

Seven Deadly Sins and Character Arcs: Shakespeare tragedies and Mahabharatha

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Abstract: *The Seven Deadly Sins, a classification of vices in Christian moral tradition, offer a fascinating lens for examining human flaws and behavior. These sins—pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth—are often depicted in literature and drama, influencing both character development and thematic depth. The Seven Deadly Sins appear in various narratives as corrupting forces that ultimately lead to the downfall of the individual or society. Shakespeare's tragedies are a rich field for exploring these vices. Characters in his plays often embody one or more of these sins, which drive their actions, leading to tragic outcomes. In Macbeth, for example, Macbeth's unchecked ambition (often tied to pride and greed) leads to his moral and physical downfall. Similarly, in King Lear, pride blinds Lear to the loyalty of his true daughter, Cordelia, and he succumbs to the consequences of his hubris. Envy plays a pivotal role in Othello, where Iago's jealousy and desire for power manipulate the events that lead to Othello's tragic jealousy and eventual murder of Desdemona. Shakespeare's tragedies are a profound exploration of human nature and the destructive potential of unchecked flaws, with characters often experiencing hamartia—a tragic flaw—that is directly tied to one or more of the Seven Deadly Sins. The progression of these characters' arcs often represents the inexorable pull of these vices, leading to their ultimate ruin, which offers a moral lesson on the consequences of excessive indulgence in sinful traits. On the other hand, the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, provides a complex narrative of family, duty, and morality, woven with themes of dharma (righteousness), karma (action), and the yin-yang balance of good and evil. The characters of the Mahabharata, particularly the Pandavas and Kauravas, exemplify various virtues and vices that mirror the Seven Deadly Sins. Duryodhana, the eldest Kaurava, embodies pride, envy, and greed. His desire for power leads to the great Kurukshetra war, a devastating conflict that is, in part, the result of his refusal to act with humility or honour. The Pandavas, especially Yudhishtira, represent idealistic virtues, but even they are not immune to flaws. Arjuna's internal struggle with wrath and duty in the Bhagavad Gita represents a spiritual crisis that mirrors the tragic nature of Shakespeare's protagonists—caught between conflicting desires and ideals. The Mahabharata's influence on character arcs is profound, with individuals often torn between personal desire (which could be linked to the Seven Deadly Sins) and their overarching duty to society and family. The story is also one of cyclical consequence, where characters face the repercussions of their actions, both immediate and long-term. The Mahabharata, much like Shakespeare's tragedies, explores the inherent flaws of human nature but offers the hope of redemption and enlightenment, particularly through characters like Bhishma and Krishna, who serve as moral guides. Both the Seven Deadly Sins in the Western tradition and the moral dilemmas in the Mahabharata offer deep insights into the human experience. Shakespeare's tragic figures and the characters of the Mahabharata embody the complexity of human emotions, the tensions between fate and free will, and the destructive power of unchecked desires. Their stories remain timeless, reflecting the universal struggle against moral failings that lead to both personal and collective catastrophe.*

Key Words: *Seven Deadly Sins, Character arc, pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, sloth.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The downfall of a character due to a sin is a powerful narrative device that explores themes of morality, consequence, and redemption. This kind of story often highlights how a character's choices, fueled by their flaws, can lead to their personal or social ruin. The sin itself could be anything from pride, greed, and envy to more extreme actions

like betrayal or violence. Below is an exploration of how this concept might unfold in literature, mythology, or film, using a variety of examples.

1.1. Hubris (Excessive Pride):

In classical literature, **hubris** (excessive pride or arrogance, especially toward the gods) often leads to the tragic downfall of a character.

Example: Oedipus Rex by Sophocles

- **Sin:** Oedipus' hubris is his belief that he can outrun fate. He defies the prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother, thinking that by leaving Corinth, he can escape it.
- **Downfall:** In doing so, he unwittingly fulfills the prophecy, killing his father, Laius, and marrying his mother, Jocasta. When he discovers the truth, the weight of his actions leads to Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-blinding, making him an outcast.

