

## **Lesson -6: The American Civil War**

### **Lesson 6: Video Lecture**

#### **Brainstorming Question**

What were the divisive issues between Northern and Southern states of the USA?

#### **Competencies**

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

Outline the genesis and growth of slavery as one of the divisive issues in American Civil War;

#### **Lesson Overview**

In this Unit you will also learn the causes, course and consequences of the American civil war.

### **1. The American Civil War**

#### **1.1 Origins of the Conflict**

The American Civil War was fought in the United States from 1861 until 1865 between the forces coming mostly from the 23 northern states of the union and the newly formed Confederate States of America, which consisted of 11 southern states that had declared their secession.

There were several divisive issues between the north and south of the USA. The South resented the economic dominance of the North. The South wanted low tariffs to ensure cheaper imports from Europe while the North wanted protective tariffs to encourage their industries. The South emphasized states' rights, i.e., the constitutional rights of the individual states of the USA while the North put more emphasis on the National Federal Government. However, the slavery issue outweighed all other issues and was the only issue capable of producing secession and civil war. When the south lost control of the political institutions of the USA, they turned to secession, fearing that northern domination of the union would lead to attacks on slavery.

Tensions grew rapidly during the 1850s. The United States Republican Party was established in 1854. The new party opposed the expansion of slavery in the western territories. The Republicans mobilized popular support among Northerners and Westerners who did not want to compete against slave labor. 1860 was a year of presidential election. At that time, the Republican Party had a very good candidate named Abraham Lincoln, who was an effective politician, an able speaker, and an attractive personality. He was a man

who appealed to ordinary northerners because he was a self-educated man. In 1860, Lincoln's election as President triggered secession in the south as the south had warned before the elections. Lincoln's election was seen as an intolerable threat to slavery in the south.

Before Lincoln took office, seven states seceded from the union, establishing a rebel government, known as the Confederate States of America, on February 9, 1861. They took control of federal forts and property within their boundaries.



Abraham Lincoln

Source: Grade 12 History Text Book, page-18

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as President of the United States. In his inaugural address, he called secession “legally void.” He stated he had no intent to invade the southern states but would use force to maintain possession of the federal property. Then, Lincoln called for all of the states in the Union to send troops to recapture the forts and preserve the Union.

## **1.2 The Civil War and Its Results**

The northerners were willing to fight to end secession. The North initially was fighting to end secession not to end slavery. Nevertheless, slavery had caused secession and therefore the causes of the civil war were both slavery and secession.

Why the Union prevailed (or why the Confederacy was defeated) in the Civil War has been the subject of extensive analysis and debate. Advantages are widely believed to have contributed to the union's success. In the civil war between the North and the South, the North had most of the advantages. It had more states, a much bigger population, more skilled labor, far more industry, more railways, much greater agricultural production, except for cotton, much greater financial wealth, and also naval power to block the south and cut

the south off essential imports. Although the British and French governments and ruling classes sympathized with the South's "king cotton," they were not strong enough to intervene in the war on the side of the south. Nevertheless, the north did not win easily because the south had initially better generals and fought with great determination, and the defensive power of firearms favored the south. The war lasted from 1861 to 1865 and claimed the lives of 620,000 people.

The Northern motive for making the war a struggle against slavery was more acceptable. Thus, making the civil war a struggle against slavery would make it politically and morally impossible for any European government to support the confederacy because slavery was now regarded in Europe as obsolete, totally wrong, and totally indefensible.

In September 1862, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to become effective as of January 1st, 1863. The proclamation said that all slaves in rebel-held territory would be free as of January 1st, 1863. The proclamation helped the North to recruit African American troops and many African American troops did serve with distinction in the Northern armies. The proclamation also damaged the south by encouraging slaves in the confederacy to run away from the plantations especially when the northern army advanced into the south. In April 1865, the Confederacy was finally defeated unconditionally and completely. A few days later on April 14, 1865 Lincoln was assassinated by a southern fanatic named John Wilkes Booth.

The civil war decided once and for all the issues of secession and slavery. Both ended by the victory of the North. After the civil war, southern political leaders had virtually no impact on the immediate post-war decisions. Thus, several amendments to the US constitution were made: the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth. The Thirteenth abolished slavery, the Fourteenth granted citizenship to former slaves, and the Fifteenth allowed them to vote.

## **Key Concepts and Terminology**

### American Civil War

The American Civil War was a civil war in the United States between the Union and the Confederacy, which was formed in 1861 by states that had seceded from the Union.