

# Family Bonds in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novels: A Journey Through Loyalty, Respect, and Support

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**Abstract**—This study examines the emotional dimensions of family relationships in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novels *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*, with a focus on the core familial values of loyalty, respect, and support. To identify these key traits, a set of 25 family-related characteristics was compiled from literature and distributed via Google Forms to 125 participants, who rated them on a 10-point scale. The top three characteristics—loyalty, respect, and support—were selected for deeper literary analysis. Through a close reading of various relationships, including those between spouses, parents and children, siblings, and surrogate figures, the study investigates how these values function as conscious emotional choices rather than mere social expectations. Using a qualitative approach informed by Family Systems Theory, Attachment Theory, and Feminist Literary Theory, the research reveals how Divakaruni reimagines family bonds as evolving structures rooted in emotional strength and mutual care.

**Index Terms**—Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Loyalty, Respect, Support, *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, *The Last Queen*,

## I. INTRODUCTION

Family has long been regarded as the fundamental unit of society—a space where love, duty, and emotional growth converge (Spiro, 1954). In literature, the family often becomes a canvas upon which complex human emotions are painted, ranging from affection and sacrifice to conflict and estrangement. In the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, family relationships (Arunraj & Viduthalai, 2018) are not merely background elements but central forces that shape character development and narrative progression. Through her vivid reimaginings of mythological and historical figures, Divakaruni offers a deep and subtle portrayal

of familial bonds, making them key to understanding the emotional journeys of her protagonists.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American writer known for her evocative storytelling and strong female characters, frequently explores themes of identity, tradition, and emotional resilience. Her novels—*The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*—present rich familial landscapes where bonds are tested and reaffirmed through emotional qualities like loyalty, respect, and support. These values are not romanticized; rather, they are depicted as evolving and often painful processes that require strength, understanding, and choice. Family in Divakaruni's narratives is both a source of strength and a site of struggle, revealing the tension between individual agency and collective duty (Anu, 2024).

This research paper aims to explore how family bonds are shaped, maintained, or challenged through the values of loyalty, respect, and support in the selected novels. It examines how these emotional characteristics influence relationships between spouses, parents and children, siblings, and surrogate figures. The study seeks to understand how Divakaruni reinterprets traditional family roles through these values, especially from a woman-centered perspective.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the broader understanding of familial dynamics in feminist literature and South Asian narratives. By focusing on the emotional framework of family life, this study moves beyond structural or cultural analysis and delves into the psychological fabric of relationships. Using qualitative literary analysis supported by theories such as Family Systems Theory, Attachment Theory, and Feminist

Literary Theory, this paper will interpret how these values function not only to uphold family ties but also to challenge injustice, assert identity, and inspire resilience.

Ultimately, this research reveals that loyalty, respect, and support are not static virtues, but dynamic tools through which characters navigate love, loss, conflict, and transformation—thus demonstrating how deeply rooted emotional values sustain the idea and structure of family in Divakaruni's fictional world.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Family bonds have long served as a foundational element in literature, offering profound insights into human emotions, responsibilities, and social values. As Dyck (1981) observes, family relationships are bound by moral obligations that shape not only individual identities but also the larger structures of community and culture. This understanding is echoed by Ciavatta (2014), who emphasizes that familial bonds are created and sustained through emotional recognition and mutual validation—both essential to the psychological need for acceptance and understanding. Literature, in its various cultural forms, captures these intricacies, portraying the family not just as a social unit but as a space where emotional connection, interpersonal conflict, and resilience coexist. These narratives help reveal the complex emotional fabric that defines and challenges family structures.

