

Ques. French Revolution was the harbinger of democracy in Europe. Critically examine the statement.

‘Critically examine’ means you have not to take a one-sided view rather you have to go through pros and cons, merit and demerit, strength and weakness i.e. both sides of the statement. Then you should take the conclusion. The conclusion should be in favour of any side depending on the issue which is involved in the topic.

Ans. French Revolution proved a greater landmark in the history of France and Europe. It brought a momentous change like government, statecraft and the relationship between state and society. But in course of the revolution to what extent the gap between promises and fulfilment could be bridged, needs deep scrutiny.

The revolution started with the famous slogan liberty, equality and fraternity. Feudalism was abolished and then appeared the declaration of rights of men and citizens which was ideologically inspired by Rousseau’s concept of the common will. The buck does not stop here but up to September 1892 monarchy was uprooted and France became a republic. Very soon French Revolution was converted into an all European Revolution when Napoleon’s conquest gave a serious jolt to the old order in Europe.

But there is another side of the picture as well. Gradually revolution diverted from its main course. Under the Jacobian rule, the revolution turned to be bloody and violent. After that Napoleon Bonaparte tactfully diverted revolution from the slogan of liberty and equality and moved it towards military conquest and imperialism. After Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna tried to undo the changes which had earlier been made by the revolution. So, a gap appeared between promise and performance.

On this basis we find that for revolution objective of democratization remained to be a distant dream. But still we can give some credit to this revolution for launching a process that was full of future potentialities.

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