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## Robinson Crusoe as a Text : Cultural Encounter



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### **Abstract :**

*The relationship between Robinson Crusoe and Friday lightens on the east, the west, and their culture. Defoe reminds us about "German Capital Punishment" which was still in practice. In a sense, it gives the pattern of colonial language, cultural dialectics and colonization in 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Robinson is a Whiteman whereas Friday belongs to black-white. There is a common between Crusoe and Friday that is, the different habits, cultures and convictions and modes of perception. The common ground between both of them that is to share is the chance of being human beings. Defoe has questioned 'the cultural displacement'. The relationship between Robinson and Friday is a paradigm of colonial relationship. Robinson and Friday develops to such an intimate bond of relationship that Friday forgets his country, his home and becomes close friend of Crusoe. For the love, affection and selflessness, which Crusoe treats,*

*Friday is recompensed generating in Friday unconditional and selfless surrender to the master. Nonetheless, one of the greatest achievements of Crusoe as a man of faith is the success in transforming Friday into a loyal and committed servant. Friday puts forth that his people are originated from the mighty river Orinoco; his God is Venamuckhi and priests are called Oowookeke who can talk to God. Defoe comments on oow as a fictional name. He exposes the age of the supremacy of priestly class, irrespective of the temporal.*

*In this way, Defoe's perception of Robinson and Friday's relationship is a paradigm of his genius who has brought out cultural encounter in this particular text.*

**Keywords :** *Cultural encounter, Friday, Crusoe, slave, master*

### **Research Paper :**

The story has since been perceived to be based on the life of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish castaway who lived for four years on the Pacific island called "Más a Tierra", now part of Chile, which was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island in 1966,<sup>[3]</sup> but various literary sources have also been suggested. Despite its simple narrative style, *Robinson Crusoe* was well received in the literary world and is often credited as marking the beginning of realistic fiction as a literary genre. Before the end of 1719, the book had already run through four editions, and it has gone on to become one of the most widely published books in history, spawning numerous sequels and adaptations for stage, film, and television.

Robinson Crusoe is all about the story of a young man who becomes resolute to go to the sea. In fact, it is the story of his choice, wisdom, experience and enlightenment of White-Anglo-Saxon. Why makes Robinson Crusoe go to the sea? It is the choice of Robinson Crusoe, which makes him leave his home and go to the sea. The choice and suffering are interconnected and interdependent. They often correlate with each other. On one hand, he had a choice to lead a comfortable life and to go to the sea is another one.

Robinson Crusoe is the story of an Englishman that has been castaway on a remote tropical island for 28 years. The story may be based on the true-life events of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish castaway that survived four years on a Pacific island. This classic tale of adventure features cannibals, captives and mutineers. Some regard it as the very first novel written in English.

Crusoe was in deep fascination of voyage, therefore his innate lust for an adventure forces him to face the hardships on a desolate island. Defoe himself declared that the book was an allegory of his own life. Conspicuously, the story is an allegory of an individual's moral

growth wherein a Christian young boy who unfriendly suffers for a long time on an uninhabited desolated island and spends his miserable days on it. Robinson Crusoe is the classic of English prose fiction and Crusoe is an epitome of the idealized portrait of Defoe himself.

According to J.P. Hunter, Robinson is not a hero but an everyman. He begins as a wanderer, aimless on a sea he does not understand, and ends as a pilgrim, crossing a final mountain to enter the promised land. The book tells the story of how Robinson becomes closer to God, not through listening to sermons in a church but through spending time alone amongst nature with only a Bible to read.

Conversely, cultural critic and literary scholar Michael Gurnow views the novel from a Rousseauian perspective. In "The Folly of Beginning a Work Before We Count the Cost: Anarcho-Primitivism in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe," the central character's movement from a primitive state to a more civilized one is interpreted as Crusoe's denial of humanity's state of nature.<sup>[17]</sup>

In the words of John Drinkwater, "Daniel Defoe was the founder of English novel. Defoe succeeded in episodic constructions that seem historically dear and perfect. However, J. W. Beach calls "Robinson Crusoe and Kidnapped (R. L. Stevenson) as the best romantic novels of adventure." D. Henrilt declared, "Defoe used voyage and adventure in Robinson Crusoe, in Moll Flanders he turns to crime and sensation. Both novels are unique in itself." It is a curious journey of Robinson Crusoe by water on an uninhabited island. In addition, it is a gradual transformation of an individual from the civilized world into savagery. He simply journeys from the society to desolate island. It is an expressible journey of Crusoe, which he undertakes due to his impulsive temperament. His complex decision compels him to face a series of problems, dangers and the reality of death. His inner tensions ultimately reach to the culmination point of agony, disaster, despair, desperation, misery, anxiety and restlessness. Defoe narrates his own story revealing that he had "rambling thoughts" about future. Impulse rather than intellect right from the beginning controls his choice. He did not think about the consequences of his action. He decided to go to an adventure disobeying his father and as a result, he put himself on the horns of a dilemma. His choice and action made him to repent over the matter. He felt guilty about his choice reminding suggestive words of his father. "That boy might be happy if he would stay at home, but if he goes abroad, he will be miserablist wretch that was ever born: I can give consent to it." Robinson Crusoe recalls certain words of his father to pray to God whenever he is in panic and distress position. However, he is a disobedient son and the novel itself is a soul-journey of a young Christian enthusiastic