This type of downfall emphasizes how a character's inability to recognize their limitations—whether divine, moral, or practical—leads to their tragic end.

1.2. Greed and Corruption:

Greed is a classic vice that can corrupt even the most honorable individuals, and a character's unchecked desire for wealth, power, or status can lead to their destruction.

Example: Macbeth by William Shakespeare

- **Sin:** Macbeth's ambition and unchecked desire for power drive him to murder King Duncan in order to seize the throne.
- **Downfall:** His guilt and paranoia, born of his violent actions, haunt him throughout the play, leading to a bloody tyranny. His moral corruption and the constant fear of retribution lead to his eventual downfall, as he is killed in battle and his reign ends in chaos.

Macbeth's downfall is a direct result of his sin of ambition, which distorts his sense of morality and brings about his ruin.

1.3. Betrayal:

Betrayal can be a deeply destructive sin, especially when it involves a violation of trust or loyalty to others.

Example: Judas Iscariot in Christian Tradition

- **Sin:** Judas' betrayal of Jesus Christ, driven by greed or disillusionment, leads to his downfall. He accepts thirty pieces of silver in exchange for delivering Jesus to the authorities.
- **Downfall:** After Jesus is condemned to death, Judas is filled with remorse but cannot live with the consequences of his betrayal. In despair, he hangs himself, symbolizing the devastating personal cost of his sin.

Judas' story is a classic exploration of how betrayal, especially for personal gain, can destroy one's soul and lead to self-destruction.

1.4. Envy and Jealousy:

Envy is a destructive force that causes characters to act out of spite, undermining their relationships and their own well-being.

Example: Iago in Othello by William Shakespeare

- **Sin:** Iago's envy of Cassio's promotion and his jealousy toward Othello's success fuel his plot to destroy both men. His envy distorts his perception of reality and drives him to manipulate others for his own gain.
- **Downfall:** Iago's manipulation ultimately leads to the deaths of Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio. However, in the end, Iago's own actions are uncovered, and he is arrested and left to rot in prison, his reputation and life ruined by his jealousy and deceit.

Iago's downfall is a result of his own sinful envy and the chain of destruction it sets off, which ultimately brings nothing but ruin for him as well as for others.

1.5. Lust and Moral Corruption:

Lust, when not controlled, can lead to emotional and social destruction, especially when it is pursued at the expense of integrity and relationships.

Example: Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

- **Sin:** Anna's affair with Count Vronsky, while an expression of her deep emotional and romantic desires, leads her to disregard her marriage and social standing.

- **Downfall:** The affair causes her to become alienated from society, estranged from her husband, and ultimately isolated. Her emotional turmoil and lack of support lead her to suicide, highlighting the destructive nature of unchecked passion.

Anna's downfall is not just a result of her affair, but also the failure to reconcile her desires with the consequences they bring, both to herself and to those around her.

1.6. Failure to Atonement and Redemption:

A character's downfall can also occur due to their refusal to atone for past sins or wrongdoings, leading to an inability to change and grow.

Example: The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

- **Sin:** Dorian Gray's vanity and indulgence in hedonism without remorse lead him to corruption. He makes a pact to remain eternally young while his portrait ages and bears the marks of his sins.
- **Downfall:** As Dorian continues to pursue a life of excess and moral decay, he becomes increasingly detached from reality and his soul becomes grotesque. In the end, his failure to face his sins and seek redemption leads to his ultimate destruction, as he stabs the portrait, only to die himself in a moment of self-realization.

Dorian's downfall shows the consequences of refusing to confront one's own moral failings and the dark spiral that follows when a character refuses to repent or change.

