Notes

**The French Revolution**

In 1789, in the wake of early morning, the city of Paris was in a state of alarm. Rumours spread that the King would open fire upon the citizens. People started gathering and they started breaking a number of government buildings in search of arms. The commander of the Bastille was killed in the armed fight and the prisoners were released. People hated the Bastille as it stood for the despotic power of the king. People protested against the high price of bread. A new chain of events began which led to the execution of the King in France.

**French Society During the Late Eighteenth Century**

Louis XVI, in 1774, ascended the throne of France. Financial France was drained because of the war. France, Under Louis XVI, helped the thirteen American colonies to gain their independence from Britain. Taxes were increased to meet regular expenses, such as the cost of maintaining an army, the court, running government offices or universities. The country of France was divided into three estates in the eighteenth century. The feudal system was part of the society estates dated back to the middle ages. 90 percent of the population was dominated by peasants but only a small number of them owned the land they cultivated. 60 percent was owned by nobles, the Church and other richer members of the third estate. The clergy and the nobility, members of the first two estates enjoyed certain privileges by birth. These groups of members were exempted from paying taxes and enjoyed feudal privileges. All members of the third estate had to pay taxes to the state which 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 French Society comprised

**1st Estate:** Clergy

**2nd Estate:** Nobility

**3rd Estate:** Big businessmen, merchants, court officials, peasants, artisans, landless laborers, servants, etc.

Some within the Third Estate were rich and some were poor.

The burden of financing activities of the state through taxes was borne by the Third Estate alone.

**The Struggle to Survive**

Increase in population led to a rapid increase for food grains. Production of grains could not keep pace with the demand due to which the price of bread rose rapidly. Due to low wages paid to the labourers the gap between the poor and the rich widened. Things became worse whenever drought or hail reduced the harvest.

**A Growing Middle Class Envisages an End to Privileges**

Peasants used to participate in revolts against taxes and food scarcity. Group of the third estate had become prosperous and had access to education and new ideas. In the eighteenth century, new social groups emerged, termed the middle class, who earned their wealth through expanding overseas trade and by manufacturing woollen and silk textiles that were either exported or bought by the richer members of society. The third estate included professions such as lawyers or administrative officials. A person’s social position was dependent on their merit.

All these groups were educated and believed that no group in society should be privileged by birth. These ideas were put forward by philosophers such as Locke the English philosopher and Rousseau the French philosopher. The American Constitution and its guarantee of individual rights was an important example of political theories of France. These ideas were discussed intensively in salons and coffee houses and spread among people through books and newspapers. These were even read aloud. Rather, a person’s social position must depend on his merit. A new form of government was proposed by Rousseau based on a social contract between people and their representatives.

Similarly, Montesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. In the USA, this model of government was put into force. Louis Louis XVI planned to impose further taxes to meet the expenses.

**The Outbreak of the Revolution**

In France, the monarch didn’t have the power to impose taxes. They had to call a meeting of the Estates-General, a political body to which the three estates sent their representatives, to pass proposals for new taxes. Louis XVI, on 5 May 1789, called an assembly to pass proposals for new taxes. Representatives from the first and second estates were present and the third estate was represented by its prosperous and educated members. According to the principle each estate had one vote. But, representatives from the third estate demanded each member would have one vote. The demand was rejected so members of the third estate walked out to protest. They swore not to disperse till a constitution drafted for France that would limit the powers of the monarch.

Due to the severe winter, bread price rose and people had to spend hours in long queues. Rumours spread that the lords of the manor hired bands of brigands to destroy the ripe crops. In fear, peasants started looting hoarded grain and burnt down documents containing records of manorial dues. Nobles fled from their homes. Louis XVI accorded recognition to the National Assembly and accepted the principle that his powers would from now on be checked by a constitution. The Assembly passed a decree abolishing the feudal system of obligations and taxes on 4 August 1789. Tithes were abolished and lands owned by the Church were confiscated.

**The important Dates**

The French Revolution went through various stages. When Louis XVI became the king of France in 1774, he inherited a treasury which was empty. There was growing discontent within the society of the Old Regime.

**1789**: Convocation of Estates General. The Third Estate forms National Assembly, Tennis Court Oath the Bastille is stormed, peasant revolts in the countryside, Assembly issues Declaration of the Rights of Man.

