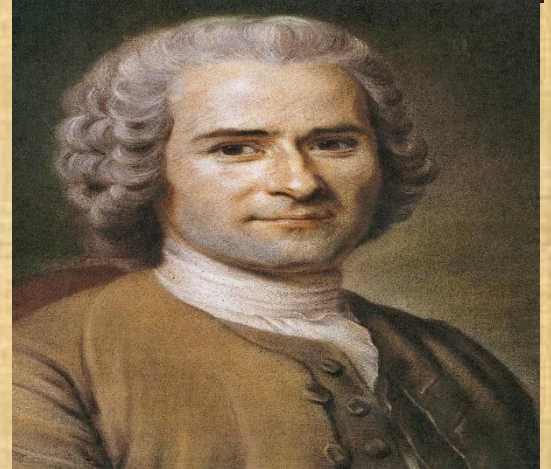


Jean Jacques Rousseau

Swiss philosopher, writer and political theorist.

Book: The Social Contract.

Idea: Formation of a government based on social contract between people and their representatives.



Montesquieu

French judge and a political philosopher.

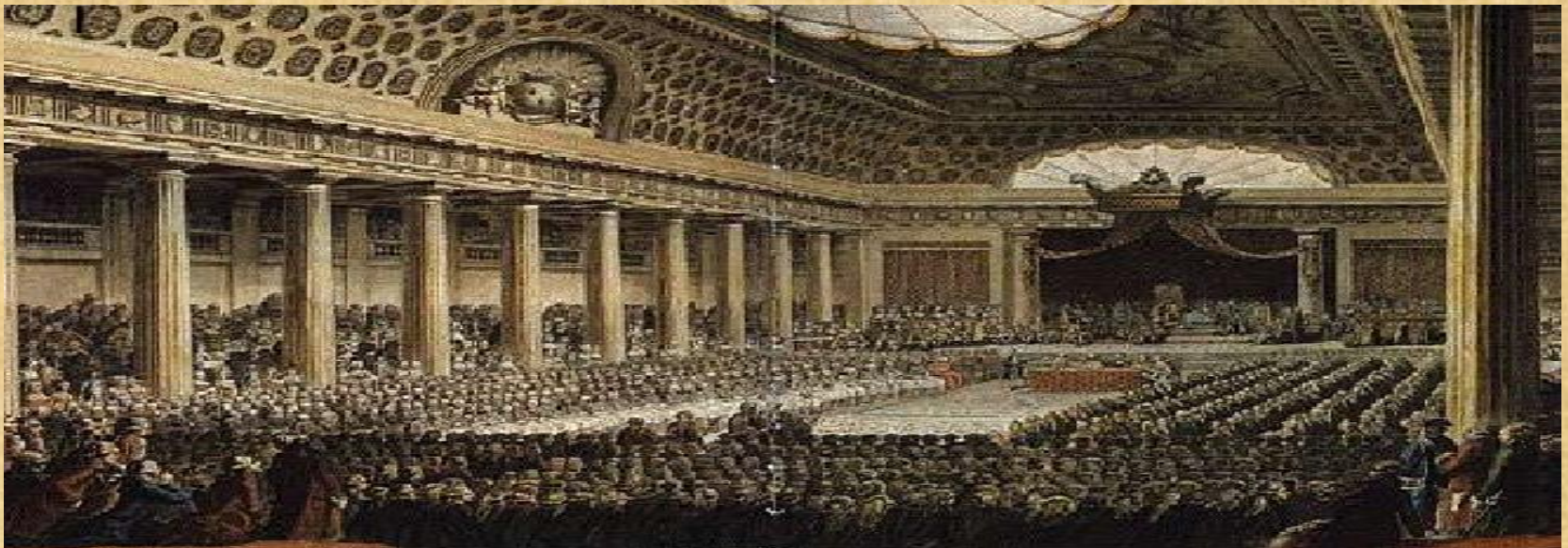
Book: The Spirit of Laws.

Idea: There should be division of power between the three important organs- the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.



