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Representation of the Early Eighteenth American Society in Benjamin
Franklin's *Autobiography*

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Letter of Recommendation

Khim Bahadur K. C. has completed his research entitled “Representation of the Early Eighteenth American Society in Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2074/7/20 to 2074/12/30. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce .

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Approval Letter

This research entitled "Representation of the Early Eighteenth American Society in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Khim Bahadur K.C has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography is about the personal interests, activities, events and his works that he completed in his different time period and simultaneously these characteristics represent the contemporary American society. He introduces the major hardships and difficulties in the narrative as a personal voice but he becomes a representative to tell about the voice of many American people. His feelings of nationality, economic development, stable political system and good manners are not merely his personal voices rather this was voice of contemporary American citizens. Although, the narrative begins by addressing to his own son, he intends to tell a true history of contemporary American society to his audience. All the descriptions of Franklin in this Autobiography as personal events, they represent the contemporary circumstances of America. Therefore, Franklin's personal narrative embodies the eighteenth century American society.

Keywords: autobiography, history morality, nationality, new historicism

Representation of the Early Eighteenth Century American Society in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*

The eighteenth century America on the basis of sociological point of view was not well managed in comparison to the European societies. Franklin was born in America in such a situation that there were numerous problems and difficulties to accomplish goals in private and public spheres. It was necessary to improve the adverse situation of a society by solving the major problems. In such a situation, Franklin observes American society and its intricacies. American tackled with fundamental needs due to the scarcity of sufficient capital, lack of skilled manpower and political unawareness.

Franklin in his autobiography presents the contemporary socio, economic, political and cultural values in the form of personal narrative. He introduces different factors of contemporary life style in general and his family life in particular. New ideas in various genre such as technology, literature, etc. were developed to succeed in personal and social life. Socio economic and cultural condition was distinct in addition to political thoughts. The life for the people was complicated because of the different reasons such as lack of technology, poor economic condition and political unawareness.

The social condition during that period was certainly different in comparison to the twenty first century. Family structure was large, Franklin's family members were nineteen.. Society was not well literate and social harmony was not so strong. Education was not wide spread so people gave birth to many children. People actively participated in religious and cultural phenomenon. They used to cooperate each other in every difficulty. Although in the narrative Franklin describes about his personal and family matters, they represent the contemporary time and circumstance. Franklin was from the poor family background as he describes his various struggles in the narrative. He comes from the lower class family and struggles in order to make social condition better.

Generally, we see the problem of him only, but he was the representative of that period. Many people were compelled to live the life of difficulty and scarcity. Franklin himself involves in many fields in order to get money. He involves in printing, works as a professional writer. He works in different fields because he could not get appropriate money. In one way the economic condition was very poor in the other way the opportunity of

getting employment was increasing. So that he involves in diverse fields. There were many chances to get work. The political condition was also different during that period. At that time, people wanted changes in their life in many fields. There was the scarcity of basic needs, such as proper shelter, quality education, appropriate health services and other services provided by government. People were seeking such a person who can lead the society and whole country in the path of development. It was necessary to represent the various voices in good manner. Franklin, in this autobiography, directly and indirectly tends to appeal all the American citizens to think and to act in his direction.

By deeply studying the contemporary socio, economic and cultural aspects, Franklin thinks that it is necessary to change the society in various ways in different fields. Furthermore, he thinks that it is necessary to bring about change in the people's thoughts behaviors and work plan. He becomes the model to develop those qualities. Through the own acts, behaviours he teaches all the American people to act and think in the same line.

The narrator mentions about the personal behaviours and interest in surface, but there are the Significant values that they represent in reality. The narrator begins to write about his earlier life addressing to his own son telling the truth that he was emerged from the poverty and obscurity. Throughout the book, the narrator chronologically introduces his works that he completed in different times and situations. Franklin wants to show to his new generations about the contemporary situations and difficulties that he tackled in different situations. Franklin, in this autobiography creates own distinct identity. He becomes one of the most famous leader of that time in the history of America. He thinks that there is the possibility of new era and there is the possibility of changes in every field if there is strong will power. He asserts that he achieved his success through a solid work ethic . He takes material prosperity as the pre dominant factor for the all round development. He involves in various fields in order to gain money. He continuously uses all sorts of power to gain property in many ways. He uses merely the additional time to make money for liberty. He does not

feel tired and exhausted in his struggle towards making money.

The spread of democracy opened the ballot box to nearly white men allowing the democracy to dominate politics during the Second Party System. Wings representing wealthier planters, merchants, financiers, and the professionals wanted to modernize the society. The Federalists promoted the financial system of Treasury Secretary Hamilton, which emphasized federal assumption of state debts, a tariff to pay off those debts, a national bank to facilitate financing and encouragement of banking and manufacturing. The Republicans, based in the plantation.

