

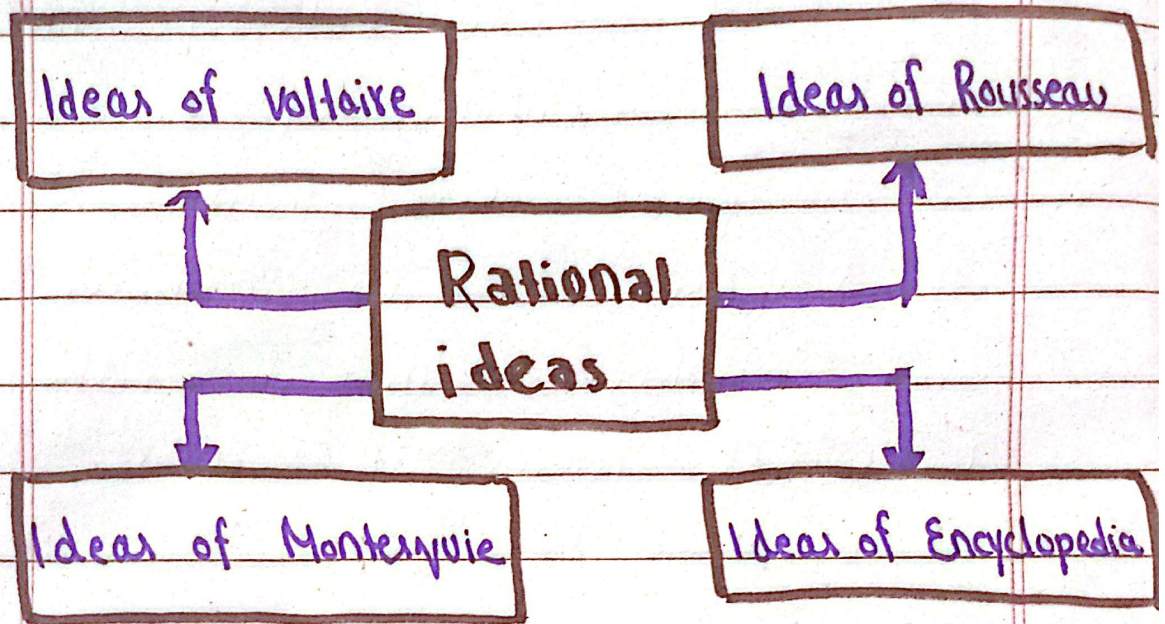
Rational ideas and fear determined the course of French revolution. Discuss.

Introduction:

The middle class, peasants, bourgeoisie, nobility of robe, parish priest were greatly unsatisfied with the monarchy and nobility. At that time, the rational ideas of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Encyclopedia greatly inspired these classes and they started protesting for the reforms. The revolution that started in 1789 was further determined by the fear of counter revolution by nobility and monarchs, King's flight to Varennes, war with Austria and Prussia, The Reign of Terror and Thermidorian reaction.

(I) Rational ideas and course of French revolution:

The rational ideas of following determined the course of French revolution:



i) Ideas of Voltaire - Attack on Catholic Church and Nobility:

Voltaire openly attack on the catholic church and the privileged nobility. He was greatly inspired by the English

freedom of press and absence of privileged nobility. He suggested the system of governance in which equality is ensured. These ideas heavily inspired the suffering class of France and they started demanding equality.

ii) Ideas of Rousseau-Theory of social contract:

According to Rousseau, all the men are born free and should be treated equally. The system of governance should be based on social contract. In this social contract, people choose their representative themselves and can remove them if the government is not protecting their rights. These ideas influence French society.

iii) Ideas of Montesquieu - Balance of power:

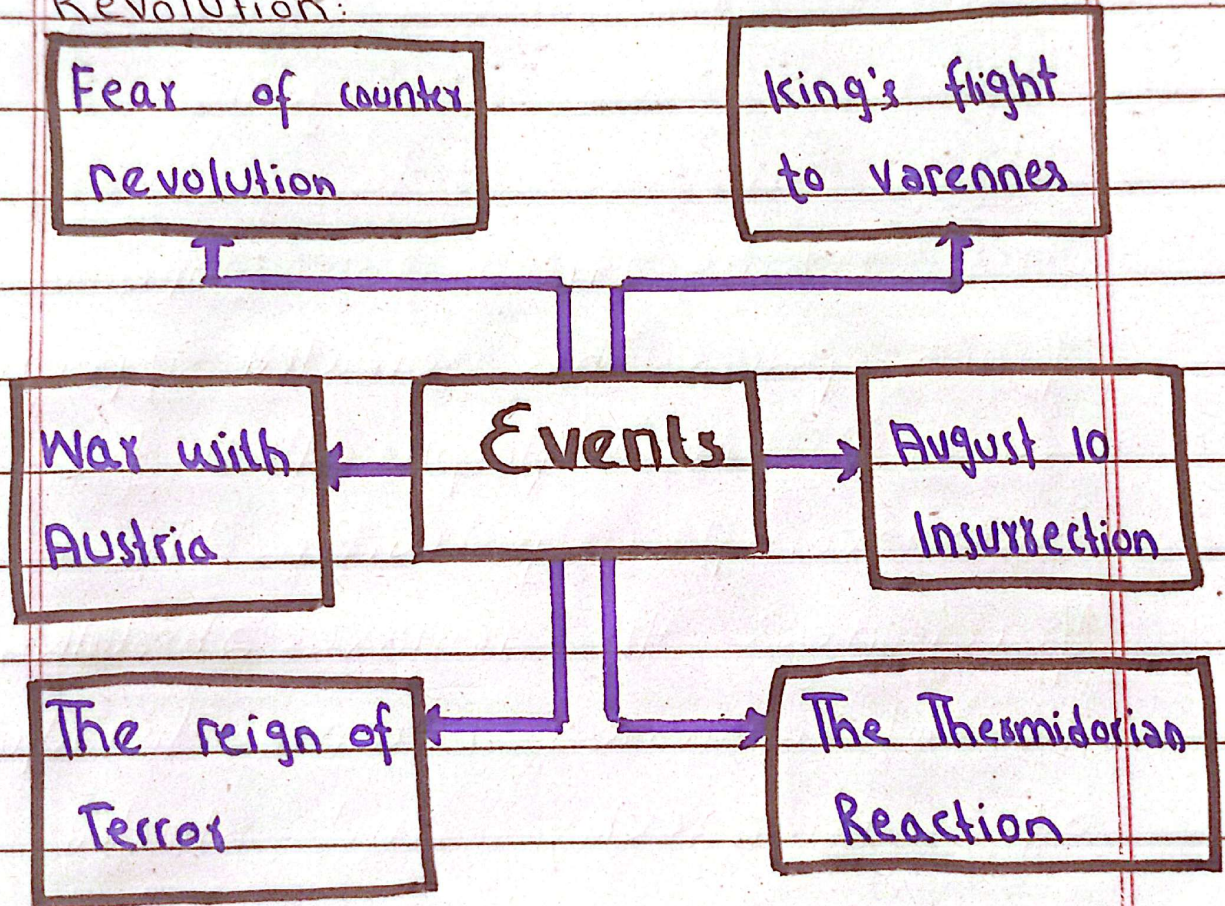
Montesquieu was not of the view that monarchy should be abolished completely. In his opinion, monarchy should be revived but with some checks and balances upon it. Power should be divided among different pillars of government.

iv) Ideas of Encyclopedia - Attack on nobility and monarchy:

The Encyclopedia of Diderot and D'Alembert attack on everything on the French society. It was greatly inspired by the ideas of Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu. It attacked on privileged nobility and despotic nature of monarchy.

(iii) Role of fear in determining the course of French Revolution:

Following events of fear determined the course of French Revolution:



i) Fear of counter-revolution by nobility and monarchy:

The peasants and middle class feared that the nobility and king might retaliate.

So, they attacked on manor houses, burned feudal records and seized land. This mass panic forced the national assembly to abolish feudalism.

ii) The king's flight to Varennes (1791):

King tried to escape from Paris. This created suspicion among the people that he was conspiring with the foreigners to restore absolutism. Revolutionaries became distrustful of monarchy and started demanding republic form of government in France.

iii) War with Austria:

Early French defeats fueled panic among the

people with rumors that the king and the queen are secretly aiding the enemy. Legislative assembly fearing of the foreign intervention declare war on Austria in 1792.

iv) Insurrection of 10 August:

The Brunswick manifesto where prussia threaten to destroy paris if royal family was harmed. This enraged the revolutionaries and led to August 10 insurrection. The mob stormed into the Tuileries palace and overthrow the monarchy. This was destructive blow to monarchy.

v) The Reign of Terror (1793-94):

The radical phase of revolution started when Robespierre came to power by defeating the moderate revolutionaries Girondins. He started "Reign of Terror" where he justified mass execution to protect the revolution. Many revolutionaries were executed who disagree with. Although, he called for liberty but used terror tool to suppress if someone disobey him.

vi) The Thermidorian Reaction:

Fear turned against the radicals. By mid 1794, the terror had become out of control. On 9 thermidore, the convention

arrested and executed Robespierre, ending the terror. The backlash showed how fear, once used to justify radicalism, could also destroy radicals themselves.

Conclusion:

Hence, from the above discussion it is clear that the radical ideas of philosophers and fear factor played a key role in determining the course of French revolution. The revolution started through the inspiration of philosophical ideas and ended with the end of fear element.