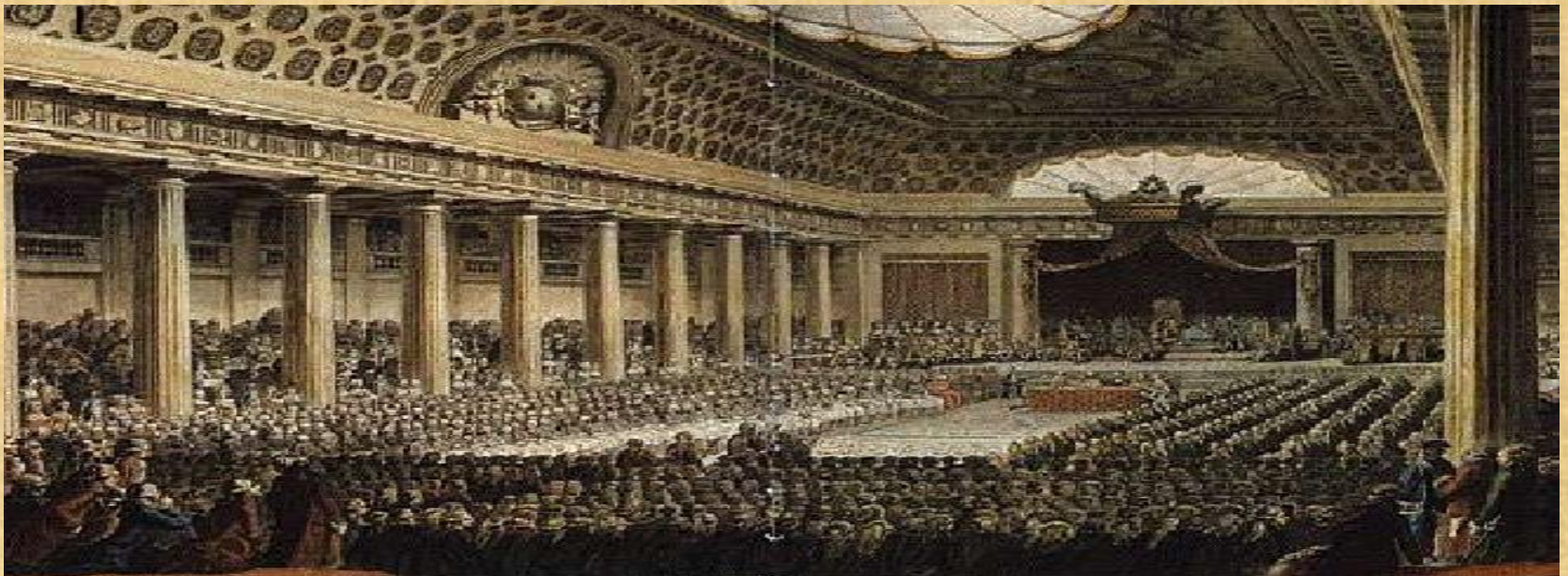
The Outbreak of The Revolution

- On 5th May 1789, Louis XVI called together an assembly of the Estate General to pass proposals for new taxes.
- The Estate General was a political body to which, the three estates sent their representatives
- The first and the second estates sent 300 representatives each, who were seated in rows facing each other.
- 600 members of the third estate had to stand at the back.



Voting System of the Estate General

- Each Estate had one vote,
- Louis XVI was determined to continue the same,
- However, members of the 3rd Estate demanded voting to be conducted by the assembly as a whole and each member having one vote.
- The King rejected this proposal, members of the 3rd Estate walked out of the assembly in protest.