boy. Moreover, nature forces him to religion and morality. According to Christianity, a disobedience of someone leads to the fall. However, the 'fall' means regretting for wrong doings. Robinson cries out in desperation to Jesus Christ, the savior commences on the gradual moral transformation of Crusoe from a man blindly following religion to the man to accept religion rationally and logically. Robinson has become mature individual, that is, it is his moral growth rather than physical growth.

Robinson's choice was a narrative motif. To Crusoe, it was the life of savage entirely unknown to any disaster of nature. During night, he had to sleep on a tree "at the approach of night I sleep on a tree, I slept soundly though it rained all the night." Though he was from civilized region, he had to make tools like an ancient man that is the Homosapien man. He suffers a lot passing through many hurdles like unknown attacks of chill, raining, fire, storm, and all kinds of problems. In fact, it is a story of the human suffering on an uninhabited island. In other words, it is a realistic story of the human survival that goes through various phases of stages. Robinson experiences different aspects of nature like her beauty and wrath while doing experiment on his own survival on the island.

It is a story of man's fall from grace, security, success and conformity. Defoe vividly describes the archetypal questions of a young man. The first pages up to 27, 28 are an extraordinary tragic note of Robinson. This novel is the development of allegory of human survival. Therefore, his naming of the island, as "the island of despair" is an important key to the moral intent of the text. Robinson begins his life on the island like "a pre- historical man. Defoe has offered an interesting portrait of the pre-historical and the civilized man. Another noteworthy point is that there is a touch of allegory in Defoe's portrayal of Robinson's Crusoe.

Having realized that he has no use of raw seeds, he usually sprinkles that around and within a few months, he has a crop growing around his cubby and he begins to understand the immensity and the diversity of the world of nature. Later on, he became optimist and started praising God. Robinson's life on the island is caught in a paradox and his paradoxical predicament is a paradigm for the general human condition. Robinson Crusoe is simply not a story of a young boy, who tries his best to cook the rice, prepares pots and puts it in the fire, but it is a realistic story of man's civilization and patience.

Most importantly, Robinson understands the importance of reason and logic rather than impulse and instinct in which he was stuck.

The relationship between Robinson Crusoe and Friday lightens on the east, the west, and their culture. Defoe reminds us about "German Capital Punishment" which was still in practice. In

a sense, it gives the pattern of colonial language, cultural dialectics and colonization in 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Robinson is a Whiteman whereas Friday belongs to black-white. There is a common between Crusoe and Friday that is, the different habits, cultures and convictions and modes of perception. The common ground between both of them that is to share is the chance of being human beings. Defoe has questioned 'the cultural displacement'. The relationship between Robinson and Friday is a paradigm of colonial relationship. Robinson and Friday develops to such an intimate bond of relationship that Friday forgets his country, his home and becomes close friend of Crusoe. For the love, affection and selflessness, which Crusoe treats, Friday is recompensed generating in Friday unconditional and selfless surrender to the master. Nonetheless, one of the greatest achievements of Crusoe as a man of faith is the success in transforming Friday into a loyal and committed servant. Friday puts forth that his people are originated from the mighty river Orinoco; his God is Venamuckhi and priests are called Oowookeke who can talk to God. Defoe comments on oow, a fictional name and exposes the age of the supremacy of priestly class irrespective of the temporal. In this way, Defoe's perception of Robinson and Friday's relationship is a paradigm of his genius who has brought out cultural encounter in this particular text.

At the very end of the novel the island is explicitly referred to as a 'colony'. The idealised master-servant relationship Defoe depicts between Crusoe and Friday can also be seen in terms of cultural imperialism. Crusoe represents the 'enlightened' European whilst Friday is the 'savage' who can only be redeemed from his barbarous way of life through assimilation into Crusoe's culture. Nonetheless Defoe also takes the opportunity to criticise the historic Spanish conquest of South America.

S. T. Coleridge opines, "Of course, Robinson Crusoe was the universal representative, the person for whom every reader could substitute himself."

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