At the core of literary portrayals of familial relationships lie emotional and relational values such as loyalty, respect, and support. Fivush, Bohanek, Robertson, and Duke (2004) argue that family narratives are critical in shaping emotional development, particularly in children, by providing a sense of stability and personal continuity. These narratives serve as emotional templates through which individuals navigate their understanding of relationships. Loyalty, as discussed by Glebova and Gangamma (2019) and Fletcher (1995), emerges as a silent yet powerful force that binds family members, fostering mutual responsibility and enduring attachments. Similarly, the themes of love and respect serve as pillars upon which individual and collective resilience is built, as noted by Chelladurai

(2020). These emotional values are central to the family stories found in literature, where they not only reflect the inner world of characters but also offer readers a lens into broader cultural and social norms. Thus, literary explorations of family dynamics reveal the importance of emotional survival, moral complexity, and the negotiation of social roles through the prism of relational values.

In the landscape of South Asian literature, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni emerges as a powerful voice whose fiction is deeply invested in the portrayal of intricate family relationships. Her work frequently explores women's emotional experiences within the framework of family, navigating themes of tradition, modernity, and generational change. Mukherjee (n.d.) underscores how Divakaruni's characters subvert and challenge conventional roles within the family, proposing new models of trust, responsibility, and emotional connection. Monika (2016) supports this view by asserting that the women in Divakaruni's novels are active participants in shaping family dynamics; they are not merely confined by tradition but act as catalysts of transformation. Further, Suganya and Manju (2025) examine how Divakaruni uses family relationships to highlight cultural identity struggles, depicting the family as both a nurturing environment and a site of inner conflict. Scholars such as Joshi and Gida (2020) and Hingorani (2019) elaborate on the everyday cultural practices—such as cooking, rituals, and storytelling—that Divakaruni embeds in her narratives to show the emotional labor involved in maintaining family harmony across different generations and social contexts.

Against this rich literary and critical backdrop, the present study aims to examine how family bonds are represented in *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*, with a specific focus on the themes of loyalty, respect, and support. These emotional values, as portrayed through Divakaruni's characters, form the foundation of this study's inquiry into the complexity and resilience of familial relationships. The research seeks to explore how these interconnected values are developed within family structures and how they contribute to shaping the identities, choices, and emotional endurance of women in these texts. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to a more

comprehensive understanding of the evolving representation of family in contemporary Indian English literature.

To explore the emotional and relational dimensions of family bonds in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's selected novels, this study draws upon a multi-theoretical framework that includes both psychological and sociological perspectives. At the core lies Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 2012), which conceptualizes the family as an emotional unit composed of interdependent members, emphasizing that behaviors and emotional responses are shaped not in isolation but through complex family interactions. This perspective is instrumental in analyzing how loyalty and support function within familial networks in Divakaruni's narratives. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1979; Ainsworth, 1978) further enriches this understanding by focusing on the early caregiver-child relationships that serve as the psychological foundation for later emotional expressions such as trust and mutual respect. In Divakaruni's works, secure attachments often lead to enduring familial bonds marked by emotional dependability and protective loyalty. Additionally, Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 2004) helps interpret how everyday interactions—rituals, shared symbols, and cultural expressions—create and reinforce family roles and values, offering insight into how respect is socially constructed and emotionally sustained within family life. Social Exchange Theory (Molm, 2015; Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023) complements this by explaining how feelings of loyalty and support emerge through perceived fairness and reciprocal care, shedding light on characters who maintain familial harmony through selfless acts. Structural-Functional Theory (Parsons, 2017) adds a macro-level lens by framing the family as a social institution responsible for emotional stability, continuity, and support across generations. This is particularly relevant to Divakaruni's depiction of familial structures that function cohesively even under strain. Resilience Theory (Patterson, 2002; Henry & Harrist, 2022) contributes by highlighting how emotional strength, mutual respect, and loyalty enable families to adapt

during crises—a recurring theme in Divakaruni's narratives, where characters display emotional