The Tennis Court Oath

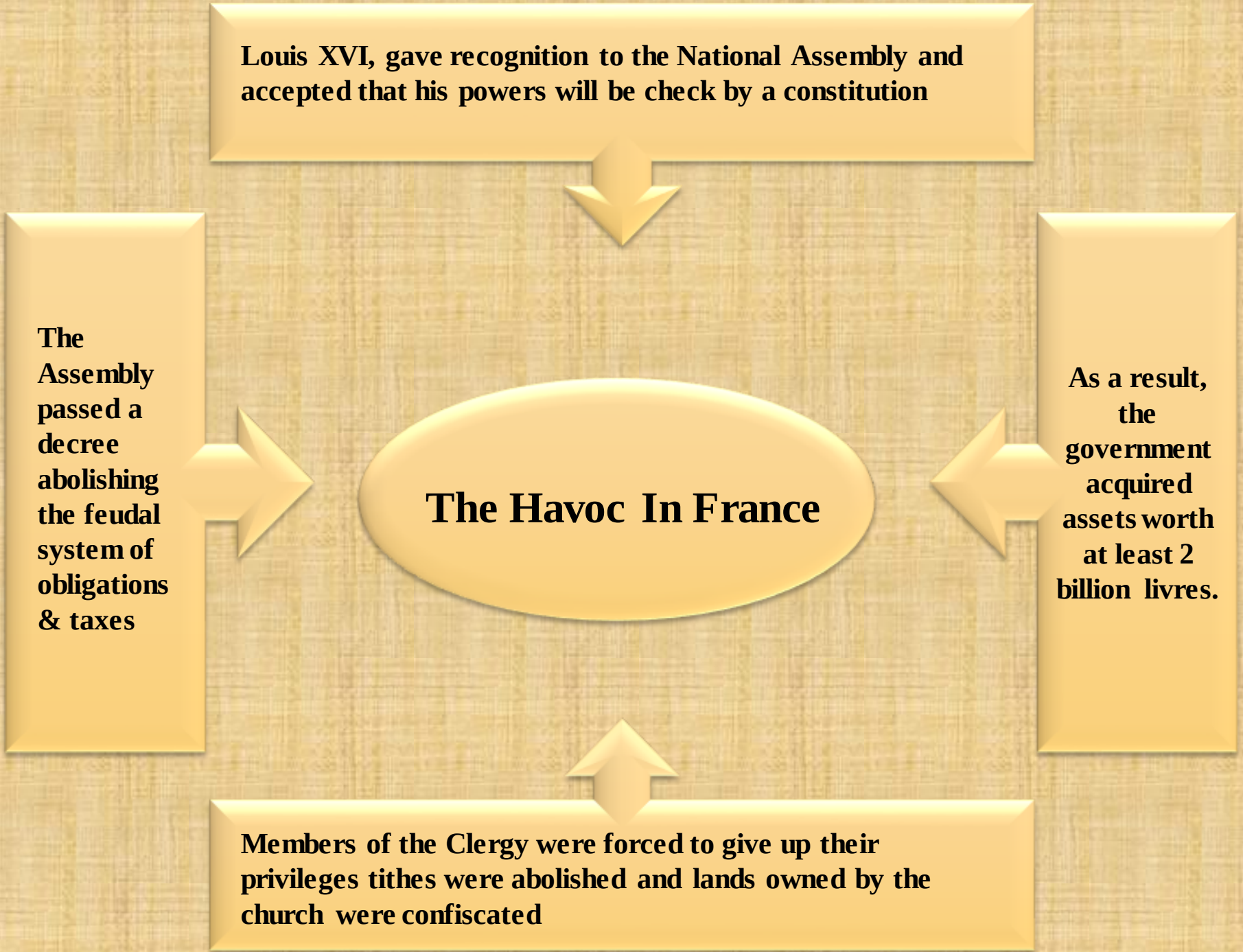
- On 20th June 1789, representatives of the 3rd Estate assembled in an indoor tennis court.
- They declared themselves a National Assembly and swore not to disperse till they had drafted a constitution for France which would limit the powers of the Monarch.



The Havoc in France

- While the National Assembly was busy at Versailles, drafting a constitution the rest of France churned with turmoil.
- Severe winter spoiled the harvest, this led to a rise in the prices of bread(staple diet),bakers hoarded supplies.
- Crowds of angry women stormed into the shops.
- The king, Louis XVI, ordered troops to move into Paris.
- On 14th July , The Bastille was destroyed.
- Rumours spread in the country side that nobles had hired men to destroy the crops.
- Peasants in several districts attacked the residence of nobles, looted the hoarded grains and burnt down the records of manorial dues.
- Large number of nobles fled from their homes and many migrated to neighbouring countries.

Louis XVI, gave recognition to the National Assembly and accepted that his powers will be check by a constitution



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graph TD; A[Louis XVI, gave recognition to the National Assembly and accepted that his powers will be check by a constitution] --> D((The Havoc In France)); B[Members of the Clergy were forced to give up their privileges tithes were abolished and lands owned by the church were confiscated] --> D; C[The Assembly passed a decree abolishing the feudal system of obligations & taxes] --> D; E[As a result, the government acquired assets worth at least 2 billion livres.] --> D;
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The Assembly passed a decree abolishing the feudal system of obligations & taxes

The Havoc In France

Members of the Clergy 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 drafted the constitution in 1791.
- The main objective of the constitution was to limit the powers of the monarch.
- The power was separated and assigned to different institutions i.e. Legislature, Executive and Judiciary.

**The Constitution of 1791
gave the National Assembly
power to make laws, but it
was indirectly elected.**

Election of the National Assembly

Citizens voted for a group of electors



Who in turn chose the members of the National Assembly

Active Citizens
Only men above the age of 25 years who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage

The French Citizens were divided into two groups i.e. Active (could vote) or Passive Citizens based on their eligibility to voting

Passive Citizens
The rest of the population was considered as passive citizens and were not allowed to vote

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

- The Constitution began with a declaration that the following rights belonged to each human being by birth and could not be taken away.
 - **Right to life, Freedom of speech, Freedom of opinion and Equality before law.** These right were termed as natural rights.
- It was also the duty of the state to protect each citizen's natural rights.



France abolishes Monarchy and becomes a Republic

- Louis XVI signed the constitution but also entered into a secret negotiation with the king of Prussia.
- Rulers of neighbouring countries were worried by the developments in France and made plans to send troops to put down the events.
- Before this could happen the National Assembly declared war against Prussia and Austria in 1792.
- Thousands of volunteers joined the army as they saw this as a war against the autocratic rule of the monarchs.



Poet Roget de L'Isle

He composed one of the patriotic song 'The Marsellaise'.
It was first sung by the volunteers from Maseilles when they
marched into Paris.

The Marsellaise is now the National Anthem of France.



