

Q Discuss the causes of French Revolution (CSS-2015)

A CAUSES OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

### INTRODUCTION

Give numbering to headings. Add quotation in Introduction.

History has witnessed a number of events which shaped the history. French Revolution is one such event, that changed the course of European history. The revolution was not a consequence of a single cause rather a number of factors contributed to French revolution. These factors can be mainly grouped under ideological evolution as a consequence of enlightenment era, economic problems in French society, social structure of French society and political factors. All these factors contributed to French Revolution, the event that proved to be a precursor of modern European history.

A paragraph on background?

### CAUSES OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

Following are main causes of French Revolution.

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## ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS MADE PEOPLE THINK CRITICALLY

Social  
Political  
Economic  
Literary

The era of Enlightenment and ideas propagated in that era proved to be instrumental in French Revolution.

These ideas challenged the prevailing political, economic and religious beliefs of that time. The invention of press machine and translation of English literature to French added fuel to the fire.

## ENLIGHTENMENT AND CRITIQUE ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The enlightenment philosophers challenged the religious beliefs of French society. Religion provided the legitimacy to monarch through divine right theory.

(i) David Hume

David Hume was against the all sorts of organized religion. Any religion based on miracles was an ultimate rejection as per David Hume. He considered this as a product of fear by primitive human beings.



(ii) Voltaire

"I may disapprove what you say, but I will defend, to my death, your right to say it."  
Voltaire

Voltaire also challenged the prevailing religious beliefs. He was against the abductions and political crimes committed by Church-King nexus. He personally convinced Louis XV. to free the prisoners, imprisoned on political grounds.

### ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS CHALLENGED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM - ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

Prevailing political system of France was absolute monarchy, based on theory of divine kingship. This was challenged by following philosophers

(i) Thomas Hobbes and theory of Divine kingship

Thomas Hobbes through his social contract challenged the prevailing political system based on theory of Divine kingship. He advocated absolute monarchy but not on bases of divine kingship but

on bases of social contract  
between king and the governed.  
He advocate the Laviathon,  
an absolute monarch. to control  
the small monsters.

(ii) Role of Ideas propagated  
by Thomas Hobbes John Locke  
John  
Lock gave the concept of  
constitutional monarchy. He advocated  
the concept of popular  
sovereignty - the idea that power  
belongs to people. He was first  
person to advocate Revolution if  
monarch is not able to fulfill  
his duties. He also advocated  
the idea of life, liberty,  
property. This became the bases of  
American and then French Revolution

(iii) Role of Rousseau - The man  
behind French Revolution

"man is born free but everywhere  
he is in chain"

- opening statement of his  
social contract

Finally, the Rousseau became  
the person, whose ideas ignited  
the French Revolution. He was a



big advocate of Direct democracy  
and general will.

## ECONOMIC FACTORS AS CAUSE OF FRENCH REVOLUTION

### (i) UNJUST TAXES—SALT TAX AND REVOLUTION

One major  
cause of French revolution  
was unjust taxes. There were  
a number of taxes on basic  
necessities. For example, salt tax in  
France, was one of the taxes  
which aggravated the French grievances.

### (ii) DISCRIMINATION IN TAXES

Similarly,  
there was a discrimination in  
context of tax paying.

a - King owned the land but  
was exempted from taxes.

b - Nobility owned the land but  
were not imposed on nobles.

c - Church didn't pay the tax  
rather collected the tax on  
name of religion.

d - Third estate paid most  
of taxes though no had no  
privileges.

### 3- Social Hierarchy of French Society - provided a foundation for Revolution

French society was divided in 3- Estates as

(i) First E-state - This represented clergy. They were privileged class and didn't pay tax rather imposed religious tax.

(ii) - Second E-state - This represented the nobles. They were people in ~~the~~ Royal courts, military and civil bureaucracy. They were also privileged and didn't pay tax.

(iii) Third - E-state - This was a vast class and included the commoners. This class payed the taxes but were unprivileged. They included people ranging from peasants to merchants.

### (iv) Political Factors and French Revolution

(i) Discriminated voting rights of three E-states

All the 3- Estates were given only one vote each. There was no vote by



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○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

hered system. This was unjust and discriminatory as the First and second estate were combined 2% while third estate made 98% of population.

First Estate + Second Estate vs Third Estate  
(2%) (98%)

2 votes 1 vote  
A paragraph on Impact of the French Revolution

ESTATE GENERAL MET SINCE 1614

The estate assembly of general had not met since 1614. This was another factor which shows that political system was run by an absolute monarchy. When meeting of E-estate general was called in 1789, it became a cause of French Revolution.

CONCLUSION

So, it can be concluded that multiple factors were responsible to aggravate the situations which lead to French Revolution. These factors ultimately led to French Revolution of 1789, which was a remarkable event as

it shaped European history for  
next 300 years.

### CAUSES OF FR

Ideas

↓

challenged political  
order

challenged Religion  
Belief

↓

collapse of Divine  
right Theory

Economic  
Problems

Indiscriminate  
Taxes

salt Tax

No taxation  
for clergy  
nobility

Political  
problems

Discriminate  
Voting  
rights

Dysfunctional  
estate  
system

Grievances of  
Commoners

↓

Revolution in  
France