**1791**: A constitution is framed to limit the powers of the king and to guarantee the basic right to all human beings.

**1792-93**: Convention abolishes Monarchy; France becomes a republic. The Jacobin Republic overthrown, a Directory rules France.

**1795**: New Constitution is adopted. A new Convention appointed a five-man Directorate to run the state from 26th October 1795. Churches reopened.

**1799**: The Revolution ends with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon’s coup abolishes Directory and establishes Consulate.

**Time Line: The French Revolution**

**1770s-1780s**: Economic decline: French Government in deep debt. In 1774, Louis XVI ascends to the throne.

**1788-1789**: Bad harvest, high prices, food riots.

**5 May 1789**: Estates-General convened, demands reforms.

**14 July 1789**: National Assembly formed. Bastille stormed on July 14. French Revolution starts.

**4 August 1789**: Night of August 4 ends the rights of the aristocracy, the surrender of feudal rights.

**26 August 1789:** Declaration of the Rights of Man

**1790**: Civil Constitution of the Clergy nationalizes the Church.

**1791**: Dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly.

**1792**: Constitution of 1791 converts absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy with limited powers.

**1792**: Austria and Prussia attack revolutionary France, Robespierre, elected the first Deputy for Paris to the National convention.

**1793**: Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed.

**1792-1794**: In 1793, the Reign of Terror starts. Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Prussia, and Spain are at war with France.

Robespierre’s Committee of Public Safety repels back foreign invaders.

Executes many ‘enemies of the people’ in France itself.

**1794**: Robespierre is executed. France is governed by a Directory, a committee of five men. The Reign of Terror ends.

**1795**: National convention dissolved.

**1799**: Napoleon Bonaparte becomes the leader of the French Revolution ends.

**France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy**

In 1791, The National Assembly completed the draft of the constitution and its main object was to limit the powers of the monarch. These powers were now separated and assigned to different institutions – the legislature, executive and judiciary. France became a constitutional monarchy.

Citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the Assembly, but unfortunately, not every citizen had the right to vote. Men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer’s wage were entitled to vote. 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, that is, they belonged to each human being by birth and could not be taken away.

**France Abolishes Monarchy and Becomes a Republic**

In April 1792, the National Assembly voted for a war against Prussia and Austria. Marseillaise became the national anthem of France. While men were away fighting at the war, women took care of their families. Large sections of the population demanded 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 were formed and among them, Jacobins became the most successful club. Members of the Jacobin club included small shopkeepers, artisans such as shoemakers, pastry cooks, watch-makers, printers, as well as servants and daily-wage workers. Jacobin members started wearing long striped trousers similar to those worn by dockworkers. These Jacobins were called the sans-culottes, literally meaning ‘those without knee breeches’. On August 10 1792, Jacobins stormed the Palace of the Tuileries and held the king hostage for several hours. Elections were held and all men of 21 years and above got the right to vote. Monarchy was abolished on 21 September 1792 and France was declared a republic. Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of treason.

**The Reign of Terror**

The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the Reign of Terror. People whom Robespierre saw enemies of the republic were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal. If they were declared guilty by the court then they were guillotined. The guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded, named after Dr Guillotin. Laws were issued to place a maximum ceiling on wages and prices. Meat and bread were rationed. Expensive white flour was forbidden to use. Equality was practised through forms of speech and address. All French men and women were addressed as Citoyen and Citoyenne (Citizen). In July 1794, he was convicted by a court arrested and the next day sent to the guillotine.

**A Directory Rules France**

Fall of the Jacobin government allowed the wealthier middle classes to seize power. According to the new constitution, non-propertied sections of society denied voting. It provided for two elected legislative councils. The government appointed a Directory, consisting of executives made up of five members. Political instability paved the way for a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.

**Did Women have a Revolution?**

Women were active participants from the beginning which brought important changes in the country France. Women from the third estate had to work for a living and they didn’t have access to education or job training. Daughters of nobles of the third estate were allowed to study at a convent. Working women also had to care for their families. Compared to men, their wages were lower. Women also started their political clubs and newspapers. The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was one of the most famous women’s clubs. They demanded equal political rights as men, the right to vote and to hold political office. The revolutionary government introduced laws to improve the lives of women. Schooling became compulsory, divorce made legal and they could run small businesses. During the Reign of Terror, the government closed women’s clubs banning their political activities. After much struggle, women in France in 1946 won the right to vote.