Nasrullah Mambrol talks about Foucault's influence on New Historicism. According to him, truth is constructed. When power changes, the knowledge changes and truth also changes. Foucault understood power as continually articulated knowledge and vice versa. Mambrol further mentions that Foucault emphasizes that knowledge always endorses the positions of the power and that knowledge is created by power structure. Similarly, according to Mambrol, Foucault discusses about the limits of cultural knowledge and techniques of examining a broad array of documents in order to understand the epitome of particular time. The following extract supports the idea:

The anti-establishment ethos of New Historicism was profoundly influenced by Foucault's theory of power, knowledge and discourse. Foucault observed that the discourse of an era brings into being, concepts, oppositions and hierarchies which are products of power. Foucault based his approach both on his theory of the limits of collective, cultural knowledge and on his technique of examining a broad array of documents. (47)

There is a strong relationship among power, knowledge and truth. To be powerful, it is essential to have knowledge and if we have knowledge we can achieve power and truth. Franklin wants to be powerful by getting knowledge.

Jacques Derrida discusses about writing. He says that writing is not only to conceive the Leibnizian book. He mentions about the general concepts of writing and

suggests to write in the same manner. The following extract illustrate the concept:

To write is not only to conceive the Leibnizian on book as an impossibility possibility. Impossible possibility the limit explicitly named by Mallarme. In general, all books contain the amalgamation of a certain number of age old truth; that actually there is only one book on earth, that is the law of the earth. The difference between individual works is simply, the difference between individual, inter perfection of one true and established text. To write is not only to know that through writing, through the extremities of style, the best will not necessarily transpire.(10)

Any literary writing is not only writing letters on book, rather there should be certain kind of value. Writing should reflect the contemporary situation. In Franklin's writing we can find appropriate meaning in relation to the context.

Merriam Websder argues that New historicism is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of power, society or ideology in a given time. Similarly, he says that New historicism seeks to find meaning in a text by concerning the work with in the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. History is not mere chrocinicle of facts on events but rather a complex description of human reality of preconceived notions. (32)

Revista Alicantina mentions that new historicism has relatively delayed effect on American studies. His idea is that Foucault's theory of power, knowledge was so immediately attractive to scholars. The great problem of American society for the new historicism then is that the state power in the United states has historically been weak and decentralized. This theme can be reflected in the following extract:

This is true, I think, and I also think that there is another reason why the New Historicism has had a relatively delayed effects on American Studies. This is the dominance within American studies of an "American Self" tradition goes to back to Perry Millers pioneering studies of Puritanism in the 1940s and

1950s, and which has lasted until virtually the present moment. For a discipline that studies American culture in the name of an “American self” that is variously represented in art and literature and politics will not lend itself readily to a theorist like Foucault.(18)

We can see the relations of power, knowledge and discourse as Foucault discusses in this autobiography. When Benjamin Franklin arose from the lower class and manipulated different sorts of business and industry then he became powerful. People began to follow him and his idea became truth. In the beginning, he was struggling for the survival and he was not in the center of the people and nation. His desire of changing society becomes success only when he gets material prosperity.

An American Historicist, Tim Lambort discusses about the historical contexts of eighteenth century America in terms of food and drink, clothing, work, recreation, religion etc. He mentions that American life at first was very hard and rough. People faced many problems and life was not so luxurious. Their food and clothing were common and ordinary. He further points out that most people in America lived by farming. It was very difficult occupation. Most of the time, they used to engage in the field. Similarly, religious conflict was a problem. This idea can be reflected in the following extract:

At first the life was hard and rough in the north American Colonies. Their houses were often small and crowded and their furniture was basic. In the eighteenth century, men wore breeches and stockings and women wore stays and hooped petticoats under their dresses. Most people in America lived by farming. It was backbreaking work and usually lasted from dawn to dusk. In the early eighteenth century, there was a great religious revival in North American Colonies.(Later it was given the name ‘The Great Awakening.’)(36)

In this autobiography, there is the reflection of common life style as Franklin narrates in different parts. People of America were not so extravagant in their daily life. No industrialization was developed and they were busy in believes farming.

In the process of struggling and involving in hard work that even poor and marginalized persons can establish their own industry and different sorts of business and can become the great figure of America. By giving more emphasize to hard work, punctuality and honesty they can fulfill their dream. Generally the story is told from the perspective of only one person , but he was the representative of contemporary American society. In this very personal narrative, the major issue is that whether his thoughts and works really represent the contemporary situations. As this is an autobiography, he describes about his personal success and failure. He mentions in this narrative about his private interest , aims and activities. In most of the part, he elaborates about his study and business. He wandered in diverse places and sectors in order to gain knowledge at first and to gain money in later stage of life. He worked as an author, printer, scientist, civic activist and diplomat. Even to gain knowledge , he enrolled in various grammar school. He involves in different work fields in his life. In this particular situation, the main concern here is that how these all represent eighteenth century life style.

There is the representation of socio political and cultural norms and values in this personal narrative. Throughout the book, he mentions about the work ethic, thirst for knowledge and fondness for reading. Intellectualism flourished along with scientific inventions and advanced in political thoughts. Many people held the optimistic belief that men could be perfected through scientific and political progress. The following extract describes the situation:

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was over laid out in books. Pleased with the pilgrim's progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan;s works in separate little volumes. I after ward sold them to enable me to buy R.Burton's Historical collection; they were small chapman's books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly books of polemic divinity most of which I read and have since often regretted that at a time for knowledge , more proper books had not

fallen in my way, since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman.(10)

Franklin wonders to different grammar school to improve his writing skills. This changing tendency shows that he has hunger for knowledge. At the age of ten, once he was taken from school and put to work with his father.

