



**The diabolic *Undeads*: Why Death is Better than Immortality? An
Exploration of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone & Dracula**

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Abstract:

Human values play a crucial role in guiding individuals toward actions that contribute positively to societal progress. These values are often revealed in times of fear, adversity, or confusion, and they are foundational to human development. Among the greatest fears that individuals face is the fear of death, a force that instigates change and transformation. For those who seek power, the prospect of losing it is terrifying. However, the desire to overcome these fears, especially through immortality, leads to a loss of human values. Immortality, when sought solely for domination and control, results in a loss of empathy and a descent into cruelty. Fantasy literature, through characters such as Voldemort from Harry Potter and Dracula, exemplifies the destructive consequences of immortality. These figures, though powerful and feared, ultimately pay a heavy price for forsaking their humanity. The portrayal of their monstrous existences serves to underscore the value of death over the perils of an eternal life devoid of meaning and connection. By examining such characters, the paper emphasizes the moral lessons drawn from fantasy literature, shedding light on how human values, cultural heritage, and societal norms influence sustainable development. The analysis connects these themes to broader discussions on fostering inclusive, culturally rich, and sustainable growth.



Keywords: Human values, vampires, death, immortality, fantasy literature, change, cultural heritage, and sustainable development.

Introduction:

Humans are complex creatures. This is the result of millions of years of evolution. From the very beginning of the universe until now, the human mind has tried to uncover its secrets. The intellectual and rational mind tends to wander and create new possibilities. They challenge the natural flow of the universe and are eager to fulfil their ambitions. Even though their rational minds can differentiate between good and bad, their basic instincts utterly influence them, and they want to possess everything around them. Their judgments are often influenced by their fears, ambitions, whims, and basic impulses. When such feelings motivate an activity, it is not certainly beneficial to society. The race for power and invincibility leads to catastrophic wars and genocides. Instead of being satisfied with their lot, human beings aspire to be compatible and happier than others. To keep power and prevent it from passing to others, the man tries everything he can to halt change. Being undead is thought to eliminate all fears, as death is man's greatest fear. Once a man has mastered death, he can do whatever he wants. Fearlessness often turns the man into an emotionless savage.

A man's conscience here plays an important role. Human values are what motivate the conscience, which keeps man's fatal whims in control. In society, human values maintain harmony and tranquillity. The desire to be all-powerful coax them, whereas the qualms try to evoke the latent human values in them. Thus, they keep on struggling with their desires, intellect and emotions.

In this case, literature serves a dual purpose. It is the expression of a man's aspirations and fears, and it aids in the promotion of human values through depicting numerous occurrences in literary works. Death has always been a person's greatest dread, and conquering death has always been their greatest aspiration. Defeating death can assist one in overcoming all frailties and ensuring indomitability.



Fantasy literature, in particular, serves as a powerful lens to explore these themes, connecting the loss of humanity in immortal beings to the broader discourse on sustainability. The destructive consequences of immortality in literature underscore the importance of values that align with transformation and renewal, both on a personal and societal level.

Several literary works address death and immortality, as well as the importance of the natural order of things. The present research analyses texts namely JK Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), to explore the value of change and the importance of mortality over immortality. It emphasizes that cultivating empathy and human values is vital for creating a harmonious world where cultural and moral awareness guide meaningful and sustainable progress.

Immortality in Literature and the Need for Change:

Man, as far as one recalls, is striving to attain immortality. The desire to conquer death and be almighty is overt in the literary texts from the parturition of literature. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is an example of the oldest known text. The existence of the undying first appeared in mythological texts and it eventually became a staple of gothic horror, fantasy, and science fiction. In almost all the religious and mythological texts, God is depicted as the creator of the world, omnipotent and supreme. The angels, gods and demons from hell, too, possess the boon of immortality. Most of the mythological texts delineate man as the aspirant to procure immortality. People have wished for bodily immortality for a long time. They have always wished to have a corporeal body like the immortal gods. Furthermore, it can be achieved from supernatural beings or substances, as well as biological or scientific means.