**Women’s Revolution highlights**

* From the very beginning, women were active participants in the events which brought about so many changes in French society.
* Most of the women of the third estate had to work for a living.
* Their wages were lower than those of men.
* They demanded equal pay for equal work.
* 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.
* Some laws were introduced to improve the position of women.
* Their struggle still continues in several parts of the world.
* It was finally in 1946 that women in France won the right to vote.

**The Abolition of Slavery**

Jacobin regime’s most revolutionary social reform was the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. In the seventeenth century, slavery trade began. Slaves were brought from local chieftains, branded and shackled and were packed tightly into ships for the three-month-long voyage across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. Slave labour met the growing demand in European markets for sugar, coffee, and indigo. Throughout the eighteenth century, there was little criticism of slavery in France. In 1794, the Convention legislated to free all slaves in the French overseas possessions. Napoleon introduced slavery after ten years. In 1848, slavery was abolished in French colonies.

**The Abolition of Slavery highlights**

* There was a triangular slave trade among Europe, Africa, and America.
* In the 18th century, there was little criticism of slavery in France.
* No laws were passed against it.
* It was in 1794 that the convention made free to all slaves.
* But 10 years later slavery was reintroduced by Napoleon.
* It was finally in 1848 that slavery was abolished in the French colonies.

**The Revolution and Everyday Life**

France during 1789 saw changes in the lives of men, women and children. Abolition of censorship happened in the summer of 1789. Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression to be a natural right. Freedom of press meant opposing views of events could be expressed. Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large numbers of people.

**The Revolution and Everyday Life highlights**

* The years following 1789 in France saw many changes in the lives of men, women, and children.
* The revolutionary governments took it upon themselves to pass laws that would translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice.
* One important law that came into effect was the abolition of censorship.
* The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution. These spread from France to the rest of Europe during the 19th century.

Napoleon

* In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor of France.
* He set out to conquer neighboring European countries, dispossessing dynasties and creating kingdoms where he placed members of his family.
* He saw his role as a modernizer of Europe.
* He was finally, defeated at Waterloo in 1815.

**Conclusion**

Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of France, in 1804 and introduced many laws such as the protection of private property and a uniform system of weights and measures provided by the decimal system. Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo in 1815. The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution. Colonised peoples reworked on the idea of freedom to create a sovereign nation-state.

**Question & Answers**

**Question 1:** In 1774, Louis XVI of the Bourbon family of Kings ascended the throne of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** France

**Question :** What was newly elected assembly called ?

**Answer:** The newly elected assembly was called the convention.

**Question 3:** The burden of financial activities of state during the Old Regime was borne by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Third estate

**Question 4:** In France, the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of a social group, termed as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Middle class

**Question 5:** The American constitution and its guarantee of individual rights was an important example for political thinkers in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** France

**Question 6:** The agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** 14th July, 1789

**Question 7:** The constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer :** National Assembly

**Question 8:** The constitution began with a Declaration of the rights of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Man and citizen

**Question 9:** The National Assembly of France voted in April 1792 to declare war against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Prussia and Austria

**Question 10:** Who introduced Reign of Terror and where ?

**Answer:** Robespierre introduced ‘Reign of Terror’ in France.

**Question 11:**  The members of the Jacobin Club belonged mainly to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** The less prosperous sections of society.

**Question 12:** When was slavery finally abolished in French colonies ?

**Answer:** Slavery was finally abolished in French colonies in 1848:

**Question 13:** One important law that came into effect soon after the storming of the Bastille in 1789 was the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Abolition of censorship.

**Question 14:** In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself as Emperor of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** France.

**Question 15:** What was ‘Sceptre’ ?

**Answer:** Symbol of Royal Power.

**Question 16:** The political body representing the three estates of pre-revolutionary France was known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Estates General.

**Question 17:** Which theory was proposed by Montesquieu ?

**Answer:** Theory of division of power.

**Question 18:** Who proposed the Social Contract theory ?

**Answer:** Jean Jacques Rousseau.

**Question 19:** A triangular slave trade started among \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** Europe, Africa and the Americas.

