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Q The Revolution of 1789 was much less a rebellion against the despotism than a rebellion against inequality.

① Introduction:

Eighteenth-century witnessed an uprising against autocracy and aristocracy in France. In the words of Farsukh Saleem, in his book 'Modern European History', "A society on the eve of revolution or catastrophe is analogous to a volcano whose lava being build up over the years finally comes out of the crater in the form of effects, thus putting every thing on the fire wherever it falls. And, of course, this effects revolutionary effects is composed of economic misery, political frustration, religious corruption and moral deterioration." Agreeing to the author, although, there were many reasons that causes the French Revolution to occur; however, the inequality in political, economic, and social sectors was the main ingredient of the French Revolution. Thus an uprising was witnessed aiming a more egalitarian society for themselves in the despotic reign of Bourbon kings in France.

② Despotism Rule of Bourbon Kings:

Despotism in France was one of the many causes that led to the rebellion against the government. Government in France was largely a one-man institution. Estates General, a kind of parliament composed of the representatives from the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Commons, was not even summoned since 1614. King could do whatever he wanted without the fear of any impeachment or legislative restriction. There was no question of constitutionality or the rights of the subjects. The King could throw any man into prison without a trial by means of the Royal Decree, or Lettre de cachet. According to Farrukh Salem,

"The King was the state."

③ Inequalities that Lead to Rebellion

3.1 Political Inequalities

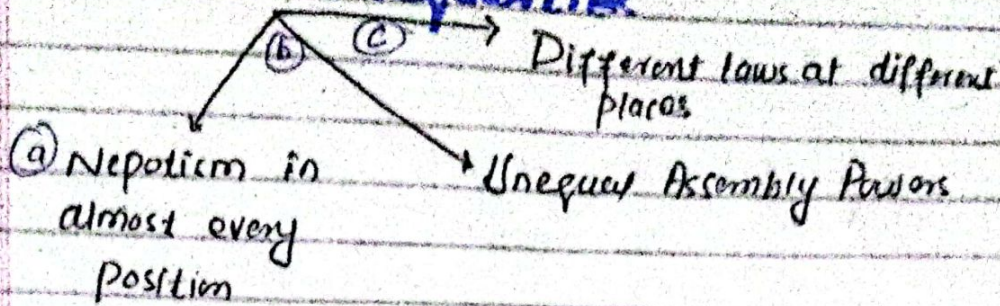
3.2 Economic Unjusts

3.3 Social Discrimination

3.4 Class Difference in Army

3.1

Political Inequalities

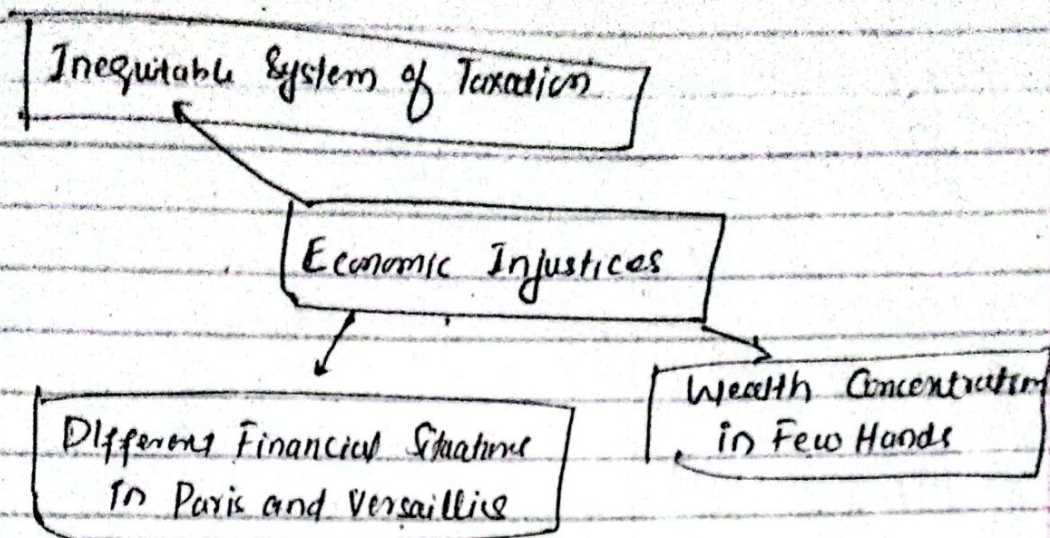


Political inequalities were among the many inequalities that resulted in the rebellion against the French Government. All the high positions were given only the clergy and the nobility. The bourgeoisie, the middle class, who has almost all the productive wealth in their hands were still deprived to have access to the court; they had no share in the highest honours; and, above all, this class had no right to vote except few. Moreover, different classes in the assembly had different powers. Furthermore, the laws of land were different from place to place.