elasticity to preserve relational stability. Finally, Feminist Literary Theory (Allen & Jaramillo-Sierra, 2015) serves as a critical foundation by examining the roles women play in shaping and redefining family values. Divakaruni's female protagonists often challenge patriarchal expectations while consciously choosing loyalty and support as expressions of both personal strength and relational integrity. Together, these theories offer a nuanced lens to explore the interconnected emotional and structural aspects of loyalty, respect, and support in the familial worlds created by Divakaruni in *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's fiction has been widely studied for its portrayal of women, family, and cultural identity, with particular attention to her feminist reinterpretation of classical and historical narratives. Thing and Girl (2019) provides a broad overview of her literary contributions, noting her focus on women lived experiences within emotionally charged family environments. Mondal, Sivapurapu, Raj, and Raju (n.d.) specifically highlight Divakaruni's feminist retelling of traditional epics, particularly how *The Forest of Enchantments* presents Sita as a figure of moral strength and emotional resilience. Similarly, Rayová (2018) argues that Divakaruni subverts traditional Indian gender roles through her portrayals of empowered female protagonists who question patriarchal norms within the family. Singh (2024) adds to this by examining *The Palace of Illusions*, focusing on Draupadi's emotional world and her struggle to find meaning and respect within a rigid social structure.

Retelling mythological and historical narratives is another dominant theme in the scholarly discourse around Divakaruni's work. Mazumder and Bheemaiah (2024) discuss how the theme of female desire and moral agency is reimaged through myth in both *The Forest of Enchantments* and *The Palace of Illusions*. Priyadarshini (n.d.) examines the ways in which Divakaruni's protagonists revise historical and mythological narratives to reclaim their voice and identity. Rajan (2022) explores this revisionist approach as a form of protest literature, reshaping collective cultural memory through a feminist lens.

Sengupta (2021) and Shukla (2024) focus on *The Forest of Enchantments*, analyzing how the text transforms Sita's story into one of emotional endurance, spiritual insight, and resistance to oppressive traditions.

Themes of sacrifice, resilience, and emotional depth have long been embedded in South Asian literature and are especially pronounced in Divakaruni's storytelling. Prakash (2017) explores how psychological resilience, a concept rooted in spiritual and cultural traditions like the Bhagavad Gita, informs the moral character of women in Indian narratives. Mathur (n.d.) studies the women in the Mahabharata, providing a classical foundation for interpreting Divakaruni's representation of Draupadi and Kunti. From a more psychological and religious standpoint, Stebbins (2020) examines the concept of sacrifice as both a moral and emotional act, which is useful for understanding Divakaruni's portrayal of loyalty, emotional endurance, and family responsibilities.

Despite this broad critical engagement with Divakaruni's feminist storytelling and mythological reimaginings, there remains a noticeable gap in the scholarship when it comes to systematically analysing the emotional and relational values of loyalty, respect, and support as

an integrated framework. While many studies have touched on these elements in isolation— often in the context of character studies or feminist readings— few have explored how these emotional values work together to construct and sustain family bonds. This absence points to a need for a thematic, focused exploration that examines how these values shape familial interactions and character development across Divakaruni's novels. This study therefore aims to fill that gap by offering a holistic analysis of how family bonds are formed, tested, and sustained through these key emotional values in *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*.

### III. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, we have chosen three novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni viz. *The Palace of Illusions*, *The Forests of Enchantments* and *The Last Queen*. From literature we identified 25 characteristics of familial relationship. These characteristics were asked as questions to 125 participants by way of google forms and they were asked to rate them on a 10-point scale. The responses of all the participants were added for each characteristic. Top 3 characteristic were identified on the basis of top scores. These characteristics of a family were now studied in the selected novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni to know as to what extent are they portrayed in them.

### IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### Comparing Loyalty as Familial Characteristic

Novel	Character	Type of Loyalty	Description	Family Dynamics	Applied Theory
<i>The Forest of Enchantments</i>	Sita	Marital, maternal	Chooses exile with Rama; raises Luv and Kush with integrity after abandonment. Loyalty as choice, not submission.	Strong emotional interdependence; commitment to family role.	Family Systems Theory – Emotional unit, interdependence, loyalty to function.
	Urmila	Sisterly, emotional	Risks hardship to visit Sita; embodies emotional sacrifice and attachment.	Sisterhood as emotional anchor, despite physical distance.	Attachment Theory – Secure bonds, emotional availability.