**Question 20:** Women in France won the right to vote in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer:** 1946:

**Question 21:** What did the French Revolution of 1789 stand for ?

**Answer:** The French Revolution of 1789 stood for the ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

**Question 22:** What did the fall of Bastille signify ?

**Answer:** The fall of Bastille signified the end of the autocratic rule of the monarch.

**Question 23:** Name the special tax levied by the church on peasants.

**Answer:** Tithes was the special tax levied by the church on peasants.

**Question 24:** On what principle was voting conducted in the Estates General ?

**Answer:** Each Estate having one vote, was the principle on which voting was conducted in the Estates General.

**Question 25:** What is a Guillotine ?

**Answer:** The Guillotine is a device consisting of two pole and a blade with which a person is beheaded. It was named after Dr. Guillotine who invented it.

**Question 26:** What idea did the ‘Law Tablet Convey’ ?

**Answer:** It conveyed the idea that the law is the some for all, and all are equal before it.

**Question 27:** Who was the leader of the Jacobin club ?

**Answer:** Robespierre was the leader of the Jacobin club.

**Question 28:** What was the Estates General ?

**Answer:** The Estates General was a political body and was controlled by the French Monarch.

**Question 29:** Who were denied entry to the assembly of the Estates General, called by Louis XVI on 5 May, 1789 ?

**Answer:** Peasants, artisans and women were denied entry to the assembly of the Estate General.

**Question 30:** Why were images and symbols used in the eighteenth century France ?

**Answer:** The majority of men and women in 18th century France could not read and write. So images and symbols were frequently used instead of printed words to communicate important ideas.

**Short Answer Type Questions**

**Question 1:** Who was Robespierre? Why Is his reign referred as the ‘Reign of Terror’?

**Answer:**

* Robespierre was the leader of Jacobins club which led a successful revolt and came to power. Robespierre ruled France from 1793 to 1794.
* His rule is referred as the ‘Reign of Terror’ because he followed a policy of severe control and punishment.
* All those who were considered enemies by him or who did not agree with him or with his methods were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal. If found guilty, they were executed.

Question 2: How was the French society organised before the revolution of 1789 ?

**Answer:**

* The French society was divided into sections called ‘estates’ namely first estate consisting of the clergy, second estate comprising the nobility and the third estate comprising all commoners including big businessmen, traders, merchants, court officials, lawyers, peasants, artisans, labourers and servants.
* The members of the first two estates, that is, the clergy and the nobility, enjoyed certain privileges by birth. They were exempted from paying taxes to the state. The members of this estate had no political rights and social status.
* The entire burden of taxation fell on the third estate. All economic functions were performed by them.

**Question 3:** Describe the incidents that led to the storming of the Bastille.

**Answer:** While the National Assembly was busy at Versailles drafting a constitution, the rest of France was seething with turmoil. A severe winter had meant a bad harvest, the price of bread rose. Often 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 Bastille

**Question 4:** What do you know about the abolition of slavery in France ?

**Answer:**

* It was finally the convention which in 1794 legislated to free all the slaves in the French overseas possessions. This, however, turned out to be a short-term measure. However, ten years later, Napoleon reintroduced slavery.
* Plantation owners understood their freedom as including the right to enslave African Negroes in pursuit of their economic interests.
* Slavery was finally abolished in French colonies in 1848:

**Question 5:** Write a short note on the document ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and citizen.’

**Answer:**

* The Declaration of the ‘Rights of Man’ and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression to be natural rights.
* Censorship was abolished. Newspapers, books and pamphlets flooded French towns and reached the countryside as well.
* Events and changes taking place in France were frankly discussed.
* Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large number of people. Thus, people could identify with ideas of liberty and equality easily.

**Question 6:** How was the Church responsible for the French Revolution ?

**Answer:**

* The members of the church, clergy belonged to the First Estate. The clergy enjoyed all privileges with no obligations. They lived in pomp and extravagance which led to resentment among the members of the Third Estate.
* The church was owner of a big chunk of land in France.
* The church too extracted its share of taxes called tithes from the peasants. Apart from this, the church also collected several other taxes.

**Question 7:** State the election process of the National Assembly in France.

**Answer:** The constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the National Assembly, which was indirectly elected. Citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn close the assembly. All citizens did not have 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 tax payers.

