

## CHAPTER 3

# BROKEN BODY AND CULTURAL MEMORY: TRACING TRAUMA THROUGH SHAKUNI'S NARRATIVE

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## ABSTRACT

India is often described as a land of the past and memory because of her deep-rooted connection with history, mythology, oral traditions, and collective remembrance that continue to shape the cultural and national identity. This perception is not merely poetic but reflects the way India's civilization and ethos are constructed through layers of memory embedded in the sacred texts, epics, rituals, and monuments. Epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are not just stories but living memories. They are performed, recited, and adapted across generations, functioning as tools for cultural memory that guide moral and spiritual lives. Unlike Western epics, they are not static as they are retold and reinterpreted through oral performances, theaters, television, literature, and regional variations. In essence, the Mahabharata functions as India's cultural memory by being a reservoir of collective experiences, continuously being remembered and reinterpreted to meet the needs of changing times. This chapter explores the narrative of Shakuni from Mallar Chatterjee's novel, *Shakuni & Dice of Doom*, as a lens to examine cultural memory, trauma, and representation of the broken body in Indian mythology. Though Shakuni is often vilified as the architect of the Kurukshetra war, yet he is re-imagined in Chatterjee's novel not merely as a cunning antagonist but as a product of historical trauma, personal loss and cultural betrayal. It also presents diverse ways in which a single plot is adapted, reinterpreted and retold across different linguistic, cultural and geographical regions. They reflect the local values, beliefs and social contexts, making Indian epics and traditions dynamic and plural rather than fixed and uniform. This study

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