



From the Annals of the World History

This month we shall turn to that page of World History that recorded the life of one of the greatest sons of the United States of America. He rose from the lowest rung of the social ladder to become the President of the USA. He is none other than Abraham Lincoln.

Abraham Lincoln

--16th president of US (1809 - 1865)



Abraham Lincoln (February 12, 1809- April 15, 1865) was the 16th President of the United States of America. He served as President from March 4, 1861, until April 15, 1865 (he was re-elected in 1864). Lincoln's Vice-President was Andrew Johnson (1808-1875).

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky. He had very little formal schooling and was mostly self-educated. He eventually became a lawyer and a Republican politician; he earned the nickname "Honest Abe". Lincoln married Mary Todd in 1842; they had four sons, but only one (Robert) survived childhood.

Lincoln was elected President in 1860. During Lincoln's presidency, the Southern states seceded from (left) the Union because Lincoln and the Northern states were against slavery. Six weeks after becoming President, the Civil War began. In this war, the Northern states (which stayed in the Union) fought the Southern states (called the Confederacy). The Civil War lasted from 1861 until 1865.

On Jan 1st, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which eventually led to the freeing of all slaves in the USA. During the Civil War, Lincoln gave many speeches, including the Gettysburg Address (Nov. 1863), a short speech in which he stated how a country must be dedicated to human freedom in order to survive.

Lincoln was re-elected President in 1864 (defeating Democrat George B. McClellan). General Robert E. Lee (from the Confederacy) surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant (from the Union) on April 9, 1865, effectively ending the Civil War.

President Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865, by John Wilkes Booth (an actor). Lincoln had been attending a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. Lincoln died the next morning. He was the first US president ever assassinated. Andrew Johnson (Lincoln's Vice-President) became the next US President.

Bhagavan on Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln, who rose to become the President of America, was born in a poor family. His father was a carpenter. His mother worked hard to earn a little money to educate him. Their income was barely enough to run the family. Lincoln had to face many hardships. He did not have even proper dress to wear. When he went to school, his schoolmates made fun of him as he was shabbily dressed. Unable to bear their taunts, one day Lincoln went to his mother and wept bitterly. She enquired as to what the matter was.

Lincoln said, "Mother, all my schoolmates look down upon me because I am poor and do not have a good dress to wear. They dislike my company." Then his mother pacified him, saying, "Son, you should understand our financial condition and act accordingly. Your schoolmates talk in this manner because they are well-to-do. We have to conduct ourselves keeping our financial condition in view. We are not rich. We have to face this situation with fortitude." She drew him close, wiped his tears and said, "You should not feel unhappy over such a trivial matter. We do not have rich friends and relatives. But we are rich in self-respect and self-confidence.

Understand that self-confidence is our true wealth. One with self-confidence and self-respect is the richest of all. Money and comforts are transient. So, strengthen your self-confidence and self-respect. They will

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certainly bestow on you all prosperity. Do not get carried away by what others say." These words of wisdom made an indelible impression on the tender heart of Lincoln. He started believing that self-confidence was his true wealth and his very life-breath. He stopped paying heed to the taunts of his schoolmates and continued his studies with determination. As there was no light in his house, he used to study under streetlights at night. At times, he had no food to eat and went to sleep after drinking a cup of water.

His mother used to work day and night tirelessly to make both ends meet. Sometimes, she used to starve herself in order to feed her son. Lincoln lost his mother when he was still a child. So, his father Thomas married again. His stepmother was a noble lady and looked after Lincoln with love and affection. She also taught Lincoln to develop self-confidence. Lincoln was happy under her loving care. He paid glowing tributes to her, saying that he never thought that a stepmother could be so kind and compassionate as she was towards him. He made all efforts to keep her happy.

Unmindful of adverse circumstances, Lincoln worked hard and pursued his studies with determination. He passed his examinations with distinction. People were amazed at his success in examinations. He attributed his success to his self-confidence. He never uttered a lie. He considered truth as God. Later he got employment in a store where he worked with diligence and honesty. Gradually he earned reputation as a man of truth and integrity. Recognizing his nobility, his friends requested him to contest the election. They said, "There is no trace of truth or morality in politics. There is no justice at all. The country needs a person like you who would uphold truth and justice."

Initially, Lincoln was reluctant to enter politics. He felt he did not have the strength to achieve success in politics. Even some elders started exerting pressure on him to contest the election. They promised that they would extend all the necessary help. Lincoln stood in election and emerged victorious. Ultimately, Lincoln became the President of America. Just imagine, a boy born in a poor family rising to the level of the President of America. His self-confidence was responsible for this.

Times, country and circumstances may change. But the purity and power of the heart do not change. Before Lincoln became the President of America, people did not realize the power of self-confidence and faith in God. It was Lincoln who taught these values to the people of America. Following the example of Lincoln, more and more people started developing self-confidence and faith in God. It is enough if a country has one person like Lincoln.

Presenting below is his famous speech known as the **The Gettysburg Address** given on 19th November 1863 -

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

- - Abraham Lincoln



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