2. HEMATIC EXPLORATION:

In all these examples, the sin itself becomes a pivotal force, not only in creating a dramatic tension but also in shaping the character's trajectory. The downfall can be immediate or slow, but it always acts as a mechanism for exploring the consequences of personal flaws and moral failings. It is often the character's inability to recognize or correct their sin that deepens the tragedy, reinforcing the idea that sin, whether it be pride, envy, greed, or lust, does not just harm others but also inevitably leads to self-destruction.

The *Seven Deadly Sins*, Shakespeare's tragedies, and the *Mahabharata* all explore complex human emotions and flaws, with characters often undergoing significant arcs, dealing with moral dilemmas, and facing the consequences of their actions. Let's break down how these three elements intersect:

2.1. Seven Deadly Sins and Shakespeare's Tragedies:

The *Seven Deadly Sins* are a list of vices that have been used in Christian teachings to categorize the worst types of immoral behavior. These sins—Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Greed, Lust, and Gluttony—often feature prominently in tragedies, especially in Shakespeare's works. In many of his plays, characters undergo tragic arcs driven by one or more of these sins. Below are some key connections:

- **Pride:** This sin is often the catalyst for a character's downfall. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Macbeth's unchecked ambition (a form of pride) leads him to murder Duncan and seize the throne, only to spiral into paranoia and eventually death. Similarly, *King Lear* explores the destructive effects of pride when Lear demands to be flattered by his daughters, ultimately leading to his downfall.
- **Envy:** *Othello* is an excellent example of how envy can cause destruction. Iago's envy of Othello's success and his jealousy toward Cassio drive him to manipulate Othello into believing that his wife, Desdemona, is unfaithful. This leads to a tragic cascade of violence and death.
- **Wrath:** In *Hamlet*, Hamlet's intense anger toward his uncle Claudius for murdering his father causes him to act impulsively, leading to the deaths of most characters in the play, including Hamlet himself. Similarly, the rage of *Titus Andronicus* results in a brutal cycle of revenge.
- **Greed:** In *The Merchant of Venice*, greed plays a crucial role, especially in the form of Shylock's obsession with the pound of flesh. This obsession with revenge and profit ultimately leads to his downfall.
- **Lust:** In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the characters' lust for each other causes political and personal chaos, contributing to the play's tragic ending.
- **Sloth** and **Gluttony** are less often the primary motivators in Shakespeare's plays, but they still appear in the forms of overindulgence, as seen in characters like Falstaff in *Henry IV*, who indulges in gluttonous behavior and represents a more comedic, less serious embodiment of these sins.

In many of Shakespeare's tragedies, these sins serve as the driving force behind character arcs, demonstrating how human flaws can destroy lives and bring about personal destruction.

2.2. Seven Deadly Sins and the Mahabharata

The *Mahabharata*, an epic that revolves around the Kurukshetra War between the Pandavas and Kauravas, similarly explores human flaws, moral dilemmas, and character arcs. Many of the characters embody aspects of the *Seven Deadly Sins*, and these vices often lead to tragic consequences.

- **Pride:** The most prominent example is **Duryodhana**, the eldest of the Kauravas, whose pride and desire to rule at any cost lead to the war. His refusal to share the kingdom with the Pandavas and his prideful attitude toward others (especially Krishna) ensure the destruction of his entire clan.
- **Envy:** **Shakuni**, Duryodhana's uncle, represents envy as he constantly conspires against the Pandavas due to his hatred and envy of their fortunes. His schemes, such as the game of dice that leads to the Pandavas' exile, are driven by deep resentment and envy.
- **Wrath:** **Karna**, who is often seen as a tragic hero, acts out of anger at being spurned and humiliated, especially by the Kauravas. His wrath, particularly in the context of his rivalry with Arjuna, is a significant motivator for his actions.
- **Greed:** **Duryodhana's** greed for power is central to the plot, especially in the way he manipulates his brothers and allies. His greed for control over the kingdom, despite the rightful claims of the Pandavas, leads directly to war and devastation.
- **Lust:** The incident of **Draupadi's disrobing** in the court of Hastinapur is driven by lust and desire for dominance over the Pandavas. Though not directly related to sexual lust, it involves a deep humiliation that arises from the Kauravas' desire to dominate and disrespect the Pandavas, particularly Draupadi.
- **Sloth:** The character of **Dhritarashtra** can be seen as embodying a form of sloth, especially in his indecision and reluctance to take firm action regarding the injustice faced by the Pandavas. His inability to act decisively leads to the escalation of conflict.
- **Gluttony:** This is less overt in the *Mahabharata*, but there are instances of excess, such as the indulgence in feasts and luxurious lifestyles by the Kauravas, which contrast with the simpler, more disciplined lives of the Pandavas. However, these indulgences symbolize moral decay and excessive attachment to material wealth and pleasure.

