

MODULE III-DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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AMERICAN REVOLUTION

- During the last half of the 18th century, the thirteen colonies of British Northern America revolted against their mother country
- They succeeded in establishing a new unified government and an independent nation called the United states of America
- The American Revolution was the most successful bourgeois revolution in the modern world
- Turing point in the history of European colonialism
- It set the pattern for the future liberation of the states of Latin America, Asia and Africa

THE ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTION:THE BACKGROUND

- The American Revolution-Product of the British policy of colonial exploitation
- Middle of the 18th cy-13 English colonies in North America
- They grew into prosperous agrarian societies with a growing industry, and a thriving trade with European countries
- A wealthy middle class of plantation owners, traders, and businessmen had come into existence
- This class played a key role in bringing about the American Revolution
- Each colony had a local Assembly which enacted laws concerning local matter, levied taxes
- Under the political control of the mother country
- England followed a mercantilist policy, found its American colonies primarily as a source of wealth to it

- The British govt passed a series of commercial and trade acts
- The commercial acts generally known as Navigation acts, sought to control the commerce of the American colonies
- Forced the colonies to trade only with England
- The colonists considered all these British acts quite unfair to them
- After the seven years' war(1756-63) Britain tried to enforce these acts and impose taxes
- Turned to resistance and then into revolt
- The seven-year's war forced Britain to adopt a more vigorous colonial policy towards its colonies
- Burdened with debt, the British government passed a series of acts to raise revenues from the colonies

- 1. Revenue Act of 1764(Sugar Act)- Imposed duty on sugar imported by the colonists. This act was strictly enforced the colonists raised strong protest against it
- 2. Stamp Act(1765)- First British act imposing direct tax on American colonists. It imposed stamp duty on all business transactions. Colonists were forced to affix revenue stamps on all legal documents, licenses, newspapers, pamphlets and other paperthes.
- Strong opposition from colonists: The lawyers and editors came out with powerful writings questioning the government measure
- British parliament had no representatives from colonies, it had no right to levy taxes on them
- They raised the cry “ Taxation without representation is tyranny”
- In October 1765, a stamp Act congress was organized in New York,

- Which declared that British government was forced to repeal the stamp Act in March 1766
- Through a Declaratory Act, it asserted its power to tax the colonies
- 1. In 1767 Parliament imposed taxes on consumer goods like tea, paper, glass and paint which were imported into the colonies. These acts, called Townshend Acts, provoked a storm of protest in the colonies
- Due to the determined opposition of the colonists, the British Government repealed the Townshend Acts in 1770 retaining duty on tea

MAIN EVENTS OF THE REVOLUTION

BOSTON TEA PARTY(DECEMBER 1773)

- The tax on tea was retained for two reason.
- Firstly, the British Government wanted to assert its right to tax the colonies
- Secondly, it wanted to help East India company to dispose its large stock of tea by selling them to the colonists.
- Resolutions were passed by various colonists for boycotting the tea exported by East India Company
- Leaders in the colonies tried to prevent unloading as tea in the America ports
- In Boston, a group of colonists, disguised as Red Indians, boarded the British ships and threw 342 chests of tea into the water on 16 December 1773
- This incident came to be known as the ‘Boston Tea Party’ in American History

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- The British parliament passed a series of Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts to punish the colonists
- The port of Boston was closed
- During these years ‘ Committees of Correspondences’ composed of citizens critical of British, had been established all over the colonies.
- In 1774, these committees decided to organize a continental congress to plan unified action against the British policy
- The first Continental Congress met on Philadelphia in Sept 1774. This congress appealed to the British King to remove restrictions on Industries and trade and not to impose any taxes without their consent. The king regarded this an act of rebellion and declaration of Independence
- The Second Continental Congress met in May 1775, which proved historical- The congress decided to form an organized army, the continental

- Under the command of George Washington-Demanded self-government within the empire and not independence. The second continental congress sent an 'Olive Branch Petition to the British king(George III) expressing their desire for peace and asking the king to protect their rights as English citizens
- King George refused to look at the petition and sent 30,000 hired German troops to the colonies to fight the colonists
- Some colonists, called Loyalists, wanted to remain Loyal English citizens. Others called the Patriots, began calling for independence
- Thomas Paine's pamphlet 'Common Sense mobilizing public opinion in favour of independence
- Complete independence from Great Britain was necessary if Americans were to secure their rights

- The colonist's struggle became a fight to set up a government of their own, instead of expecting reform within the British empire
- On 4th July 1776, the II continental congress adopted the declaration of independence. This document was largely a work of Thomas Jefferson
- It stated that all men are born equal and are endowed with the certain inalienable rights-rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.
- It also asserted the right of the people to form their own government
- The declaration of independence declared the colonies to be ‘free and independent states absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown’.
- This declaration amounted to a declaration of war against Great Britain

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE


- After the declaration of Independence in 1776, the colonists fought for their right to be an independent nation.
- George Washington commander of the American forces
- The war of independence was fought for about 7 years
- Battle of American's existence and freedom
- Revolutionary leaders like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton
- The British fought with world's best military force, they ultimately lost the war
- Spain, France, and Holland came to the aid of colonists
- The war ended in 1781 with the surrender of English General Cornwallis at Yorktown in Virginia.

- In 1783, the treaty of paris was signed by which England recognized the independence of the 13 colonies
- The 13 colonies were now a new country
- Their first constitution called the Articles of Confederation was a failure
- Constitutional convention was called in Philadelphia to frame a new constitution, which came into effect in 1789
- It established a republican form of Government and federal system under which powers were divided between the central government and the states
- George Washington took charge as the First President of the new Republic on April 30,1789

THOMAS JEFFERSON(1743-1826)

- Thomas Jefferson's life and political career spanned the American Revolution and early years of the new Republic
- Jefferson was one of the prominent leaders of America who organized resistance against mother country
- In 1774, He wrote a summery view of the Rights of British America, stating that the British Parliament had no authority to legislate for the colonies
- Jefferson was elected to the second Continental congress in 1775
- Appointed to a five man committee to prepare a formal declaration of independence
- The committee selected Jefferson to write the first draft because of his reputation as a writer
- The declaration of Independence, written by Jefferson was adopted in June 1776

- The declaration of Independence is Jefferson's greatest contribution to American Revolution and political thought
- The declaration consists of three parts
- The first part consists of political philosophy, the second consists of charges against King George II and the third includes an important solemn statement of independence
- Declaration asserted the Sovereignty of the colonies
- It stated that 'all men created equal' and they are 'endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights' among which are 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness'
- To quote the Declaration, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government

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- While demolishing the reputation of George III and the monarchical idea itself, Jefferson gave his countrymen a new goal, a republican system of Government
 - He upheld the principal of the liberty of the individual, and stood for the creation of a society in which men were free and equal
 - The declaration of independence became the ideological weapon of the American colonies in their revolt against Great Britain
 - It made the break with Britain