Optimism is an important representing value of the early eighteenth century which can be seen in the Franklin's autobiography. Franklin involves in various fields in order to get money with the hope of getting success in each sector. He inspires to his friends and upcoming generations to be optimistic. Franklin preferred the things that were related to costiveness. The following extract is illustrative of this point:

I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive assuming manner that seldom fails to disgust tends to create opposition and defeat everyone of those purposes for which speech was given to us to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure. For, if you would inform a positive and dogmatic manner in advancing your sentiments may provoke contradiction and prevent a candid attention. (15)

A man should think always positively and he should have the hope of positive result. People who have pessimism cannot taste the success in their life. Franklin, in this autobiography as he narrates is always optimistic. As a result he achieves his goals.

The issue of morality was strong in the time of Franklin in America. People thought that it was necessary to be obedient in the given task to achieve success in their life. The culture of morality was developed as he describes in the autobiography. Franklin, himself is the evidence of this concept. He performs every activity very honestly and actively. He always reminds the suggestions given by his father, friends and all well wishers. He thinks that it is better to follow the fixed rules and regulations to complete any great work. The following extract illustrates the concept:

It was about this time, I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection . I wished to live without committing any fault at any time. I

would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do one and avoid the other. (84)

The reflection of the contemporary society regarding the gender issue can be seen in this autobiography. There was dispute that whether female can learn as male or not. Gender discrimination was prevalent during that time. Many people thought that female cannot learn education easily as male and they also believe that male and female have different learning abilities. Male used to dominate female in various ways. In this autobiography, Franklin introduces the situation of gender issue in beautiful manner. The following extract highlights the case in point:

A question was once somehow or often started between Collins and me, of the property of educating the female sex in learning and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words, and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reason. (12)

There was gender discrimination in his life time in America. People's thinking of male superiority was in existence and they behave female differently. It is essential to treat both male and female equally for social harmony and development.

Franklin wanted to teach the lesson of good manner and morality which is indispensable for the socio- economic development of the society. Morality was the concern of great matter in the contemporary society. The given extract describes the situation:

It was about this time I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time ; I would conjure all that either natural inclination, custom or company might lead me into. As I knew , or thought I knew, what was right and wrong. I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. (84)

Franklin in his life works hard in a good manner. He completes his task appropriately and suggests other people do in the same manner. Even while studying, working in house, involving in writing, he completes the duty honestly.

Franklin tries to make the American to be independent. His concern during that period was to make the people involved in various business and other fields in order to bring about change in their life. He teaches the lesson of hard work and self employment. His idea was that when every person becomes success to live happily then the country becomes developed. Similarly, he emphasizes to respect all sorts of occupation which leads to the all round development of the country. The following extract helps to illustrate the idea:

Human felicity is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day. Thus, if you teach a poor young man to shave himself, and keep his razor in order, you may contribute more to the happiness of his life than in giving him a thousand gayness . The money be soon, spent, the regret only remaining of having foolishly consumed it, but in the other case, he escapes the frequent vexation of waiting for barbers and of their sometimes dirty fingers, offensive breaths, dull razors, he shaves when most convenient to him, enjoys daily the pleasure of its being done with a good instrument. (133)

He realizes the drawbacks of dependency upon European countries, and manipulates industries in America. Similarly, he reinforces to others to involve in different sorts or economic activities.

Farely Grubb introduces the important contribution of Franklin in bringing change in the economy of then American society. The economy of America in Franklin's time changed from carter to paper money based economy. The given extract represents concise view of Grubb in this regard:

Franklin starts his pamphlet by noting that a lack of to transact trade within the province carries heavy cost because the alternative to paper money is not gold

and silver coins, which through trade have all been shipped off to England, but barter. Barter, in turn, increases the cost of local exchange and so lowers wages, employment and immigration. Money scarcity also causes high local interest rates which reduces investment and slows development. Paper money will solve these problems.(13)

There was dispute regarding the paper money in his time. It was difficult to carry out daily activities through gold and silver coins. Most of the people realized the necessity of paper money and Franklin takes the favor of developing paper money.

Steven Forde explores Franklin's hidden vision of democratic society in his autobiography. Along with this vision comes other supporting visions, social harmony and profit making business enterprise. Any culture rooted in firm economic foundation has the maxims likelihood to succeed. Forde makes the following remarks in association with his part of thematic preoccupation:

Franklin's autobiography was written in part to provide a model for the emerging democratic individual and democratic culture of America. His teaching in the world has been subject to severe criticisms from the beginning, though it has had many defends too. Neither friend nor foe, however has taken a sustained look at the autobiography itself to explore its teaching in detail. Franklin's presentation of the relationship of wealth and virtue, his utilitarianism, and his vision of democratic society is remarkable. He finds a subtle and to bust idea deftly calculated to educate and elevate American culture. (10)

In the time of Franklin, the democratic values were not developed perfectly. In such a situation, he wants to develop the democratic exercises among the people. He gives equal priority to all people while doing any work. He address to the every community and people coming from different social, economic, and political background.