3. CHARACTER ARCS AND REDEMPTION:

Both in Shakespeare's tragedies and the *Mahabharata*, many of the characters experience significant arcs, often tied to their downfall due to their sins. However, some characters also experience forms of redemption or transformation, showing the possibility for growth or change:

Shakespeare's plays are rich with character development, and many of his characters undergo significant transformations over the course of the narrative. Here are a few examples of character arcs in some of his most famous plays:

3.1. Hamlet (from *Hamlet*):

- **Initial State:** Prince Hamlet begins as a deeply melancholic and indecisive character. Struggling with the death of his father and the hasty remarriage of his mother to his uncle Claudius, Hamlet is consumed by grief, doubt, and anger. He is intellectually inclined, questioning life's meaning, the nature of death, and the morality of revenge.
- **Character Arc:** Over the course of the play, Hamlet's arc is one of self-realization and transformation. Initially paralyzed by uncertainty, Hamlet eventually resolves to take action, though still conflicted about the morality of his revenge. His journey culminates in his acceptance of fate, symbolized by his readiness to face death at the end. In the final moments, Hamlet acts decisively, carrying out his revenge, but at great personal cost.
- **Change:** Hamlet transitions from a brooding, introspective intellectual to a man who accepts the inevitability of death and acts on his moral convictions, despite the personal consequences.

3.2. Macbeth (from *Macbeth*):

- **Initial State:** Macbeth starts as a loyal and honorable Scottish general. He is initially a noble and brave warrior, but he is also ambitious, and the prophecy of the witches ignites his latent desire for power.
- **Character Arc:** As the play progresses, Macbeth's ambition drives him to commit murder and usurp the throne. His descent into tyranny, paranoia, and madness accelerates after he kills King Duncan. He becomes more ruthless, isolated, and delusional, haunted by guilt and fear. His moral decay mirrors his physical deterioration.
- **Change:** Macbeth's arc shows the corrupting influence of unchecked ambition. He begins as a man of honor but ends as a tyrant, consumed by his desire for power, which ultimately leads to his downfall and death.

3.3. Othello (from *Othello*):

- **Initial State:** Othello is a noble and respected Moorish general in the Venetian army. He is deeply in love with his wife, Desdemona, and initially confident in his position and in his relationship.
- **Character Arc:** Othello's arc revolves around his growing jealousy and insecurity, largely fueled by the manipulative Iago. Iago plants the seed of doubt about Desdemona's fidelity, and Othello's overwhelming jealousy leads him to distrust his wife. As his jealousy grows, Othello becomes more irrational and destructive.

- **Change:** Othello transitions from a dignified, self-assured leader to a man consumed by jealousy and rage, ultimately leading him to murder Desdemona in a tragic fit of misguided vengeance. His final recognition of his mistake, when he kills himself in remorse, is a moment of tragic self-awareness.