	Kaushalya	Maternal, supportive	Supports Rama And Sita's decisions despite internal grief.	Navigates role as mother-in-law with empathy and care.	Structural- Functional Theory – Maintains Stability through acceptance.
	Mandodari	Marital, maternal, conflicted	Loyal to Ravana and Indrajit despite	Torn between morality and familial ties.	Resilience Theory – Endures
			Disapproval of their actions.		inner conflict for family unity.
<i>The Palace of Illusions</i>	Draupadi	Marital, symbolic, ethical	Remains committed to Pandavas despite betrayal; supports collective identity.	Loyalty challenges traditional gender roles; rooted in dharma.	Feminist Literary Theory – Loyalty as agency within patriarchy.
	Bhim	Fraternal, protective	Defends Draupadi emotionally and physically; challenges norms.	Deep emotional loyalty; challenges gender and caste hierarchies.	Symbolic Interactionism – Meaningful emotional action.
	Arjun	Fraternal, disciplined	Loyal to duty, Krishna, and brothers; strategic and measured.	Operates within role expectations, values balance.	Structural- Functional Theory – Loyalty stabilizes group function.
	Yudhishtir	Ethical, principle- based	Follows dharma over familial comfort; causes suffering despite good intent.	Role conflict between ethical ideals and family needs.	Social Exchange Theory – Chooses abstract fairness over emotional loyalty.
	Krishna	Spiritual, familial, unconditional	Constant source of moral and emotional support for Draupadi and Pandavas.	Combines divine love with loyalty to chosen family.	Attachment Theory – Secure base figure, protective presence.
	Kunti	Maternal, strategic	Hides Karna's identity; loyal to Pandavas for survival.	Loyalty driven by fear, secrecy, and responsibility.	Family Systems Theory – Strategic decisions to preserve family function.
	Gandhari	Maternal, blind loyalty	Supports Duryodhana blindly despite moral concerns.	Loyalty becomes a tragic flaw; overrides justice.	Attachment Theory (Insecure) – Overprotective attachment, lacking balance.
	Karna	Fraternal, ideological	Loyal to Duryodhana despite moral dilemmas; sacrifices hidden family ties.	Loyalty based on gratitude and emotional debt.	Social Exchange Theory – Loyalty in return for Dignity and acceptance.

<i>The Last Queen</i>	Jindan Kaur	Maternal, political, moral	Fights for her son's rights and Sikh heritage; defies colonial and patriarchal control.	Fierce Protector of Lineage and justice; maternal activism.	Feminist Literary Theory – Loyalty as political Resistance and agency.
	Duleep Singh	Filial, redemptive	Reconnects with mother and cultural roots after years of separation.	Emotional loyalty reawakened after loss and reflection.	Attachment Theory – Rebuilding bond after rupture.
	Mangla	Surrogate familial, emotional	Stands by Jindan through hardship; loyalty through Service and affection.	Non-biological bonds provide strength and continuity.	Symbolic Interactionism – Role redefinition through lived experience.
	Mataji	Maternal, foundational	Shapes Jindan's character with values of strength and dignity.	Quiet maternal loyalty lays emotional foundation.	Resilience Theory – Foundational influence on daughter's coping ability.

## Comparing Respect as a Familial Characteristic

Novel	Character	Type of Respect	Description	Family Dynamics	Applied Theory
<i>The Forest of Enchantments</i>	Sita & Rama	Mutual, spousal	Sita asserts her voice; Rama appreciates her wisdom, showing early signs of a marriage based on mutual respect rather than dominance.	Respect as dialogue, not hierarchy, in marriage.	Family Systems Theory – Balance of Roles and emotional feedback.
	Sita & Sunaina/Janaka	Parental, nurturing	Sita's parents raise her to be strong and independent, trusting her decisions. Respect is shown in allowing space for personal growth.	Trust-based parenting that builds autonomy.	Attachment Theory – Respect fosters secure emotional development.
	Sita & Urmila	Sibling-in-law, emotional autonomy	Urmila respects Sita's moral decisions, offering advice without imposing her views.	Emotional maturity and non-interference strengthen sisterly bonds.	Symbolic Interactionism – Respect communicated through non-verbal support.
	Sita & Kaushalya	Intergenerational, mutual	Sita honours Kaushalya's emotions despite disagreements; Kaushalya respects Sita's role as	Mutual understanding and empathy across generations.	Structural- Functional Theory – Role-based harmony and family stability.

