



ii) George Danton - He was the leader of the Cordeliers Club, one of the most popular clubs during the Revolution. He made this club a significant political force. He also made speeches at the Jacobin Club. Danton was a very important force behind the execution of the king and the end of monarchy in France. He became the first president of the Committee of Public Safety but met his death at the guillotine after he criticised Robespierre's methods.

iii) Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, known as the Abbé Sieyès - He was a Roman Catholic who was influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment period. In 1789, just before the Revolution broke out, he wrote a pamphlet entitled 'What is the Third Estate?' where he asked for genuine rights for the members of the largest estate. He was made Director of France in 1799. He helped Napoleon overthrow the Directory since he knew about the corruption plaguing it at that point in time. Together with Napoleon and Roger Ducos, Sieyès became one of the three Consuls of the French Republic.

iv) Mirabeau - He became a popular figure leading the Jacobin Club in the early stages of the Revolution. He was



elected its president in 1790. He died shortly after that and was hailed as one of the founders of the Revolution.

v) Jean-Paul Marat – He was perhaps the most influential journalist during the period of the Revolution. He wrote in the periodical *L'ami du Peuple* (Friend of the People) and used a fierce tone to advocate the rights of the most oppressed parts of the populace. He was associated with the purge of the moderate Girondins and was consequently murdered by a Girondin sympathiser named Charlotte Corday.

vi) Maximilian Robespierre – He was one of the most influential leaders of the Revolution. He was an outspoken advocate for the rights of the poor and introduced laws abolishing slavery, and controlling the price of basic commodities, among other things. After the defeat of the Girondins in June 1793, the Montagnards formed the Committee of Public Safety, which became the de facto executive government during the time of the Revolution commonly known as the Reign of Terror. Robespierre was the leading member of that committee. Under his watch, more than 40,000 people were executed in the name of ridding the Republic of its enemies. As fear grew among



the people, Robespierre's enemies managed to arrest and execute him in 1794.

vii) Napoleon Bonaparte - Napoleon grew into prominence as a general in the Revolutionary forces fighting a civil war against the Royalist forces. After he took care of the internal rift, he was given command of the Army of Italy. He then led French forces against the coalition of several European armies, winning almost every battle and thus becoming very popular and powerful. Being a national hero, he took advantage of the instability in the Directory and successfully seized power in a coup in 1799. The Coup of 18th Brumaire was the symbolic end of the Revolution. Napoleon became the First Consul of the French Republic for a while and later on became Emperor in 1804.

viii) Marie Antoinette - The Queen of France before the Revolution, Marie Antoinette had a profound influence on the King and the affairs of the court. She was extremely unpopular, especially because of the many false scandals surrounding her name, and her spending habits. She was also reviled because she was Austrian and France and Austria had been bitter enemies since a long time. The



Queen's unpopularity and her general indifference to the poor cost her her head, as she was executed shortly after Louis XVI in 1793.



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## CONSEQUENCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

- The declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen established the following principles:
  - a) All men are born free and have equal rights. Everyone is equal in the eyes of law.
  - b) Every citizen is entitled to freedom of speech and expression, religion and a fair trial.
- Liberty, Equality, Fraternity – the battle cry of the revolution, became the guiding principle of the French Republic.
- The revolution of 1789 marked the end of absolute monarchy and paved the way for the establishment of a republic.
- The revolution laid the foundation of a democratic government, i.e. a government based on the consent of the governed.
- Feudalism and serfdom were abolished and the power of the church was brought under the control of the government.

• 'Happiness for all' was proclaimed as the ultimate goal of the government. New reforms were introduced and the condition of the people improved.

- It inspired feminist movements in France and all over Europe and the '**Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen**' by Olympe de Gouges in 1791 initiated a movement by women for political and social rights. Several women's clubs also came up at this time, and women of the third estate, who mostly worked as domestic help, laundresses, sellers, seamstresses and child-carers, began to gradually understand and demand equality in terms of social citizenship. Women were not given the right to vote by any of the revolutionary governments as neither the National Assembly, nor the Directory, nor the Convention accepted them as active citizens. French women finally earned suffrage (voting rights) in 1946, only a year before India became independent.



## INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OUTSIDE FRANCE

The revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution spread to all European countries. The slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity became the guiding principles of the freedom loving people all over the world. Oppressed people in Europe rose in revolt against their tyrannical, hereditary rulers and established new social and political systems based on popular sovereignty. It inspired mass movements all over the world and instilled the spirit of nationalism among people.

Napoleon's conquest of Europe spread ideas throughout the continent, while further destabilizing the influence of the Holy Roman Empire, which eventually collapsed in 1806. It also sowed the seeds for later revolts in 1830 and 1849 across Europe, loosening or ending the monarchical rule that led to the creation of modern-day Germany and Italy later in the century. It also sowed the seeds for the Franco-Prussian war and, later, World War I.