Formation of Political Clubs in France

- The Constitution of 1791, gave political rights to only the richer sections of society,
- Political clubs became an important rallying point for those who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of actions.
- Women too had been active throughout this period and formed their own clubs.
- The most successful club was of that of the Jacobin's.

The Jacobin Club



Maximilian Robespierre
(Leader)

- Members: Less prosperous sections of the society including shop-keepers, workers, etc.
- Jacobins came to be known as the Sans-Culottes, meaning- Those without knee breeches.
- Jacobin men wore long striped trousers and red cap that symbolized liberty.

In 1792 the Jacobins planned a rebellion against the high prices of bread

They stormed the palace of the Tuileries, massacred the king's guards and held the king as hostage

The assembly voted to imprison the royal family

Elections were held and after that men of 21 years and above regardless of wealth got the right to vote

Newly elected Assembly was called the "Convention"

On 21st September 1792, the assembly abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic, Louis XVI was sentenced to death and publicly executed on 21st January 1793.

The Reign of Terror (1793-1794)

- Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment.
- All those he considered his enemies- including his club members and anyone who didn't agree to his methods- was arrested and imprisoned.
- If court found them guilty, they were guillotined (beheaded using a device with 2 blades at the poles).
- He made laws to seal wages and prices.
- Meat and bread was rationed, peasants were forced to sell grains at prices fixed by the government.
- The use of expensive white flour was forbidden and citizens were required to eat the pain d'égalité (equality bread)
- People had to address each other as "*Citoyen*" and "*Citoyenne*".
- Churches were shut down and converted into barracks.
- He was so strict in his policies that even his followers demanded change.
- Finally, he was convicted by the court in 1794, arrested and guillotined.

A Directory Rules France

- After the end of Jacobin Government, the wealthier middle class took over the power.
- New constitution was introduced, denying voting rights to those who did not own property.
- This led to the formation of 2 elected legislative councils (make laws).
- The legislative councils then appointed a Directory (executive made of 5 members).
- It provided a safeguard against any one man dominating powers.
- The Directors often clashed with the councils.
- This instability in politics led to the rise of a military dictator- Napoleon Bonaparte.

Women's Revolution

- From the very beginning women were active participants in the events which brought about many changes in the French society.
- Most women of the third estate had to work for a living. Their wages were lower than those of men.
- In order to discuss and voice their interests, women started their own political clubs and newspapers.
- One of their main demands was that women must enjoy the same political rights as men.
- They demanded the right to vote, to be elected in the Assembly and to hold political positions.



Laws Introduced by the Revolutionary government to improve lives of women

- The creation of state schools made schooling compulsory for all girls.
- Fathers could no longer force them into marriage.
- Marriage was made into a contract, entered into freely and registered under civil law.
- Divorce was made legal, which could be applied for by both women and men.
- Women could now train for jobs or run small businesses .

However, their struggle for equal political rights continued.





Olympe De Gouges

Olympe De Gouges was one the most important and politically active woman in revolutionary France. In 1791 she wrote a *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen*.

Abolition of Slavery

- Slave trade began in 17th century.
- Merchants sailed to African coast from ports of Bordeaux or Nantes (port cities in France) where they got slaves from the local chieftains (leader of people or clan).
- They were sold to plantation owners.
- This helped Europeans to meet the growing demands of sugar, coffee and indigo in Europe.
- Economic prosperity of ports cities was due to slave trade.
- The Convention in 1794 legislated to free all slaves, but Napoleon reintroduced slavery during his rule.
- After the rule of Napoleon, slavery was abolished in 1848 from the French colonies.

The Revolution and Everyday Life

- The revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution i.e. equality and liberty changed the clothes people wore, the language they spoke and the books they read. Laws were passed to translate these ideals into everyday practice.
- One important law that came into effect soon after the storming of the Bastille in 1789 was the abolition of censorship.
- The **Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen** proclaimed freedom of speech and expression to be a natural right. Newspapers, pamphlets, books and printed pictures flooded the towns of France.
- Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large numbers of people. The visual and oral art forms became very popular among the common mass which could not read and write in the 18th century.
- The majority of men and women could now easily understand the ideas of equality, liberty and justice.
Thus, the everyday life of the French people was deeply affected by the revolution.



Napoleon Bonaparte

- In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself emperor of France.
- He introduced many laws such as protection of private property and uniform system of weights and measures.
- Initially he was seen as a liberator but soon his armies came to be viewed everywhere as an invading force.
- He was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815.

Conclusion

- The Ideas of Liberty, Equality and Democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution.
- These ideas spread from France to the rest of Europe to abolish the feudal system.
- Colonised people were motivated by the ideas to start Nationalist Movements.
- Tipu Sultan and Raja Ram Mohan Roy are the examples of Indians who responded to the ideas of French Revolution.