			Rama's support.		
	Sita & Elders	Cultural, hierarchical	Sita respects Dasharatha and Kaikeyi through diplomatic behavior, fulfilling Expected social roles without Losing her identity.	Navigating traditional structures with grace.	Social Exchange Theory – Respect ensures social and emotional equilibrium.
<i>The Palace of Illusions</i>	Draupadi & Pandavas	Spousal, emotional ethical	Draupadi seeks dignity & from her husbands; Bhim respects her deeply, Arjun supports her silently, Yudhishtir fails her during the dice game.	Respect (or its absence) affects trust and marital cohesion.	Family Systems Theory – Breakdown in emotional communication weakens bonds.
	Draupadi & Krishna	Spiritual, unconditional	Krishna respects Draupadi's Intellect and humanity, offering unwavering emotional support.	Respect transcends Social roles, becoming empowering and healing.	Attachment Theory – Secure emotional base and validation.
	Draupadi & Dhri	Sibling, fluctuating	Dhri respects her autonomy at swayamvar but later compromises it for political gain.	Fraternal respect struggles under external pressures.	Resilience Theory – Bonds bend but survive through emotional recovery.
	Kunti & Sons	Maternal, directive	Kunti often assumes authority, limiting her sons' personal choices, especially Draupadi's marriage.	Generational respect complicated by indominance.	Structural- Functional Theory– Hierarchy defines roles, not always emotions.
	Gandhari & Duryodhana	Maternal, unreciprocated	Gandhari's loyalty not returned with moral respect from her son, creating emotional distance.	Respect must be mutual to sustain meaningful familial bonds.	Attachment Theory (Insecure) – One-sided bond with limited emotional return.
	Subhadra & Abhimanyu	Maternal, protective	Respects her son's independence while struggling to shield him from harm.	Parental respect balanced with fear and loss.	Resilience Theory – Emotional flexibility amid fear and love.
	Karna Society &	Social/familial, denied	Karna is denied respect due to his supposed low birth, shaping his bitterness and Loyalty to Duryodhana.	Social identity affects familial Respect and belonging.	Social Exchange Theory – Respect linked to social worth and status.

<i>The Last Queen</i>	Jindan & Ranjit Singh	Spousal, posthumous	Jindan respects her late husband's legacy by defending their son's right to the throne.	Spousal respect drives political and maternal courage.	Structural- Functional Theory – Loyalty to role continues post- death.
	Jindan & Duleep Singh	Maternal, autonomous	Jindan respects her son's independence while nurturing his identity.	Deep emotional respect strengthens delayed reconnection.	Attachment Theory – Long-distance bond sustained through emotional trust.
	Jindan & Jawahar Singh	Sibling, strained then reconciled	Despite political tensions, mutual respect endures and is restored.	Sibling bonds adapt under Stress and power shifts.	Resilience Theory – Relationship recovers after internal family conflict.
	Jindan & Mangla	Surrogate, emotional equality	Jindan treats her maid with emotional closeness and dignity, valuing her loyalty.	Non-blood kinship Rooted in mutual emotional respect.	Symbolic Interactionism Status Replaced by emotional symbolism.
	Jindan & Chand Kaur	Peer, regal sisterhood	Despite risks, Jindan respects Chand Kaur's role and seeks her counsel; Chand reciprocates.	Mutual respect builds solidarity among women leaders.	Feminist Literary Theory – Female respect as resistance to male-dominated power.
	Jindan & Punjab People	Cultural/national	Jindan respects her people's trust and refuses to betray them even in exile.	Respect extends from family to national identity.	Family Systems Theory – Nation as extended family structure.