“What was lawful in one town might be illegal in a place not five miles distant. Almost five hundred bodies of law were in force in different parts of the France.”

— Hazen (Historian)

3.2 Economic Injustices



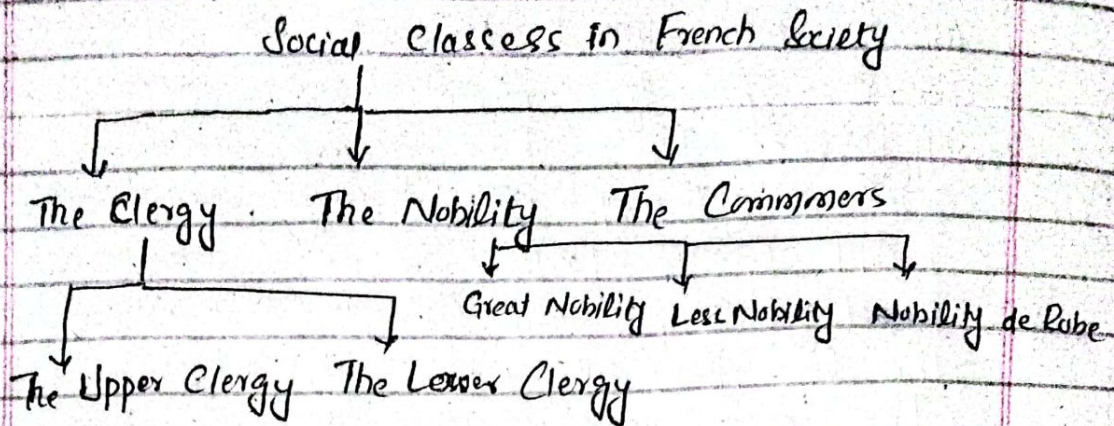
Another major reason that cause the rebellion against the government was the economic injustices there.

There was discriminatory system of taxation on a class while the other classes were exempted from it. For example, the Commons had to pay tailles, a tax on land, while the clergy and nobility were exempted from it.

Moreover, during the famine of 1788, the nobility and the clergy were enjoying in the great palace of Versailles while there was unemployment, and extreme poverty in Paris. Therefore, the angry mob brought the King and the Queen, and then sent to Paris which was the biggest of the conflagration of the Revolution.

3.3

Social Discrimination in French Society



Among other inequalities, social inequality was one of them. The society were divided into different classes on the basis of privileges and affluence. They were called Estates. The higher Estate was the clergy who has secured all sinecures - position in the court. There were also two classes within the Clergy: The Higher Clergy, receiving salary of about 2500 franc a year, while The Lower Clergy had the salary between 30 to 70 francs a year. Similarly, The Nobility who were only 2% of the total population owned the 20% property of the country. The Great nobility, an upper class, looked down upon the The Lesser Nobility who were recruited from the Bourgeoisies class. Finally, The Commomers class which was comprised of about 97% of the population was the poorest class which had no access to most of the fundamental rights.

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Class Difference in Army:

The French Army which was used to be the reliable source of the monarch was not anymore. There had always been felt a threat of mutiny in the French Army because of the inequalities in Army Recruitment System. For example, the law of 1781 which restricted the commission ranks in the army to nobility only and no other class could have ~~any~~ entered army as a commissioned officer. This sense of inequality made the many segments of the army sympathizers of the revolutionaries.

(4) Conclusion:

In a nutshell, it was the inequality that shape the future of the France through revolutionaries. Political, economic, and social inequalities paved the way for the Revolution. It can be argued that if there no inequality in the France, the Bourbon's would not have been overthrown by the the unruly mobs and the despotic form of government would have been seen so many years more than it actually last for.