

**MODULE III-
DEVELOPMENT OF
DEMOCRACY**

TOPIC:FRENCH REVOLUTION

- ◉ The French Revolution began in 1789
- ◉ More complex, more radical and more influential than the American
- ◉ Destroyed the age old feudal order, traditions and institutions of France
- ◉ Create both a new political order and a new social order
- ◉ Opened the modern era in politics
- ◉ French Revolution is generally characterized as the ‘Revolution of revolutions’, and ‘World Revolution’
- ◉ Several factors brought about the French Revolution’
- ◉ They can be broadly classified into political,intellectual,social,and Economic

POLITICAL FACTORS

- ◉ Despotism of The Bourbans
- ◉ The despotism reached its climax during the reign of Louis XIV
- ◉ All powers of the state were in the hands of the monarch
- ◉ The Estates General, the supreme legislative in France, was not summoned since 1614
- ◉ Ruler LouisXV also suppressed the Assemblies
- ◉ His successor Louis XVI was indifferent to the work of government and was often misled by his queen Marie Antoinette
- ◉ The French people hardly enjoyed any political right
- ◉ Anyone could be thrown into prison for an unlimited term without a proper judicial trial
- ◉ This was done by issuing ‘Letters de Cachet’, a type of royal warrant

- ◉ Persons like Voltaire and Mirabeau were put behind bars without trial
- ◉ The king tolerated no opposition
- ◉ The public was denied the freedom of speech and strict censorship was enforced
- ◉ The administrative machinery of France, especially the Bureaucracy was defective and inefficient
- ◉ There were about 15000 officers in the palace, who consumed about nine per cent of the total revenue
- ◉ Many of them purchased or inherited their government positions
- ◉ Favouritism, nepotism and Extravagance became the hallmarks of the government
- ◉ Marie Antoinette spent a lot of money on festivities and interfered with state appointments in order to promote her favourites

- ◉ Louis XVI also showered favours and pensions upon his friends

IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- ◉ FR inspired by the ideology of Enlightenment philosophers, physiocrats and encyclopedists
- ◉ The enlightenment ideas of reason, secularism and democracy played a great role in shaping the revolution
- ◉ F revolutionaries and leaders used these enlightenment ideas as weapons against aristocracy, monarchy, and the church
- ◉ The philosophers, the leaders of the Enlightenment, made immense contribution in preparing the ideological background of the revolution
- ◉ According to Kettlebey ‘The writings and propaganda of the philosophies made an excellent gun powder for destroying the monarchy in France’

- ◉ Contemporary politicians like Edmund Burke believed that the French Revolution was the result of a conspiracy made by the Philosophers
- ◉ Writers were a powerful factor in the revolution
- ◉ The philosophers questioned the age-old social and political institutions of France
- ◉ Urged faith in reason, made an attack on the Clergy, and advocated the doctrine of popular sovereignty and democracy
- ◉ Exposed the evils of the French society brilliantly and made the people aware of it
- ◉ Ideological contributions made by revolutionary thinkers like Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Condorcet exerted a deep impact on the Revolution

VOLTAIRE(1694-1778)

- ◉ Voltaire was the most famous and influential of philosophers
- ◉ Champion of intellectual, religious and political liberty
- ◉ Attacked corruption in the French government and undermined the respect for authority
- ◉ Believed that the people had the right to revolt against the oppressive government
- ◉ Voltaire stood for freedom of thought
- ◉ Ardent spokesman of civil liberties
- ◉ Believed all religions absurd and contrary to reason
- ◉ Main target of attack was catholic church
- ◉ Fearing his powerful and satirical writings, the French government put him behind the bars and exiled

MONTESQUIEU(1689-1775)

- ◉ The French thinker and philosopher, writer played a significant role in shaping the ideology of the French revolution
- ◉ Critic of autocratic government
- ◉ Rejected the theory of divine right upheld by autocratic monarchs
- ◉ Montesquieu was especially famous for his theory of ‘separation of powers’, Which he developed in his outstanding work ‘The spirit of Laws’
- ◉ Put forward this theory with a view to prevent autocracy and ensure liberty to the people
- ◉ His ideal form of government was constitutional monarchy
- ◉ French people were influenced by this thought and the constitution of 1791 was based on his theory