As a result, throughout the world's mythological legends, alchemists seek “the philosopher's stone” (Paracelsus & Peuckert, 1965), Caribbean people want “the fountain of youth,” and Chinese people seek “peaches of immortality” or “the elixirs of life” that provide eternal youth. It was churned out of the holy Ganges by the Devas with the help of Vasuki and is known as “Amrita” in Hinduism. It was known as “ochimizu” or “waters of rejuvenation” in Japanese mythology, and it belonged to the moon deity (Naumann, 2000, p. 133). The Muslim texts



mention “Aab-i-Hayat,” which means “water of life,” and “Chashma-i-Kausar,” which means “Fountain of Bounty” (Poonawala, 2021). As a consequence, man has continually attempted to achieve immortality, a gift from God Himself, throughout history.

Such a strong desire to be immortal is frequently misdirected, resulting in tedium, alienation and social inertia. For a peaceful world and long-term progress, change is crucial. All people must adhere to human values. Since “human interactions, relationships, behaviour patterns, and cultural norms” are essential to society's development (University of the People, 2021). Changes in social constructs have influenced these outcomes. Change is only possible if a person is concerned about the welfare of others. Human values play a pivotal part in instilling this notion in people. They serve as a guiding concept for all living things and encourage people to do good. It is possible to contribute to the betterment of society only by following these values. As a result, change fosters awareness and aids in the formation of new norms and improved social mechanisms that will have a long-term impact on society. It promotes knowledge across society, resulting in improved citizen consciousness. Consequently, human values flourish, prompting people to make decisions and learn what has been done right and what has been wronged. Thus, it is apparent that culture evolves solely through change.

Women, for example, were once thought to be inferior to men. They had no absolute freedom, no right to study, and no right to vote, yet today, they are being elected to the Senate and even as Prime Ministers and Presidents, such as Mrs Indra Gandhi (Indian Prime Minister 1966-1977 and 1980-1984), Samia Suluhu Hassan (Tanzania's President April 2021), and others. Thus, in reality, the authors of such texts are attempting to portray that immortality gained by such means stifles change and interferes with the infixation of human values in living beings.

The goal of the research is to figure out how JK Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* highlight the idea that immortality is harmful to human values. When a mortal gains immortality, he degenerates, becoming cruel and merciless.

In both of the texts, the themes of immortality and death are prominent. Immortality has a strong connection to the theme of death. It is a means of overcoming or avoiding death.



Death causes grief as a result of the loss of loved ones. The characters in the novels lament the lost future they may have shared with their loved ones. Hence, one wishes for his loved ones to avoid death and live on.

The theme of Death and Immortality in *Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone*:

The Mirror of Erisad, for example, in Harry Potter, reveals what he was missing. He witnesses himself happy with his parents, who are now deceased. He mourns his loss and hopes for the mirage to come true. Dumbledore is concerned about Harry's frequent visits to The Mirror of Erisad and advises him not to “dwell on dreams and forget to live...” (Rowling, 1997, p. 171). Dumbledore also reveals that the mirror will be hidden in a location where Harry will be unable to find it because it is more important to live in the present than to dwell in the past and lament what cannot be undone. Thus, it is critical to progress and grow in life.

Furthermore, it is man's dread of the afterlife, of God, and of the consequences that keep him in check. To eliminate this fear, one urges to defeat death. Voldemort's existential horror drives him to create Horcruxes, bind his life force to these totems and become invincible. He also strives to obtain the Philosopher's Stone to drink the elixir of life and become immortal. However, the question arises: is immortality truly a means of conquering death?

