



Mains Practice Question

Q. What were the reasons for the French Revolution? Examine its impact on French society in particular and on the world in general. (250 words)

27 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Briefly state what the Revolution was with dates in the introduction.
- Highlight the main causes for it.
- List out the impact of France, mainly pros and also some cons, as question demands Examine.
- List out the impact on World.
- Also highlight some indirect impacts in the conclusion.

Introduction

French Revolution (1789-1799) was a period of social and political upheaval in France resulting in the overthrow of Monarchy and establishing of Republic.

Main Body

Its causes were multi-dimensional:

- **Cultural:** Enlightenment to think rationally, critically led to lowering the status of Church and Monarch, while promotion of secular, scientific and humanistic values.
- **Social:** Aspiration of Bourgeois class to be politically equal to Clergy and Aristocratic class.
- **Financial:** France's involvement in the American Revolution leading to increased taxation at home and reduction in privileges
- **Political:** Provincial Courts' opposition to the reduction in their privileges.
- **Economic:** Deregulation of grain prices leading to high inflation of bread and bad harvest leading to food shortage provoking the masses to revolt.

Impact on French Society

- Monarchy was abolished and Republic took its place.
- Political sovereignty introduced at individual and nation-state level with a centralised government.
- Serfdom, Feudalism, Slavery were abolished and the influence of Church decreased in personal lives.
- Idea of separation of public and private realm emerged.
- **Some Shortcomings:** Limited suffrage, especially women were excluded, Slavery was reintroduced by Napoleon.

Impact on World

- Napoleon carried ideals of the Revolution to the rest of Europe: Liberty, Modern Laws, Democratic Rights, protection of private property. This, in turn, gave rise to Modern Nationalism paving way creation of the sovereign nation-state.

- Liberalism as government form got crystallised in North and South America.
- It inspired other revolutions: Haitian Revolution, Independence Movements in Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South America. Raja Rammohan Roy and Tipu Sultan in particular and Indian Nationalist Freedom Struggle incorporated ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Conclusion

Thus, the importance of the French Revolution laid in laying the foundation of Modern States based on Liberal Democratic ideals. Also, indirectly it laid the groundwork for the growth of Socialism and Communism by providing an intellectual and social environment in which these ideologies could flourish.

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