



TalkEvangelistGitikkaGanjuDhar, in this piece, shares her experience of being a working mother. One of India's leading live talents, a goliath in her field, first awardee Best Anchor India, Live Quotient Awards, she has also been honoured with the Bharat Nirman Award for her contribution to the field of anchoring in India. She is a veteran of more than a two dozen television shows and three thousand live events across the globe. Known to be enormously talented, her skill as an orator is admired by one and all in the industry. She is widely idolized by young blood entering the Indian live industry. Her ability to rule the stage, the audience and her legendary professionalism mark her a cut above the rest. Whether a corporate event, government or social event she always raises the bar and takes it to a different level altogether. The expertise and intellectual quotient she brings to the job is unparalleled. Today, she is also a writer, content curator, much sought after moderator and is India's preferred anchor for content based conferences and also government events that involve the presence of Heads of State. Gitikka hails from the valley of Kashmir and says she owes her creative genes to the land of poets, painters and artisans. Based in Mumbai and married to senior banker VineetDhar, she is mother to seven year old Daeveka V Dhar and is balancing the many roles she plays, pretty well up till now. What is her take on being a mompreneur....

THE PIECE-

Being a mother is a serious business. Being a professional anchor is also a serious business. Please imagine a heart emoji bouncing around both these statements. "God could not be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers." Thus wrote Rudyard Kipling, a very long time ago. He may have not spoken in the same vein today. Nowadays, in many a case, the mother cannot be everywhere. Is God revising his quotations too? Sitting atop a white mountain peak, is God smiling whilst watching the game of chess unfold between Mother Eve and Papa Adam? Is he concerned as the tectonic plates shift and a new societal order solidifies itself, forever altering archetypical role definitions of the two genders. Is he also watching intently, as many new shades of motherhood emerge? The emergence of the new-world mompreneur is a reality that the world has had to accept. The fact that I am one too, is a reality I have recently woken up to! Indulge me when I say that mompreneurs can be broadly classified into two categories, the ones who go to work due to purely economic reasons and the ones who hum ABBA's song, I Have a Dream. I 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 family or friends present locally, I had put on weight and was finding 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. And then suddenly, a bunch of kind people in the Indian live industry decided to award me with the Best Anchor Female Award in the year 2012, based on my past body of work. The Pandora's box reopened. By 2013, I was back in the driver's seat, proactively breathing life into a career, I had turned my back on a few years back. The grind began. On some days, when I think back, I marvel at my own perseverance. How did I pull through! I must begin by applauding my daughter's inherently easy, jovial nature as a toddler and the gigantic contribution my parents made as primary baby sitters on constant call. I could have not accomplished my comeback without their support. I was a hands-on mother and a nervous one at that. From carrying her in a baby sling, walking endlessly at airports, to scripting while she slept, to attending meetings when she went to Play School, to combing the earth for a good nannies, to waking up at the crack of dawn to reply to mails, I did it all, tirelessly, pushing my body and my mind into a frantic rhythm that it was not used to. I remember many incidents from those days, of being cancelled off events if I could not report for an unplanned rehearsal at 10 P.M., being told it was better if I devoted my time to look after my kid, home and husband, being told that I was finished, I was history and will not be able to tread in the mainstream arena again, being told that I was too old to be a live events anchor, I remember each incident, each statement, clearly. Every such experience only served to embolden my resolve. It was no more about me. It suddenly became about us, the moms of the world. And then one day, as if by magic, my efficiency at work went up by leaps and bounds. It suddenly became a well-oiled machine that could do it all. The more I pushed myself, the more I could achieve from every second of the day. I often tell my friends, we have the power to expand time. We, as in, working mothers.

So, is it easy? My dear husband knows the answer to this. The flat answer is-No! It takes the mickey out of you. Especially, if you want to do it all, properly. No one at work is willing to concede you an inch, no ivory branch is handed out. On the contrary, most mompreneurs are fiercely proud professionals who want no concessions made. I was no different. My work as an anchor is largely content driven, so it was not about slapping on the grease paint, pulling on a great dress and going to work. As a professional, I had to bring something rare to the table to get my foot in the door. It was not difficult as I did what I always done. I spent days researching and studying topics, brands, industries and tried to frame content that aimed at surpassing expectations. As a result I spent many waking hours and all of my free time writing and reading. I worked hard at eating healthy and improving my stamina. I invested a large amount of time navigating my brand on social media. I had understood that I would first have to showcase my work, for the industry to realise again, the magic of content and call me in for jobs. I offered to host at industry platforms to spread the message of good content and extempore speaking and slowly but surely, content began to talk its way to great Indian stages. By 2015, I was back, doing better work than I had ever done. I still work as hard. I still confront prejudices. I still strive to learn, improve and craft a new course. I am still committed to spreading the joy of content. But, I also still read to my daughter at night. I still escort her to hobby classes. I still pick her up from school. I still arrange play dates for her. I still tell her right from wrong.

Yes, I cannot cook for her, more than once a month. Some mornings, I am not there to get her ready for school. She misses out on a few birthday parties here and there. But I am the one bringing her up. Every bit of her, I am helping build. I am her mother. I am also a mompreneur. And do you know, who is most proud of me? Yes, my little girl.

It is not easy. It takes a toll. I hardly get any leisure time. But I am learning to navigate between the most important, the not so important and the not important things to do. I'll get there. I have also realised that I need to eat healthy, keep fit and meditate on a daily basis to keep my wheels spinning at the pace they need to. Just because a woman is a mother, does that mean she needs to pack up her dreams in a trunk and gracefully place it in the attic? Because someone very long back decided that it is her first duty to be a full-time mother? I was in that very hall when brilliant actor Shahid Kapoor's wife Mira inadvertently said, "Misha is not a puppy. I can't spend one hour with her and rush off to work." I do not know if she meant it, but I remember, I felt a stab of anger in my chest. Well, all I have to say is that when I had a dog, I took care of her just as much. Now that I have Giaa, I try and take care of her to the best of my ability. Like a woman who ties her baby across her back and breaks brick at a construction site or like a woman like me, who steps out to talk the stage, whether a mompreneur born out of need or a dream, mompreneurs are here to stay. It is a permanent change in the world's societal structure. Who knows, maybe in a few years from now, this column may be about poppreneurs. That day, we will sit back and say with a smile, we did it mommies. We changed the world for our sons and daughters.