

Social Description of France in 18th Century

- Before the outbreak of the revolution, the social structure of France were divided into three ESTATES
- THE FIRST ESTATE (THE CLERGIES)
- THE SECOND ESTATE (THE NOBILITY)
- THE THIRD ESTATE (THE REST OF THE POPULATION)

THE FIRST ESTATE OR CLERGY

- The first estate consisted of clergymen. At that time there number were 130,000 people and who occupied 10% of the total land of France.
- On the other hand, the clergies were also divided into two categories radically:-
 - * the higher clergy who stemmed from aristocratic families, and shared interest the nobility.
 - * Poor Priests from the class of commoners.
- notably, the clergies were exempted from “Tallies”, that was France’s main tax.

THE SECOND ESTATE OR NOBILITY

- ❑ AFTER CLERGYMEN, IT WAS THE NOBILITY WHO OCCUPIED THE SECOND STAGE OF FRANCE'S SOCIAL STRUCTURE.
- ❑ The total population of the NOBILITY was 350,000 , who owned near about 25 to 30 per cent of the total land.
- ❑ The nobility hold the important positions in the government machinery such as military, law courts and higher church officers.
- ❑ The nobility were also exempted from the main tax of the state, "Tallies"

THIRD ESTATE

- The Third Estate or the Commoners of the country constituted the overwhelming majority of the population.
- The Third Estate were divided according to their profession such as their occupation, educational status, and wealth.
- Within Third Estate, the Peasants alone constituted 75% to 80% of the total population and stayed as the largest segment of the society.
- The Third Estate owned 35% to 40% of the total land, whose ownership varied from area to area.
- The Third Estate had their obligation to local landlords.

- The Craftsmen Shopkeeper's and other wage earners were also a part of Third Estate.
- Their condition was decline steadily due to the increase in the consumer prices.
- On the 8% of the population or 2.3 million constituted the BOURGEOISE OR MIDDLE CLASS WHO OWNED ABOUT 25% OF THE LAND.
- This middle class consisted of merchants, industrialists and bankers who controlled the resources of trade and manufactures.
- The middle class also included professional people such as lawyers, holders of public offices, doctors and writers.
- The middle class people at that time had their own grievances as they were deprived of social and political privileges.
- Moreover, there was a similarities such as by obtaining wealthy middle class could enter into the ranks of nobility.

- Along with that the new political ideas of the Enlightenment became attractive for aristocratic and middle class people.
- this aristocratic and middle class families were frustrated by :
 - A monarchy that was based on privileges
 - An old and rigid social order based on concept of estates.
- Therefore, the opposition of these elites to the old order of French led a drastic change in the French Monarchical regime.