3.4. King Lear (from *King Lear*):

- **Initial State:** King Lear begins as a proud and powerful king, intending to divide his kingdom between his three daughters based on their professions of love for him. His decisions are rooted in vanity, and he fails to recognize the genuine love of his daughter Cordelia.
- **Character Arc:** Lear's arc is a journey of self-discovery and humbling. His decision to relinquish power leads to his eventual madness, as he finds himself betrayed and abandoned by two of his daughters, Goneril and Regan. He undergoes a profound transformation, realizing the true nature of loyalty, love, and humility, especially in his relationship with Cordelia.
- **Change:** Lear moves from a state of self-importance and arrogance to a place of painful self-awareness. In his madness and ultimate death, Lear achieves a tragic clarity about his mistakes, especially his treatment of Cordelia and his failure to see the deceitfulness of his other daughters.

3.5. The Tempest (from *The Tempest*):

- **Initial State:** Prospero, the Duke of Milan, starts the play as a vengeful and powerful sorcerer. He has been stranded on an island for years after being overthrown by his brother Antonio.
- **Character Arc:** Throughout the play, Prospero's thirst for vengeance gradually transforms into forgiveness. Initially obsessed with using magic to control and manipulate events for revenge, he slowly comes to realize the value of mercy and reconciliation, particularly after seeing the suffering of those he wronged.
- **Change:** Prospero moves from being a ruler focused on retribution to a man who seeks peace and restoration. His arc is about letting go of anger and embracing forgiveness, culminating in his decision to release the spirits, forgive his brother, and return to Milan, symbolizing his personal growth.

3.6. Romeo and Juliet (from *Romeo and Juliet*):

- **Initial State:** Romeo and Juliet start the play as impulsive and youthful lovers, unaware of the full consequences of their love, which is forbidden due to the feud between their families.
- **Character Arc:** Romeo's and Juliet's arcs are marked by rapid, intense emotions as they fall in love and make drastic decisions in the face of family opposition. Their love evolves from a carefree, passionate infatuation to a tragic, fateful bond marked by a series of misunderstandings, culminating in their untimely deaths.
- **Change:** Their arcs do not show the usual "growth" seen in other characters, but they represent a tragic trajectory from youthful innocence to the consequences of a world driven by hatred and division. They are changed by love in its purest form, but ultimately it is love itself that leads to their tragic deaths.

3.7. Julius Caesar (from *Julius Caesar*):

- **Brutus' Arc:** Brutus is a noble Roman senator who initially struggles with loyalty to Caesar and his loyalty to Rome. He is persuaded by the conspirators that Caesar's ambition would lead to tyranny, and he joins the assassination plot.
- **Character Arc:** Brutus' arc is one of tragic idealism. He believes in the nobility of his actions but fails to see the consequences of his actions. His idealism leads him to misjudge the political landscape and ultimately leads to civil war. His downfall comes from his inability to adapt to the consequences of his decisions.
- **Change:** Brutus begins as an idealistic, moral man but ends as a tragic figure, undone by his own naivety and the realization that his actions have led to greater chaos and bloodshed than the tyranny he sought to prevent.

In Shakespeare's plays, character arcs are often central to the thematic exploration of human nature, ambition, loyalty, love, and morality. Characters frequently undergo dramatic transformations, often learning harsh truths about themselves and the world around them. These transformations, whether toward greater wisdom, tragic downfall, or redemption, are some of the most compelling elements of Shakespeare's works. The *Mahabharata*, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, presents a complex array of characters, each with multifaceted arcs and potential for redemption or moral transformation. The epic, attributed to the sage Vyasa, spans multiple generations and weaves together moral dilemmas, family dynamics, and cosmic consequences, making it a profound study of human nature and ethical decision-making. Redemption and character arcs are crucial elements of the *Mahabharata*, as many of its characters grapple with their actions, responsibilities, and their relationship with dharma (righteousness or duty).

Below are some of the most prominent character arcs and their associated themes of redemption:

Yudhishtira

- **Arc:** Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, is initially portrayed as a model of righteousness (dharma) and moral integrity. However, his role in the *Game of Dice* (where he gambles away his kingdom, his brothers, and himself) brings immense suffering upon him and his family. His seemingly unwavering adherence to truth and

dharma becomes a source of weakness, as he does not question the decisions of his elders or mentors, even when they lead to disaster.