When a person is free of these fears and feels invincible, he transforms into a vicious creature. In Voldemort's situation, the example is clear. Fearing that “the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord” (Rowling, 2003, p. 741) would be born soon, he went on a killing spree. He killed his parents and lost his powers because he suspected Harry Potter was the one. Voldemort offered Lily the option of stepping aside and letting him kill Harry. However, she chose to stand in the middle and sacrifice herself. As a result of her selfless love, Harry was marked with a protection spell and safeguarded. Voldemort's killing curse was repelled, destroying the Dark Lord's body and briefly defeating him. Except for a lightning-bolt scar on his forehead, Harry was unharmed. Later, he found shelter in Albania, where he spent years biding his time while searching for a mind to influence into carrying out his commands.



Fortunately for him, Professor Quirrell accepts to share his body with Voldemort. On his orders, he attempts to obtain Nicholas Flamel's stone. He almost succeeds, only for Harry to accidentally kill him by touching him. Voldemort manages to escape, leaving Quirrell to die alone, paying the ultimate price for his decision. He performs such heinous acts of violence and atrocities in the subsequent books that make one shudder. Hence, it is self-evident that the illusion of invincibility causes one to become harsh and lose one's humanity.

In addition, it is self-evident that acquiring what is abnormal and against nature frequently has negative consequences. Furthermore, the techniques by which such acquisitions are made are likewise terrible. To stay alive, Voldemort must drink unicorn blood. However, he requires assistance to carry out the task. As a result, Voldemort seeks refuge with Prof. Quirrell, whom Quirrell conceals beneath his turban. Unicorns are said to be the purest and gentlest of animals, and killing one is considered a sin. Firenze, the centaur points out, such a crime will only lead to a cursed existence. He says,

...the blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips... (Rowling, 1997, p. 207)

Voldemort survives, but he turns into a hideous creature hidden beneath Quirrell's turban. He roams about Hogwarts in search of Nicholas Flamel's philosopher stone.

The ghosts in the magical world are also clinging to distorted versions of their lives. They are neither dead nor living. Being trapped in the areas where they died, reliving the final moments of their lives. They're stuck in a never-ending state of misery.

In short, Rowling aims to highlight the importance of one's perspective toward life and death. She argues in an online interview with Grossman that death should not be viewed as something to be avoided but rather as a natural part of existence. "It is not about seeking immortality, but about accepting mortality," she said of Harry Potter's immortality theme. Dumbledore's character reflects her approach to a tee. Throughout his interactions with Harry, he emphasises



that trinkets frequently enchant people and are prone to doing destructive things. Dumbledore opines,

You know, the stone was really not a wonderful thing. As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all... the trouble is humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things which are worst for them... (Rowling, 1997, p. 240)

It implies that death is an inevitable element of life that must be accepted. Every moment of one's life should be lived with a smile. Escaping death, no matter how appealing it may appear, is a disruptive experience.

Dumbledore's decision to destroy the philosopher's stone also demonstrates his optimistic outlook regarding death. When Harry asks him not to destroy it because Nicholas will die if he does, Dumbledore responds that death is the next step in life. It is vital to move forward since movement is what gives life its freshness. Death must be followed by long life, just as sleeping after a long day is necessary. Dumbledore exclaims,

... to one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicholas and Pernelle, it really is like to bed after a very, very long day. After all, to the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure... (Rowling, 1997, p. 240)

Accepting death as a natural part of life is thus the proper attitude to adopt. Furthermore, according to Dumbledore, the master of death is someone who has a positive attitude toward death and understands that there are many more horrifying things in life than death. He says,

the true master does not seek to run away from death. He accepts that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying... (Rowling, 2007, pp. 720–721)

Rowling, thus, is attempting to emphasise the importance of change for the betterment of society. It is necessary to replace the old in order to have something new. Death is inevitable.

It is not an option to fear death and flee, but it is important to accept it. Attempting to conquer



it using non-natural ways often results in dangerous consequences. Voldemort must suffer the ramifications of his undead status, which include being secluded, deformed, and repulsive.

Furthermore, the delusion of being fearless transforms a person into a heartless monster who does not think for a second before killing someone. As a result, immortality stifles not only change but also the development of human values. It transforms an immortal into a callous and insensitive individual toward his fellow creatures.

