

Course - IV Restoration to 1798

M.A. IInd Sem (English)

Topic - Enlightenment Ideas & Philosophy

- E Background - What is Enlightenment: -

- ⇒ The Enlightenment, sometimes called the 'Age of Enlightenment', was a late 17th and 18th Century Intellectual Movement emphasizing reason, individualism and skepticism. The Enlightenment presented a challenge to traditional religious views.
- ⇒ It was centered around the idea that reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy, and it advocated such ideals as liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity and separation of church and state.
- ⇒ The scientific revolution of the 17th Century is closely associated with the enlightenment and in many respects, the two overlap. Scientific thinking played a crucial role in the Enlightenment, as thinkers employed the scientific method to understand the world around them.
- ⇒ Most historians place the beginning of the Enlightenment between the mid-Century of 17th and the beginning of the 18th Century. The writings of intellectuals, like Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Isaac Newton were particularly important in giving birth to the Enlightenment.
- ⇒ The Enlightenment started in Europe and eventually spread to the United States, where it attracted followers like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. The Enlightenment died out in the early 19th Century as Romanticism gained appeal.

Six Main Ideas of Enlightenment:—

(i) Deism (ii) Liberalism (iii) republicanism, (iv) Conservatism
-tism (v) toleration (vi) toleration and scientific progress.

Three Central Ideas of Enlightenment:

⇒ Reason:— The most important and original idea was that the methods of natural science could be used to examine and understand all aspects of life. Everything was to be submitted to rationalism.

⇒ Scientific Method:— The scientific method was capable of discovering the laws of human society as well as those of nature.

⇒ Progress:— The goal of enlightenment thinkers to create better societies and better people by discarding outmoded traditions and embracing rationalism.

Major Themes of Enlightenment:—

⇒ while the Enlightenment was a tremendously broad movement, there are several core themes that were characteristics of it. One was Reason.

⇒ Enlightenment thinkers typically denounced supernatural occurrences as mere superstition. Here is where it gets a little tricky. The Enlightenment spurred atheism, but more commonly, it resulted in a new Christianity and scientific rationalism.

⇒ Deist Movement— That gripped Europe and the United States during the 18th Century. In simplest terms, deism is the belief that God exists, but chooses to let the universe proceed according to natural law. Deists deny supernatural occurrences and insist that God is knowable through reason and

nature, not divine revelation.

⇒ Skepticism: — Another Enlightenment theme, which is Skepticism. By skepticism, we are talking about skepticism of religious dogma, the institutionalized church, government authority, and even skepticism of the nature of reality.

According to this view, which had been popular among Catholics for centuries, Monarchs had been placed in positions of power by the will of god and were not subject to earthly powers. Basically this was a fancy way of saying the king was above the law. But with the Age of Enlightenment this idea began to lose its credibility.