## Comparing Support as familial characteristic

Novel	Character	Type of Support	Description	Family Dynamics	Applied Theory
<i>The Forest of Enchantments</i>	Sita & Rama	Spousal, emotional	Sita supports Rama during exile, putting aside her grief to strengthen him emotionally.	Support as shared responsibility in marriage.	Family Systems Theory – Emotional interdependence in family unit.
	Sita & Kaushalya	Intergenerational, mutual	Sita consoles Kaushalya and promises to care for Rama, receiving emotional trust in return.	Support nurtures mutual understanding across generations.	Structural- Functional Theory – Role-based caregiving maintains harmony.



	Sita & Urmila	Sisterly, unconditional	Urmila offers to accompany Sita to the forest, later accepts care of Lav and Kush, showing strong familial solidarity.	Emotional trust and dependability between sisters-in-law.	Attachment Theory – Secure bond ensuring dependable emotional response.
	Sita & Lav/Kush	Maternal, Emotional & moral	Sita raises her sons alone, offering strength through nurturing and values.	Maternal support empowers independent, value-based identity.	Resilience Theory – Emotional caregiving promotes long-term strength.
	Valmiki & Ashram	Communal, protective	Valmiki and the community offer Sita nonjudgmental refuge and help during crisis.	Supportive environment enables healing and positive parenting.	Symbolic Interactionism – Shared moral framework creates emotional safety.
<i>The Palace of Illusions</i>	Draupadi & Pandavas	Spousal, fractured	Draupadi suffers when her husbands fail to support her in the court; Bhim offers vocal defense, Arjun silent loyalty, Yudhishtir's passivity causes lasting emotional pain.	Spousal support varies; absence weakens bonds. its	Family Systems Theory – Imbalance in emotional roles causes distress.
	Draupadi & Krishna	Spiritual, emotional	Krishna consistently supports Draupadi in her most vulnerable moments.	Moral support transcends biological family.	Attachment Theory – Krishna as secure base and emotional anchor.
	Draupadi & Dhri	Sibling, conditional	Initially supports her independence, later puts politics over loyalty.	Support challenged by ambition and public duty.	Social Exchange Theory – Support strained by cost-benefit tradeoffs.
	Kunti Sons &	Strategic, maternal	Kunti advises and guides her sons during war and exile, but hides Karna's identity for strategic reasons.	Maternal support is filtered through duty and survival.	Structural-Functional Theory – Strategy preserves collective family goals.

	Gandhari & Duryodhana	Maternal, unconditional (misguided)	Supports her son blindly, despite knowing his moral failings, which leads to	Loyalty without moral correction damages the family.	Attachment Theory (Insecure) – Emotional closeness lacks
			tragic consequences.		constructive balance.
	Subhadra & Abhimanyu	Maternal, protective	Nurtures her son while preparing him for duty; emotionally supportive yet Constrained by fate.	Supportive parenting bounded by destiny.	Resilience Theory – Support builds strength despite anticipated loss.
	Karna & Duryodhana	Fraternal-like, loyal	Karna remains Duryodhana's strongest ally, Even when morally conflicted.	Loyalty based on emotional debt and dignity.	Social Exchange Theory – Support Exchanged for social identity.
<i>The Queen Last</i>	Jindan & Duleep Singh	Maternal, emotional, political	Even in exile and imprisonment, Jindan supports her son's identity, inspires resistance, and remains emotionally present.	Maternal support spans emotional, political, and national dimensions.	Resilience Theory – Support resistance–as against adversity.
	Mataji Jindan	Maternal, foundational	Quiet emotional backing and early life teachings prepare Jindan for struggle.	Maternal presence shapes future strength.	Attachment Theory – Early secure bond forms internal emotional resilience.
	Mangla Jindan	Surrogate, emotional, practical	Mangla offers caregiving, political help, and emotional support, forming deep emotional kinship.	Non- biological loyalty builds a strong support network.	Symbolic Interactionism – Roles redefined through shared experiences.
	Lal Singh & Jindan	Political, emotional	Supports Jindan in resistance efforts and emotional recovery after personal losses.	Chosen family alliance based on shared vision.	Social Exchange Theory – Support rooted in loyalty and purpose.
<i>The Last Queen</i>	Jindan Kaur	Maternal, political, moral	Fights for her son's rights and Sikh heritage; defies colonial and patriarchal control.	Fierce Protector of lineage and justice; maternal activism.	Feminist Literary Theory – Loyalty as political Resistance and agency.