The theme of Death and Immortality in *Dracula*:

Count Dracula, a fictional character created by Bram Stoker, is another example of an eternal yet terrible creature. He has gained invincibility, is supernatural but is alienated from humanity. As per the book review "The Cambridge Companion to Dracula", Dracula claims himself to be Szekelys, a descendant of Attila the Hun and considers himself a Transylvanian lord (Daly, 2018, p. 101). He is an eternal vampire and the founder of the vampire lineage. Vampires are depicted as corpse-like monsters in Eastern European folklore, yet Dracula is shown as attractive.

Bram Stoker, on the other hand, depicts him as a pale old man, tall, with a long white moustache, usually dressed in black, with no touch of colour. When Jonathan stays with Dracula at his castle, he keeps a journal that contains most of the information regarding his appearance. The Count has a strong face, according to Jonathan, with a "high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere" (Stoker, 2006, p. 18). A huge, bushy unibrow, piercing white teeth, and pale, pointed ears, hairy hands with long pointed nails complete the Count's appearance. The Count has an unusually pale complexion, which is unsurprising given that he spends his days in a coffin.

The white hair, on the other hand, does not stay for long. As he takes human blood, the Count's age is reversed. Jonathan also notes that his appearance has changed; his dark iron-grey hair has replaced his white hair and moustache. His cheeks grew plumper, and his lips and skin turned bright crimson as if he had been slathered in blood. As a result, he benefits from the



revitalising properties of human blood. He grows stronger, gaining the strength of twenty men and the ability to morph into any animal at desire. The details in Seward's diary explain the effects of human blood on Dracula

...he can even grow younger, that his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty. But he cannot flourish without this diet, he eat not as others... (Stoker, 2006, p. 226)

Hence not only human blood gives him strength but it also restricts him.

His bite has the ability to transform his victims into vampires. He is the king of vampires, and he has complete authority over his entire lineage. He turns his victims into vampires by having them drink his blood. He handles Lucy and Mina in the same way. He creates a telepathic link with them and has complete control over their behaviour. His vampires can also hypnotise their victims, but this only lasts till the vampire dies. Steward explains that vampirism is, in reality, not a boon but a curse:

When they become such, there comes with the change the curse of immortality. They cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world. For all that die from the preying of the Un-dead become themselves Un-dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like as the ripples from a stone thrown in the water. (Stoker, 2006, p. 203)

He compares such a creature with "...the nosferatu do not die like the bee when he sting once. He is only stronger, and being stronger, have yet more power to work evil..." (Stoker, 2006, p. 224). As a result, the power only leads the possessor to do evil. It extinguishes the last vestige of humanity in them.

Although Dracula enjoys his powers yet he must pay a high price. His powers are limited and come along with loopholes. Even though the sun does not kill him, he loses most of his faculties throughout the day. He can only shapeshift at dawn, noon, and dusk, implying that he is a night



creature with boundless abilities only at night. Jonathan Harker puts an entry in his journal regarding this, he says,

The sun that rose on our sorrow this morning guards us in its course. Until it sets to-night, that monster must retain whatever form he now has. He is confined within the limitations of his earthly envelope. He cannot melt into thin air nor disappear through cracks or chinks or crannies. If he go through a doorway, he must open the door like a mortal. (Stoker, 2006, pp. 276-77)

Furthermore, he is not permitted to visit the victim's home unless he has been invited. Mountain ash and garlic repulse him, and religious symbols frighten him. They can protect anyone from him if one keeps them close. Moreover, if a wild rose branch is placed on his coffin, he will not be able to escape. Hence, his travel abilities are similarly limited. He can only cross the water when the tide is low or high. As a consequence, he is unable to glide across rivers in his bat form, and he also requires physical assistance while boarding and docking a ship. He also requires death sleep to regain his vigour. He can only relax properly and maintain power if he is surrounded by Transylvanian earth. Despite the fact that he is undead, the sacred bullet imbued with holy water has the ability to kill him.