In course of writing and publishing journals and pamphlets, Franklin is impacted by

European journalism. His purpose of writing journals is to foster the ethos of enlightenment in eighteenth century America. Anything that promotes the ethos of enlightenment is reflecting to the narrator. He says “ Indeed I had some cause of believe that the defense of the country was not disagreeable to any of them, provided they were not required to assist it” (116). As he reflect on this side of progressive thought, he also happens to be a dynamic. He further mentions “And I found that a much greater number of them than I could have imagined, though against offensive war, were clearly for the defensive. Many pamphlets pro and con were published on the subject and some by good Quakers.”(116)

This autobiography is the epitome of Franklin’s sprit. Benjamin Franklin through this autobiography provides the special qualities in each of his multiple careers which remained as characteristically American. He was one of the great example of eighteenth century. He constructed multiple careers and becomes one of the greatest leader in various ways. In another way, we can understand this autobiography as the Franklin’s brilliance. We can see how a person’s life and character could become a noble one through constant self assessment. It is the story representing the essence of American morality.

Similarly, it can be analyzed that this autobiography is about the original American dream. Those activities and lessons of morality that reflect in the autobiography are the American dream . He usually advises on the virtue of humanity. This autobiography is very much worth reading as this gives a complete picture of Franklin’s life and time. Franklin mentions in this narrative about the different circumstances of the eighteenth century American life and history.

Early eighteenth century was the period of discovering new knowledge and scope of various working opportunity. People used to involve in different fields in order to get success in their life. There were many chances to work and they had the opportunity to choose the work. Franklin himself worked as printer, author, civic activist etc. When the problem arouse in one sector, then he used to leave it and started another. This sort of tendency in one way helped to be independent and in another way it contributed for ling term

economic development. This idea can be reflected in the following extract:

I now took leave of printing, as I thought, forever, and was daily employed in my new business, going about with Mr. Denham among the tradesman to purchase various articles and seeing them packed up, doing errands, calling upon workman to dispatch, etc and when all was on board, I had a few days' leisure. On one of these days I was, to my surprise, sent for by a great man I knew only by name, a Sir William Windham, and I waited upon him.(49)

In 1742, Franklin invents the stove which becomes widespread within his lifetime.

Similarly, he brings new ideas of changing society in various ways such as socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Hardworking was another important representing value in the early eighteenth century America. All the people including Franklin used to hard work to get success in their lives. They believed that progress is in own hand and it can be fulfilled only through continuous hard work Indolent persons cannot achieve success and they are unable to taste the real life. The following extract helps to delineate the situations:

Thus I spent about eighteen months in London; most part of the time I worked hard at my business, and spent but little upon myself except in seeing plays and in books. My friend Ralph had kept me poor; he owed me about twenty seven pounds, which I was now never likely to receive; a great sum out of my small earnings. I loved him, notwithstanding, for he had many amiable qualities.(49)

Early eighteenth century American people were tend to be ambitious. Franklin himself was an ambitious person. He participated in great tasks although he knows about the further difficulties and risks. He followed the certain work plan and continued the task honestly. He did not become hopeless even if he got failure in many times. His idea is that continuity is indispensable to complete any task. The following extract is helpful to support the idea:

In truth, I found myself incorrigible with respect to Order; and now I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensible the want of it. But on the whole, tho I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell for short of it, yet I was, by the endeavor, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it.(92)

Franklin involves in printing and writing continuously in spite of the financial and technological problems. He hopes to change the life of many people in America. He was increasing his business to move the society ahead.

Charles Angoff points out chief features of personal journey. The very rise of the narrator from poverty to celebrity is one of the most fascinating thematic expressions.

Dealing with this thematic concern, Angoff makes the following remarks:

One of the leading themes of the autobiography and one that Franklin takes evident pleasure in emphasizing is his own astonishing rise from poverty and obscurity. One of the stated purposes of the work is to accentuate the contrast between his humble beginning and his later success and to show the means by which it was accomplished. Franklin invites us to contemplate the contrast between his first, bedraggled appearance in Philadelphia and prosperity and reputation he has since achieved there.(75)

He was born in ordinary family and his great desire of achieving social changes leads him to the many places. He moves from Boston to Philadelphia and sometimes London and other main cities. He becomes success in his life through hard work.

Paul Smith comments Franklin's view on religion. Though a committed man to scientific pursuit and experiment, he affirms his fervent faith in the grace of redemptive value of religion. Regarding this, Smith makes the following remarks:

Benjamin Franklin is widely celebrated as a key historical figure in shaping our nation's foundation. In addition to being remembered fondly from a modern perspective Franklin achieved international celebrity- status within his

own lifetime in France, for example, his face was the most recognizable image in the country. However, Franklin's position in the history is marked not only by his role in the revolutionary war and the founding of the U.S. but also for his embodiment of the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment.(12)

William Daun Howells asserts that Franklin is one of the greatest autobiographies in literature, and towers over other autobiographies as Franklin towered over other men. However, Mark Twain's essay "The Late Benjamin Franklin" (1870) provides a less exalted reaction. Franklin develops some capacity of leadership from the early life. He mentions that he had a strong inclination for the sea. He has learnt to swim very early. In the beginning, he dislike the trade but his father declares against it. To become a great leader , it is essential to develop the qualities of good leader in the early life. He had the ability to manage the difficult situations. So his father and other people in the community provide him the authority of handling various difficult tasks. This theme can be proved by the following extract:

I disliked the trade and had a strong inclination for the sea, but my father declared against it; however, living near the water, I was much in about it, learnt early to swim well, and to manage boats; and when in a boat or canoe with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially a leader among the boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty.(7)

Franklin teaches the lesson that it is very necessary to respect the parents even if they are dead. He always respect his parents and other family members which is essential to develop the various qualities in the life. He mentions that he does not know either his father or mother to have any sickness. He places a marble over their grave, with the inscription:

JOSIAH FRANKLIN,

And

ABIAH his wife,

Lie here interred.
They lived lovingly together in wedlock
Fifty five years.
Without an estate, or any gainful employment,
By constant labor and industry,
With God's blessing.(9)

Respecting to the parents is one of the important aspects of social life. Franklin always remembers to his father and mother. He coordinates to his brother and wants to maintain family life in perfect harmony. He always remembers to his parents even after death.

One aspect of his successful life is that his involving with people of diverse field and knowledge. He meets with Mr. Andrew Hamilton, a famous lawyer of Philadelphia. Keimer, who had a printing house, Sir William Keith, governor of the province, Ralph, who was inclined to pursue the study of poetry (36). This type of making partner in the business shows that many ideas can help to bring success in human life. Franklin talks about the morals and principles to become successful in business. He mentions that behind the success in business, his principles and morals play the vital role. He expects that all people should have some sort of knowledge, morals and principles to fulfill his/ her predetermined goals. This theme can be supported by the following extract:

Before I enter upon my public appearance in business, it may be well to let you know the then stable of mind with regard to my principle and morals, that you may see how for those influenc'd the future everything of my life. My parents had already given me religious impressions and brought me through my childhood piously in the Dissenting way. (56)

In defining autobiography, Smith Sedonia and Julia Watson give emphasize memory as meaning –making. They argue that the writer of autobiography depends to access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that

experiential history. They further mention that memory is the both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts. To illustrate this concept, they make the following remarks:

As memory researchers from fields as diverse as neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and philosophy have argued, remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present. The process is not the positive one of mere retrieval from a memory bank. Rather, the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering (16).

Smith Sedonia and Julia Watson discuss about the life narrative and biography. They point out the similarities and differences between life narrative and biography. This concept becomes clear from the given extract:

Although life narrative and biography both are modes of narrating lives, they are not interchangeable, no matter how often people subsume both under biography and think of autobiography, as the biography someone writes about him or herself. In fact, although both forms narrate a life, they do so quite differently. In biography, scholars of other people's lives document and interpret those lives from the point of view external to the subject. In life narrative, people write about their own lives (even when they write about themselves in the second or third person, or as a member of a community and do so simultaneously from internalized and internal point of view) (8).

Franklin writes about himself and contemporary situations. He writes about his life describing how he becomes popular in the society. He writes about his difficulties, happiness and personal desire throughout the Autobiography. He writes in the form of Autobiography.

Paul Hamilton discusses about the ancient historians and history. He gives the example of Aristotle and Cicere and their concept of history. Similarly, he deals with history and poetry. This theme presents in the following extract:

When we look back to the ancient historians, we find just this tangle of common concerns rather than Aristotle's clear demarcation of purposes. In a

famous aside in *De Legibus*, Cicero tries to stick to the Aristotelian agenda, but he is obliged to concede that in practice distinctions become blurred: 'different principles are to be followed in history and poetry for in history the standarder by which everything is judged is the truth, while in poetry it is generally for pleasure one.'(8)

As this is an autobiography, Franklin confesses the reality that happened and he encountered in his different time period. The theme of self assertion and longing with reconnection with homeland exist side by side. It was compulsory to do the task that may be highly risk in various ways in order to adjust in competitive society. Franklin thinks that human beings are competitive in nature and they should involve in hard work to achieve the predetermined goals. As a lower class man, to upgrade in upper class and to change the society it was both challenges and opportunity. Challenge in the sense that the condition of infrastructure and social, economic, and cultural phenomenon was not favorable . Opportunity in the sense that there were lots of chances to improve the society and the chance of taking leadership to lead the society ahead. This theme makes the entire narrative a dynamic expression of seeker's pride. Concentrating on this aspect of the narrative, Pryse adds:

Franklin's narrative modulates between an aggressive of self as an uncompromising arbiter of value on behalf of an oppressed community and a longing for reconnection with an ideal as seeker's supplement informs us that would restore freedom loving heart and a broken body to the safety and security of family members in a new England. (4)

There is conflicting mind to the narrator. The narrator is torn between despair and dignity. The narrator wants to be free but he trapped by many difficulties and unfavorable situations. Radical change seldom occurs in society. The narrator expects many changes at once. Therefore, it is necessary for the narrator to compromise with the many unfavorable

situations.

Ferguson carefully points out the use of direct speech in the narrative of Franklin. He argues that the repeated use of direct speech intends to create an aura of resistance. The narrative has dialogic structure. It offers scope for various interpretive possibilities. Ferguson includes the point further:

The narrator uses direct and reported speech to create the background necessary for his own voice. He repeats and refashions the words of resistance that are the legacy of his own community, giving special attention to the words of love and support from her brother, his father and his mother. Self is crafted in dialogue with the voice of fellow slaves and voice of the world that opposes it. (16)

The self is embedded in the language that he uses in the narrative. The subjectivity of the narrator is shaped by the language. The use of direct speech in this narrative is to highlight the historical sense. The use of direct speech in the narrative is also for giving priority to the description of character's conflict.