- **Redemption:** Yudhishtira's arc is about his struggle with the consequences of his actions. After the war, Yudhishtira faces the task of reconciling the devastation caused by the Kurukshetra War and the deaths of his loved ones. His redemption comes through introspection, responsibility, and his eventual realization that dharma is not just about following rules, but about understanding their deeper, compassionate meanings. He receives guidance from Krishna and others, ultimately finding peace and assuming the throne, though he is also burdened by the weight of his choices.
- **Key Moment of Redemption:** His journey to the Himalayas with his brothers and the eventual ascension to heaven, where he is tested by the gods, shows his growth into a more mature understanding of dharma, where it transcends legalistic righteousness and becomes a path to spiritual enlightenment.

Arjuna

- **Arc:** Arjuna, the greatest of the Pandava warriors, faces a profound internal crisis on the eve of the Kurukshetra War. He is conflicted about fighting in the war, particularly against his own family members, teachers, and friends. This leads to his despair and hesitation, questioning the righteousness of the conflict.
- **Redemption:** Arjuna's arc is not about a fall from grace, but about the resolution of his doubts. His redemption is catalyzed by Krishna's teachings in the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Krishna instructs him on duty (dharma), detachment, and devotion (bhakti). Through this dialogue, Arjuna overcomes his moral paralysis and reaffirms his commitment to his role as a warrior. His redemption lies in his ability to transcend personal emotions and ego for the greater good, ultimately fulfilling his duties.
- **Key Moment of Redemption:** The moment when Arjuna listens to Krishna's guidance and decides to fight, not out of desire for victory, but to fulfill his cosmic duty (svadharma). This realization marks the transformation of Arjuna from a hesitant, confused individual to a warrior with a clear sense of purpose.

Karna

- **Arc:** Karna, one of the most tragic figures in the *Mahabharata*, is born to the unmarried Kunti and is abandoned at birth. Raised by a charioteer, he grows up with a deep sense of injustice and strives to prove his worth, ultimately aligning himself with Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, who offers him friendship and support when no one else does. Despite his loyalty to Duryodhana, Karna is aware of his true heritage as a Kshatriya, and this knowledge haunts him throughout his life.
- **Redemption:** Karna's arc is one of self-realization, moral struggle, and tragic sacrifice. Throughout the *Mahabharata*, Karna is presented as a tragic hero who suffers from the weight of his decisions, particularly his decision to fight against the Pandavas, whom he unknowingly shares a blood bond with. Karna's redemption comes through his unwavering sense of honor, generosity, and his desire to live by his own code of ethics. In the end, he realizes that his fate is intertwined with that of the Pandavas, and he is confronted with the choices of his past. Karna's tragic flaw is his loyalty to Duryodhana and his refusal to abandon his friend despite the moral costs.
- **Key Moment of Redemption:** Karna's final act of generosity, when he decides to give away his divine armor (Kavacha) and earrings (Kundala) to Indra, even though he knows it will lead to his own death, signifies his redemption. This selfless act—despite the irony that it ultimately leads to his downfall—demonstrates his commitment to honor and virtue, marking him as one of the most noble yet tragic figures in the epic.

Duryodhana

- **Arc:** Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, is a character defined by ambition, pride, and a sense of injustice over the treatment he receives from the Pandavas. Though he has valid grievances (especially regarding the treatment of his family), his desire for power blinds him to the greater principles of dharma. He becomes increasingly consumed by hatred and jealousy towards the Pandavas and leads his brothers into a devastating war.
- **Redemption:** Duryodhana's redemption is perhaps the least clear-cut, as his arc reflects a refusal to acknowledge his wrongdoings. He remains committed to his cause, even when his actions lead to the destruction of his family. In many ways, Duryodhana's character embodies the tragic consequences of excessive pride, envy, and the inability to forgive. His potential for redemption is thwarted by his arrogance and the refusal to listen to counsel from others, including his uncle Vidura and even Krishna.
- **Key Moment of Redemption:** While Duryodhana never fully redeems himself in the moral sense, his final moments—when he accepts his fate during his battle with Bhima—display a grudging acceptance of his actions. His final words, calling on Krishna, suggest that he may be reconciled with his inner moral conflict in his last moments, though it is unclear whether this is truly a redemptive realization or just the recognition of his impending death.