Dracula, the vampire king, exudes a terrifying sense of recklessness and cruelty, fully aware of his invincibility and unparalleled strength. This knowledge fuels his evil acts, leaving a trail of inhumanity that permeates the narrative. Bram Stoker's Dracula is rife with incidents that highlight his monstrous nature, each more horrifying than the last.

The captain of the doomed Demeter provides one such chilling account in his log. Describing a wolf-like creature, the captain writes about how the entity drained the blood of his entire crew, leaving him alone to bear witness to the horror. The ship's final journey ends with the captain lashed to the wheel, his face frozen in terror—a testament to Dracula's malevolence.

Dracula's cruelty extends to his treatment of those under his influence, particularly his three brides. He views them as mere extensions of his will, demanding their absolute obedience.

When they defy him or show any semblance of independence, his response is brutal. In one



particularly striking scene, Dracula berates the women for attempting to claim Jonathan Harker as their prey, grabbing them by the neck and hurling them aside with disdain. His dominance over them is underscored by his chilling proclamation:

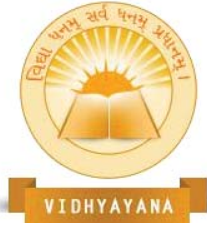
How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me. (Stoker, 2006, p. 57)

His manipulative control extends to Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra, whom he sees as tools for his sinister plans. With Lucy, Dracula's actions are both seductively predatory and utterly dehumanizing. He visits her repeatedly in the night, draining her life force until she transforms into a vampiric creature herself. This transformation is not merely physical but symbolic of his ability to strip away a person's humanity, reducing them to his pawn. Mina, on the other hand, suffers psychological torment. Dracula forces her into a blood ritual, creating an unholy connection between them. The violation is both literal and metaphorical, as he invades her body and mind, asserting his dominance in a manner that leaves her deeply scarred.

In his moments of rage, Dracula becomes a savage force of destruction, his veneer of aristocratic charm falling away to reveal the true beast within. This is evident when he learns that his plans are being thwarted. He reacts with a ferocity that shakes those around him, smashing objects, shouting curses, and turning into a monstrous, uncontrollable figure.

Dracula's inhumanity is not limited to these overt acts of violence. His mere presence brings about decay and despair, as seen in the way he corrupts Carfax Abbey and spreads plague and death in Whitby. Every step he takes is marked by the suffering of others, solidifying his position as a force of pure, unrelenting evil.

Therefore, Bram Stoker, also implies that immortality leads to inhumanity. It not only slows down the ageing process but also hinders mental and emotional growth. One who seeks eternal life is truly selfish, as he does not consider the well-being of his fellow beings but manipulates them without hesitation.



Conclusion:

Both the texts hitherto imply immortality entails escaping and avoiding the unavoidable. Immortality, when pursued without regard for human values, disrupts the natural order and undermines the foundation of societal progress. An immortal, free from the fear of death, often succumbs to cruelty and selfishness, forsaking societal good for personal gain. This stifles transformation, leading to chaos. Death, as an inevitable force, upholds the natural order by enabling renewal. For a harmonious world, embracing change is essential. Characters like Dracula and Voldemort, as depicted in fantasy literature, reveal the dangers of prioritizing power and control over empathy and transformation. Their monstrous existences highlight the moral necessity of death as a catalyst for change, allowing renewal and growth. Without change, stagnation prevails, leading to chaos and societal decay.

Further, sustainable development hinges on the elevation of human values such as empathy, kindness, and a commitment to collective well-being. These values encourage individuals to act for the greater good, fostering a culture of inclusion and respect for cultural heritage. By embracing empathy, individuals can improve their surroundings and contribute to the long-term development of society. Sustainable progress requires a delicate balance between preserving traditions and embracing necessary change, ensuring that development remains inclusive and culturally rich.



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