**Question 8:** What were the main ideas behind the French Revolution ?

**Answer:** The main ideas behind the French Revolution were :

* The revolutionary ideas in France were propagated and preached by the famous thinkers and philosophers like Rousseau, Montesquieu. They favoured the abolition of such a social system that supported political, social and economic injustice and discrimination.
* The French revolutionaries were also influenced by the triple ideals of the American Revolution, i.e., Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and they opposed the privileges enjoyed by the clergy and the nobles.

**Question 9:** Write some of the main features of the French Constitution of 1791:

**Answer:** The main features of the French Constitution of 1791 were :

* The constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the National Assembly, which was indirectly elected. Its main objective was to limit the powers of the monarch.
* The citizens of France voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the Assembly. Only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes were entitled to vote.
* The constitution began with a Declaration of the Rights of Man and citizens.
* The constitution declared that it was the duty of the state to protect each citizen’s natural rights.

**Question 10:** How did a directory rule in France ? Explain.

Or

Write a short note on the Directory.

**Answer:**

* The new constitution made provision for two elected legislative councils. These then appointed a Directory, an Executive made up to five members. This was meant as a safeguard against the concentration of political power in a one-man executive as under the Jacobins.
* The political instability of the Directory paved the way for the rise of a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.
* Through all these changes in the form of government, the ideals of freedom, of equality before the law of the land and of fraternity remained inspiring ideals that motivated political movements in France and the rest of Europe during the following century.

**Question 11:** What was subsistence crisis ? Mention two factors responsible for this crisis ?

**Answer:** Subsistence crisis is an extreme situation where the basic means of livelihood are endangered.

Two factors responsible for this crisis were :

* The population of France rose from about 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789. This led to a rapid increase in the demand for foodgrains. Production of grains could not keep pace with the demand. So the price of bread which was the staple diet of the majority rose rapidly. Most workers were employed as labourers in workshops whose owner fixed their wages. But wages did not keep pace with the rise in prices. So the gap between the poor and the rich widened.
* Things became worse whenever drought or hail reduced the harvest. This led to a subsistence crisis, something that occurred frequently in France during the Old Regime.

**Question 12:** What is the significance of the “Tennis Court Oath” in the French Revolution ?

**Answer:** The representatives of the third estate viewed themselves as spokesman for the whole French nation. On 20th June, 1789, the assembled in the hall of on indoor tennis court in the grounds of Versailles. They declared themselves a national assembly and swore not the disperse till they had drafted a constitution for France that would limit the powers of the Monarch. The National Assembly completed the draft of the constitution in 1791 as a result of which France finally became a republic in 1792:

**Question 13:** What were the causes of the empty treasury of France under Louis XVI ?

**Answer:** 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 colonies to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain. The war added more than a billion livres to a debt that had already risen to more than 2 billion livres. Lenders, who gave the state credit, now began to charge 10 percent interest on loans. 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.

**Question 14:** Write the importance of Napoleon Bonaparte in the History of France and the world.

**Answer:** Napoleon saw himself as a moderniser of Europe. He introduced many laws such as protection of private properly and uniform system of weights and measures provided by the decimal system. He carried out the revolutionary ideas of liberty and modern laws to other parts of Europe which he conquered. They had a great impact on people. He was a great general too.

**Question 15:** Which laws were introduced by revolutionary government to improve the condition of women in France ?

**Answer:** In the early years, the revolutionary government did introduce laws that helped to 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 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

**Question 16:** What landmark decisions were taken by the National Assembly led by the Third Estate on 4th August, 1789 ?

**Answer:** Louis XVI finally accorded recognition to the National Assembly and accepted the principle that his powers would be checked by a constitution. On 4 August 1789, the Assembly passed a decree abolishing the fedal 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.

**Long Answer Type Questions**

**Question 1:** Who were the Jacobins ? What was their contribution to the French Revolution ?

**Answer:** Political clubs had become rallying point for people who wanted to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action. The most successful of these clubs was that of the Jacobins. They got their name from the former convent of St. Jacob in Paris. They belonged to the less prosperous sections of the society. They included small shopkeepers, artisans such as shoemakers, pastry cooks, watch-makers, printers, as well as servants and daily wage earners. Their leader was Maximilian Robespierre.