Duleep Singh	Filial, redemptive	Reconnects with mother and cultural roots after years of separation.	Emotional loyalty reawakened after loss and reflection.	Attachment Theory – Rebuilding bond after rupture.
Mangla	Surrogate familial, emotional	Stands by Jindan through hardship; loyalty through Service and affection.	Non-biological bonds provide strength and continuity.	Symbolic Interactionism – Role redefinition through lived experience.
Mataji	Maternal, foundational	Shapes Jindan's character with values of strength and dignity.	Quiet maternal loyalty lays emotional foundation.	Resilience Theory – Foundational influence on daughter's coping ability.

## V. CONCLUSION

In *The Forest of Enchantments*, *The Palace of Illusions*, and *The Last Queen*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents family not merely as a biological unit but as a dynamic emotional space where relationships are constantly tested, shaped, and sustained through three foundational characteristics: loyalty, respect, and support. These traits, individually powerful, collectively serve as the emotional glue that binds families together, especially in the face of adversity, injustice, and transformation.

Loyalty, in these novels, is portrayed as a deliberate and often painful choice rather than unquestioning obedience. Characters like Sita, Draupadi, and Jindan Kaur exemplify loyalty not only to people but also to values, traditions, and shared emotional legacies. Sita follows Rama into exile and raises her sons with pride after abandonment. Draupadi remains loyal to the Pandavas despite public humiliation, and Jindan Kaur fights unrelentingly to preserve her son's right to identity and sovereignty. Their loyalty strengthens familial identity, ensuring emotional continuity even in times of separation or betrayal. Without loyalty, families risk becoming fragmented and directionless, lacking a sense of shared purpose and long-term commitment.

Respect plays an equally critical role by safeguarding individual dignity within the collective family unit. Divakaruni highlights that respect is not limited to hierarchical obedience but involves emotional intelligence, empathy, and recognition of personal agency. Sita's respectful engagement with Kaushalya, Draupadi's bond with Krishna, and

Jindan's treatment of Mangla and Chand Kaur show that mutual respect—across genders, roles, and even class boundaries—creates trust and understanding. In families, respect validates each person's voice, ensuring that no member is diminished or silenced. Its absence often leads to conflict, resentment, or emotional withdrawal, weakening the very foundations of the familial bond.

Support emerges as the most nurturing of the three traits. It encompasses emotional reassurance, moral encouragement, and practical help during hardship. Sita supports Rama through exile and offers strength to her sons; Krishna supports Draupadi when others fail her; Jindan receives and offers support in political, maternal, and spiritual forms. Support transforms suffering into resilience and turns vulnerability into strength. Families that offer unconditional support become safe emotional spaces, where members feel seen, valued, and protected. When support is lacking, as in Draupadi's abandonment during her humiliation, emotional bonds are severely strained and trust is lost.

Together, loyalty ensures emotional consistency, respect protects individuality, and support nurtures resilience. These three characteristics work in tandem to form the psychological and emotional structure of a strong family. Divakaruni's novels remind us that while families may be bound by blood, they survive and thrive through conscious emotional labor, mutual responsibility, and a shared commitment to upholding one another's dignity and

dreams. In doing so, she redefines the family not as a static institution, but as a living, evolving relationship that must be continuously nourished with loyalty, respect, and support.

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