Smith and Watson also argue that the discursive nature of experience requires us to be self reflexive about what we understand as "our experience" or what stand as "our or what we think of we mean when we say things like " That's just my experience" or "I am a man." These things called experience is as Scoot cautions "at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation."(37)

Although all these critics and reviewers examined the autobiography of Franklin from different points of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, one of them notice how this autobiography represents the various aspects of early eighteenth century America. This was the time when industrialization and commercialization have gained massive progress, the fate and future of financially weak people remain bleak. The adverse situation created by economic hardship compels people to exchange feelings and emotions

with monetary worth. The impact of low pay job, dissatisfaction, exploitation and various other evils of mercantile capitalism has poiled the emotional strength and vitality of those who are committed to bring in American society. In this very circumstance, Franklin becomes an example of radical leader in order to bring about change in the life of American people. He helps to develop the concept of work ethic, industrial development and cultural reformation. He himself begins industry and teaches the lesson that American people can bring change in their life in different ways.

In the process of analyzing this autobiography, we can see the mainly four parts. Part first of the autobiography begins by addressing to Franklin's son William. His main intend here is to inform his son about the father's life. Throughout this part, he talks about the family members, friends, relatives and their activities. According to Franklin he and his friends establish their business and plan to start a newspaper.

Similarly, the second part begins with two letters that the Franklin received in the early 1780s while in Paris. In the letters his fiends encourage him to continue the autobiography. Mr Benjamin Vaughan in his letter tells the reasons why he should publish remaining parts. Furthermore he mentions that it will more ever present a table of the internal circumstances of the country and will very much tend to invite to it settlers of virtuous and mainly minds. In the third part , there is the description of the events which occurred when Franklin returned to Philadelphia.

According to Charles Eliot Franklin was concerning himself more and more with public affairs. He set forth a scheme for an Academy which was taken up later and finally developed into the University of Pennsylvania. Furthermore, he founded an "American Philosophical Society" for the purpose of enabling scientific man to communicate their discoveries to one another. In politics, he proved very able both as an administrator and as a controversialist. His most notable service in home politics was his reform of the pastel system.

Smith analysis this autobiography in different ways. He mentions that

Franklin's autobiography is different from every other life story of a great and successful man is just this human aspect of the account. Franklin told the story of his life as he himself says, for the benefit of his poverty. He wanted to help them by the relation of his own rise from obscurity and poverty to eminence and wealth. He is not unmindful of the importance of his public services and their recognition.

There are other reasons according to Smith why the autobiography should be an intimate friend of American young people. Here they may establish a close relationship with one of the foremost Americans as well as one of the wisest men of his age. According to him, the life of Franklin is importance to every American primarily because of the part he played in securing the independence of the United States and establishing it as a nation. Franklin shares with Washington the honors of the revolution and of the events leading to birth of new nation. He is also interesting to us because by his life and teachings he has done more than any other American to advance the material prosperity of his countryman.

Franklin thinks that education is one of the most important factor to change the society. Taking this sense in mind he establishes a library where many books articles and other important information were collected and kept safely. He realizes the many advantages of this collection. Many people can visit and study and learn different sorts of knowledge which ultimately help in the development . Here the purpose of establishing of library and printing press is not merely the commercial but also the purpose of teaching the common people. He thinks that uneducated people cannot help in the process of development rather they hinder in the changes in various ways. Franklin realizes the various advantages of opening library. This theme can be find in the following extract:

Finding the advantages of this little collection, I propos'd to render the benefit from books more common by commencing a public subscription library. The libraries were augmented by donations; reading became fashionable and our people, having no public amusement to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books. (80)

To move the society in the path of development, education is one of the most important infrastructure. This produces the appropriate knowledge and human manpower to the country. In his time, library becomes an important means of providing education.

According to Rupa Publications Benjamin Franklin is best known for being one of the founding fathers of United States of America. He was also hailed as the first great philosopher and man of letters of the New World. A man of wide ranging interests, he gained renown as an author, printer, scientist and diplomat- all the more creditable, given that he had little by way of formal education. Similarly, this book is an inspirational and unique account of one of the most versatile and talented man in colonial America.

Benjamin Franklin in this autobiography mentions about the paper money. He says that about this time there was a cry among the people for more paper money, only fifteen thousand pounds being extent in the province and that soon to be sunk. He further says that wealthy inhabitants opposed and addition being against all paper currency from an apprehension that it would deprecate as it had done in new England (64). There was debate regarding the existence of paper currency and Franklin is serious about this matter. Franklin says “ Our debates possess’ d me so fully of the subject that I wrote and printed an anonymous pamphlet on it entitled The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency (65). The utility of this currency was increasing as it grew soon to fifty five thousand and pounds to eighty thousand pounds. He takes this as a means of profit making business as he says” I soon after obtained, thro’ my friend Hamilton, the printing of the New Castel Money another profitable job”. (65)

In the course of struggling, Franklin points out the different sorts of obstacles including bad persons. He mentions that sometimes people can give such suggestions which mislead the appropriate direction of success. In this autobiography we can see the different people having different manner as Franklin introduces. Franklin mentions that one of the persons gave him bad suggestion in his life. This theme can be seen in the following extract:

There are croakers in every country always boding its ruin. Such as one then lived in Philadelphia; a person of note an elderly man with a wise look and a very grave manner of speaking. And he gave me such a detail of misfortunes now existing or that were soon to exist that left me half melancholy. (58)

Franklin's desire of making society more moral and well managed, he uses different ideas. He establishes a club and makes rules to be followed by all. According to the rule every member should attend in JUNTO and should discuss on any point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy.

