

“We’ve changed the world for our sons and daughters”

One of India’s leading live talents, talk evangelists, first awardee of the Best Anchor Female, India, at the Live Quotient Awards and winner of the Bharat Nirman Award for her outstanding contribution to the field of anchoring, **Gitikka Ganju Dhar**, shares her experience of being a working mother, but more importantly, being able to strike the right balance between her duties to her daughter, as well as her career



Being a mother is serious business. Being a professional anchor is also serious business. The fact of the matter is that women today don’t really need to choose between the two. I’m sure you’ve, at some point, come across Rudyard Kipling’s famous words, “God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers.” I believe that those words are in need of an update. The modern world has witnessed a shift and a new societal order solidifies itself, forever altering archetypal role definitions of that of a man and woman. There’s no doubt that many new shades of motherhood are emerging. From working mothers to the new-world mompreneur, the world is definitely moving forward from the times that Kipling speaks of. And whether you’re ready for it or not, this is a reality that the world has to accept.

The fact that I am one too, is a reality I have recently woken up to! Indulge me when I say that working mothers or mompreneurs can be broadly classified into two categories, the

ones who go to work purely due to economic constraints, and those whose drums beat to the tune of Beyoncé’s *Run the World (Girls)*. I believe that most women of today, belong to the latter category.

My daughter was born in the year 2010. I was already cosily encased in a self-imposed sabbatical from work before her birth. By the year 2009, I had reached a point in my career where I felt exhausted, spent, bored, unchallenged, directionless and unmotivated. As she turned one, I was still confused, still physically unfit and also mentally lethargic. I took my own sweet time to cope with the many challenging changes that her birth brought into my life. I was in a new city, Mumbai, without any close family or friends to lean on; I had put on weight and found it impossible to discipline myself to eat healthy. I was completely out of touch with everyone at work, in my cocoon, far away from the madding crowd. Then, I was recognised for my hard work by the panel of the Live Quotient

Awards in 2012, and that was my 'Wake Up' call. Pandora's box was reopened.

By 2013, I took control of my professional life and slowly, but steadily, began breathing life into a career I had turned my back on. The grind began. Now, when I look back to those initial days I tried to kickstart my career, I'm still amazed at my own perseverance. There's a great sense of pride and accomplishment, and that, dear ladies, comes with keeping at it and not giving up on your dreams, no matter how good or bad you have it. Of course, I do have my parents and daughter to thank for my successes. If it wasn't for their availability as my on-call babysitters, and my daughter's her inherently easy going and jovial nature, I'd have probably not accomplished quite as much as I have today.

Don't get me wrong, though. As much as I enjoyed my work, I cherished every moment I got with my baby girl. I was a hands-on mother and a nervous one at that. From carrying her in a baby sling while walking endlessly at airports, scripting while she slept, attending meetings when she went to play school, to combing the earth for a good nanny and waking up at the crack of dawn to reply to work emails, I did it all, tirelessly, pushing my body and my mind into a frantic rhythm that it was not yet used to.

Of course, it wasn't easy. It wasn't always rainbows and butterflies. There was rejection, too. I remember many incidents from back then, when I was fired from an event because I couldn't report for an unplanned

rehearsal; I was constantly patronised and was even offered 'friendly' advice by way of being told it was better if I devoted my time to look after my daughter, home and husband. If that's not all, having to deal with comments on how my career was finished, that I was history and will not be able to tread in the mainstream arena again, that I was too old to be a live events anchor. I won't lie, it hurt. I remember each incident and every negative comment clearly. But that didn't deter me from my path. It did quite the opposite, to be honest. It only served to embolden my resolve. That's when I realised it wasn't about me anymore. It was about about that sheer will to succeed for my daughter, but more importantly, serve as an example to other women, and mothers dealing with exactly this mindset. The more I pushed myself, the more I could achieve from every second of the day. I often tell my female friends, we mothers have the power to bend time. There's no denying that most mompreneurs are fiercely proud professionals who want no concessions made.

The truth, however, is the process takes the mickey out of you, especially if you want to do it all, and do it right! No one will concede an inch; no olive branch is handed out. It's every woman for himself. Yes, there are times you're going to end up disappointing your child—maybe you're not around to get them ready for school or cook them a delicious home-cooked meal on a regular basis, you have to remember that you're a big part of their life. It is you who are bringing them up. Every bit of them, you are helping mould and



guide. I am their mother. You are also a breadwinner. And believe it or not, your children will always be proud of you!

There's no doubt that you're doing your best to give your children the best. Like a woman who ties her baby across her back and breaks brick at a construction site, or like a woman like you and me who steps out to make a name for herself, whether this drive is born out of need or a dream, mompreneurs are here to stay. It is a permanent change in the world's societal structure. All that's left is to sit back and and say it with a smile, "We did it mummies; we've changed the world for our sons and daughters!" **MB**

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