Dhritarashtra

- **Arc:** Dhritarashtra, the blind king and father of the Kauravas, is a figure marked by indecision, inaction, and moral blindness. He fails to act when it matters, particularly in preventing the animosity between his sons and the Pandavas from escalating. His inability to discipline Duryodhana and prevent the war from happening is a central aspect of his character.
- **Redemption:** Dhritarashtra's redemption comes slowly. He experiences deep regret over the loss of his sons and the devastation caused by the war. His final moments, where he renounces the material world and prepares for his own spiritual journey, symbolize his acceptance of the consequences of his past actions. His redemption is largely emotional and spiritual, as he comes to understand the impermanence of life and the consequences of his failure to act decisively when required.
- **Key Moment of Redemption:** His journey to the Himalayas, where he renounces his throne and prepares for his eventual spiritual ascension, represents his redemption. It is a realization of the futility of attachment and the necessity of spiritual liberation.

Shakuni

- **Arc:** Shakuni, the uncle of the Kauravas, is a master manipulator and the primary architect behind the *Game of Dice* and the ensuing war. His bitterness and desire for revenge stem from the humiliation and injustice faced by his family at the hands of the Kuru dynasty. Shakuni is driven by a desire for power, often using deceit and underhanded tactics to achieve his ends.
- **Redemption:** Shakuni's character arc does not offer much room for redemption. He remains consumed by vengeance and hatred until his death, showing no real remorse for his actions. He embodies the consequences of unchecked malice and cunning. Shakuni's character serves as a foil to the other, more redeemable characters like Karna and Yudhishtira.
- **Key Moment:** His final moments during the war, where he is killed by the Pandavas, are marked by a lack of regret. He is a tragic character in the sense that his quest for revenge leads to his destruction, and he does not have the opportunity for moral growth or redemption.

CONCLUSION:

The *Mahabharata* presents a rich tapestry of character arcs, where redemption is a central theme for many figures, though not all. While some characters (like Yudhishtira, Arjuna, and Karna) undergo profound moral transformations, others (like Duryodhana and Shakuni) remain unrepentant, their fates sealed by their adherence to their flawed desires and beliefs. The epic emphasizes the complexity of human nature, showing that redemption is not a simple matter of forgiveness, but often requires deep self-awareness, moral courage, and sometimes, tragic sacrifice. In both Shakespeare's works and the *Mahabharata*, these character arcs demonstrate the powerful effects of moral choices, the inevitable consequences of human flaws, and the struggle for redemption. Shakespeare's tragedies feature characters whose flaws align with the Seven Deadly Sins, driving their complex arcs. Macbeth's ambition (greed) leads to his murderous spree, while Hamlet's wrath manifests in hesitation and revenge. Othello's envy consumes him, causing the tragic murder of Desdemona. Lear's pride blinds him to reality, triggering his downfall. Coriolanus's wrath isolates him from allies, and Julius Caesar's pride results in betrayal. These sins create internal struggles, pushing characters toward their tragic fates. Each sin deepens the conflict, revealing the destructive power of human flaws and ultimately leading to personal destruction or profound realization. The *Seven Deadly Sins* provide a useful lens to understand the character arcs in Shakespeare's tragedies and the *Mahabharata*. In both traditions, characters are often driven by these vices, which shape their actions and ultimately lead to their downfall. However, these stories also offer lessons on the consequences of these sins and the potential for redemption, providing rich, morally complex narratives that have resonated with audiences for centuries.

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