There is the philosophical expression in this autobiography as he expresses his thoughts very wisely. He digs out the different sorts of evils, nature of the human kind, their behaviors, reality, pride and the different types of ambiguous matter. He honestly analyzes the surrounding in various ways. He experiences all sorts of struggles, miseries and other matter that help and hinder in the development. He especially points out the human nature and their activities in this autobiography. This theme can be seen in the following extract:

In reality there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive and will every now and then peep out show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.(95)

There may be any problems in a life. Franklin, to live in quality life struggles a lot throughout in his life. Life is not always straight as we expect and we should face many difficulties. Franklin's philosophical thinking leads him to a successful career.

According to French historian Georges Gusdorf Autobiography is a recent and not very Widely distributed literary genre. Regarding autobiography he makes the following remarks:

Autobiography is limited in time and space; it has not always existed nor does it exist everywhere. Its conscious awareness of the singularity of each

individual life is the late product of a specific civilization. Autobiography becomes possible only under certain metaphysical preconditions. The man who talks trouble to tell him knows that the present differs from the past and that it will not be repeats in the future. (6)

Franklin was one of the leading writer of autobiography in his time. The genre of Autobiography was not developed and Franklin wrote an autobiography and the trend of writing autobiography develops more and more. It is not widely spread genre of literature. Autobiography becomes possible when a person faces great difficulties and they are distinct from past and future.

During the time of Franklin , the writing of autobiography was not very popular. He wrote this autobiography especially targeting to his new generations to inform the different circumstances of his time. John W. Scott talks about the relation of subject and language in autobiographical text. He mentions that subjects know themselves in language. Subject is embedded in discursive language. In this regard, Scott makes following remarks:

Subjects know themselves in language because experience is discursive embedded in the language of everyday life and the knowledge produced at every day sites. For instance, through the discourse of medical institutions, persons learn to understand themselves ,experience themselves patients in need of healing or insufficient bodies in need of surgical intervention.(26)

There are certain human experiences outside the orbit of discursivity. Sometimes language used by narrator reflects the subject matter. Some examples of human experiences are feelings of body, feelings of spirituality and powerful sensory memories. These non discursive experiences need self-reflexivity on the part of analyst.

Literary writing including autobiography may include some exaggerations in reality. The author can add some extra incidents while exploring his/her feelings and experiences. In other words , sometimes the author can become selfish and the reader may not believe all the descriptions. In autobiography there may be some confessions as well. Concerning this

aspect, James Olney makes the following arguments:

What is of particular interest to us in a consideration of the creative achievements of men and the relationship of these achievements to a life lived, on the one hand an autobiography of that life on the other is isolate, uniqueness that nearly everyone agrees to be the primary quality and condition of the individual and his experience.(4)

To be honest is one of the important aspects in literary writing including Autobiography. Sometime the author creates artificial truth in a text to highlight the issue to make it more important. He inserts his private self in describing the life.

In this autobiography Franklin describes about the thirteen virtues (85). He argues that these all virtues are very essential to the life of a person and country as well. These include; Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity and Humility. He mentions that he practiced all these all virtues in life and to some extent he achieved all virtues and simultaneously he inspires all the citizens to develop these virtues. He argues that if the people apply these virtues, they can change their life and the condition of the country. In obtaining these virtues, he realizes that silence was comparatively more easy to obtain (86). Similarly, order was most difficult to apply. His intend here is to develop the all virtues to the all citizens and they ultimately contribute the all-round development of the country. He also suggests that to gain these virtues one must be strict and punctual on their commitment.

Benjamin Franklin in this autobiography has clearly mentioned about the political matters. He observes and analyzes the political scene of the contemporary America. He mentions about the dirty activities of political parties. He also mentions about the importance of political parties and suggests to act in good manner. He mentions the political context in the following extract:

That the great affairs of the world the war, revolutions, etc are carried on and affected by parties, that the view of these parties is their present general

interest, or what to be such. That the different views of these different parties occasion all confusion . That while a party is carrying on a general design, each man has his particular private interest in view. (96)

Human beings are not separated from the politics and Franklin also gives interest in politics. There exist different views regarding politics and sometimes people fall in confusion. One party carries one vision and each man has particular private interest.

Franklin in this narrative discusses about the importance of employment and adverse effects of unemployment giving several examples. According to him, if people involve in work they become busy and enjoy the life, on the contrary, if they are jobless they involve in different kinds of social evils which ultimately hinders in the all-round development of the society and country. So he suggests all the citizens to involve in any work regularly. This theme is represented in the following extract:

This gave me occasion to observe, that, when men are employed, they are best contented, for on the days they worked they were good natur'd and cheerful, and with the consciousness of having done a good day's work they spent the evening jolly: but on the our idle days they were mutinous and quarrelsome. (154)

There was the problem of employment in his time. Many people were free and involved into negative activities. There were not sufficient chances of getting job during that period. It was necessary to create job opportunity to make people involve on different works.