A large group among the Jacobin decided to wear long striped trousers like those worn by dock workers. This was to set themselves apart from the fashionable sections of society especially the nobles who wore knee breeches. It was a way of proclaiming the end of the power wielded by the wearers of knee breeches.

These Jacobins came to be known as sans-culottes, literally meaning ‘those without knee breeches’. San-culottes men wore in addition the red cap that symbolised liberty. Women, however, were not allowed to do so.

In the summer of 1792, they planned an insurrection of many Parisians who were angered by the short supplies and high prices of food. On August 10, they stormed the Palace of the Tuileries, massacred the king’s guards and imprisoned the king. Elections were now held.

The newly elected assembly was called the Convention. On 21st September 1792 it abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic. Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of treason and executed on 21st January 1793. The queen also met with the same fate.

**Question 2:** “The revolutionary government took it upon themselves to pass laws that would translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice.” Discuss this statement with special emphasis on the abolition of censorship.

**Answer:** The years following 1789 in France saw many such changes in the lives of men, women and children. The revolutionary governments took it upon themselves to pass laws that would translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice.

One important law that came into effect soon after the storming of the Bastille in the summer of 1789 was the abolition of censorship. Earlier all written material and cultural activities — books, newspapers, plays — could be published or performed only after they had been approved by the censors of the king. Now the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen declared freedom of speech and expression to be a natural right. They all described and discussed the events and changes taking place in France. Freedom of the press also meant that opposing views of events could be expressed. Each side sought to convince the others of its position through the medium of print. Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large numbers of people.

This was one way they could grasp and identify with ideas such as liberty or justice that political philosophers wrote about at length in texts. Newspapers, pamphlets, books and printed pictures flooded the towns of France from where they travelled rapidly into the countryside.

**Question 3:** Did women have a revolution in 1789 and after it ?

**Answer:**

* Most of the historians believe that from the very beginning women were active participants in the events related with the French Revolution of 1789: Before and during the days of Revolution, most of the women of France did not have access to good job training or education.
* The women were paid lower wages than those of men.
* In order to discuss and voice their interests, women began their own newspapers and political clubs. The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was the most famous of them.
* They demanded the right to vote and right to contest elections as well as the right to hold political office. Women’s movement for voting rights and equal wages continued through the next two hundred years in many countries of the world.

**Question 4:** Describe the social conditions in France before the French Revolution.

**Answer:**

* The French king drove France into useless wars bringing the country on the verge of bankruptcy.
* French society was divided into three main classes called ‘estates’. The first estate constituted the clergy, the second estate constituted the nobility and the rest of the population constituted the third estate. The first two estates were the privileged ones exempted from all the taxes. The third estate shouldered the burden of taxation and had few privileges.
* France was a centralised monarchy and the people had no share in decision making. Administration was disorganised, corrupt and inefficient. The defective system of tax collection and oppression created discontentment.
* Peasants made up of 10 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 nobles, the church and other richer members of the third estate.
* Peasants were obliged to render services to the lord. They have to work in the lord’s house and fields or to serve in the army or to participate in building roads.

**Question 5:** Describe causes for the fall of Jacobin government in France.

**Answer:**

* The Jacobin government in France was based on extreme measures. The period from 1793-1794 is referred to as the reign of terror. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. All those he saw as being ‘enemies’ of the republic-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 guillotined. This led to chaos and resentment among the people.
* The Jacobin government issued laws placing a maximum ceiling on wage 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. This led to a feeling of resentment against the Jacobins. Peasants began opposing them.
* Robespierre’s government ordered shut down of churches and converting church buildings into barrack or offices. Thus the clergy turned against the Jacobin regime and hastened its fall.
* Robespierre pursued his policies so relentlessly that even his supporters turned against him. They began to demand moderation and a middle path.
* Finally, he was convicted by a court in July 1794, arrested and guillotined.

**Question 6:** Explain the role of philosophers in the French Revolution of 1789:

**Answer:** The role of philosophers in the French Revolution of 1789 were :

* In Two Treaties 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 Moritesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.
* The ideas of these philosophers were discussed intensely in salons and coffee-houses and spread among people through books and newspaper.
* Patriotic song Marseillaise composed by poet Roget de Lisle. It was sung for the first time by volunteers from Marseilles as they marched into Paris and so got its name. The Marseilles is now the national anthem of France.