There is the reflection of common life style in the narrative. As he talks about his family condition, including decoration of the kitchen and bedroom, it can be said that there was the feeling of simple living and high thinking. Similarly, Franklin mentions about the importance of family relationships. He intends to realize that group activity leads to great success. Each member should perform their task honestly and completely. This idea is supported by the following extract:

We have an English proverb that says," He that would thrive must ask his

wife.” She assisted me cheerfully in my business by folding and stitching pamphlets, tending shop etc. We kept no idle servant, our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest . For instance, my breakfast was a long time bread and milk, and I ate it out of a two penny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon.(82)

In the time of under development of technology and economy, life does not become luxurious. People were struggling for fundamental needs. There were many problems to make prosperous life. So people lived in simple way.

Franklin takes religion as a general matter. He neither strongly supports nor completely deny the importance of religion. His view here is very important for religious tolerance which can help in maintaining peaceful society. According to Franklin, religious conflict is very dangerous for the society. So he takes middle path regarding religion. The following extract support the idea:

Tho’ I seldom attended any public worship, I had still an opinion of its property, and of its utility when rightly conducted ,and I regularly paid my annual subscription for the support of the only Presbyterian minister or meeting we had in Philadelphia. He used to visit me sometimes as a friend, and admonish me to attend his administrations, and I was now and then prevailed on to do so, once for five Sundays successively.(83)

There are many religions on the world and they have own views to look the universe. The ultimate destination of any religion is same only they take different path. There must be religious tolerance in the society.

Franklin by writing this autobiography is not only telling about his personal matters but also telling the very important norms and values that are necessary to every people for their success. He inspires all the contemporary citizens to behave in good manner and act honestly, to think positively and emphasizes to improve their habits and work ethic which can lead the American society always forward.

The major finding of this research is that eighteenth century America was dependent upon England in various ways such as culturally, commercially, and politically. During that period, America was not capable to develop books, new ideas, life style fashion, culture etc. Even after the movement of independence, for few years America was not able to invent everything it needs. In this very circumstance, Benjamin Franklin tries his best to bring radical changes on culture, politics, work ethic, education and many more other ingredients of social changes. He emphasizes the development of education and trade. He himself involves in press and inspires all the citizens to engage in different sectors very actively.

America was not developed although there were sufficient sources of development. There was only scarcity of clear vision and strong commitment including successful leadership to move the country in the path of development. After realizing the drawbacks of dependence, he manipulates his will power to various sectors and tries to make the country independent culturally, commercially and politically. His involvement in more than one field shows that he was willing to change the many sectors.

One special and most important issue that Franklin raises from this autobiography is work ethic representing the aforementioned thirteen virtues. He shows the solid work ethic and expect from all citizens the same. Similarly, he develops the different virtues in his life and wants to transfer these qualities in every citizens which ultimately contribute in the all round development of America. In fact, Franklin was serious and worry about the huge dependency on England. He thinks it was necessary to change the life of people and country as a whole. The success story of the narrator, his family and his friends can be the model of hard work and strong commitment to achieve the predetermined goals. Franklin emphasizes the business as he himself involves in different trades including printing press. He thinks that business is the engine of economic development.

Suffering from various aspects such as poor economic background, unmanaged political system and illiteracy he lessons that hard work and good virtues leads to the maximum satisfactions and development. He does not afraid from any difficulties rather he

tackles the problems as great opportunity. Although he encounters financial scarcity, lack of appropriate environment to work, cultural backwardness, and the illiterate society he does not feel tired and continuously move forward to minimize these problems to become success to his huge mission.

Franklin through this autobiography reinforces the all available power ingredients including human resources. He teaches the lesson that bright future and sound health is in their own hand. He further suggests that indolent persons never taste the success and satisfaction in their life. Most of the personal voices in the narrative represent enthusiasm, positive thinking, appropriate manner, struggle for surviving and the ultimate intention here is to develop such qualities in every citizens for the development of America. During the long course of his life, he contributed the American society as a politician, an author, scientist, social activist etc. His celerity on vision and mission, America became well managed country. His desire of changing society economically, commercially, culturally did not stop even if he tackled with various difficulties and hardships. Franklin also tries to eliminate the immoral and bad social practices such as drinking alcohol gambling etc Franklin and his friend strictly forbade the selling any liquor to the people who were extremely apt to get drunk (125). He believes that social evils and immoral activities are dangerous for the social development. In fact, it was not easy to complete the desired works in the contemporary situations. Franklin's unstable practices made him successful. He thinks that great success is behind the great challenges. He realizes that optimism is very important for doing any great works.

Finally, it can be said that the change in culture, economy, politics, commerce etc was indispensable and simultaneously there were many challenges to overcome but not impossible. There was only the lack of successful leader, strong commitment and solid plan and work ethic. There was the necessity of unity among the diverse people. Franklin makes his clear vision which helped to make prosperous America.

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