

# Digital Maternal Cultures: The Politics of Collaboration in/and Indian Mommy Blogs

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In *The Care Manifesto*, a 2020 publication of the Care Collective, the authors note that precarity of racism and resources in certain African American communities have led black women to reimagine "what mothering might look like, dividing childcare between 'blood mothers' and 'other-mothers'", where other-mothers represent "the *network* of women a biological mother can rely on" (Chatzidakis et.al, p.30). With the rise of the blogosphere, such collaborative networks of analogue feminist (and maternal) solidarity were presumed to find their digital equivalent in the phenomena of *mommy blogs*: where mothers talking about their lives and families was hailed as a "radical act" that presumably "offered a transcendent, unifying experience, [of mothering] and elevated [the] everyday experience into a larger sense of community" (Hunter 2016). More recently, critical scholarship has vehemently opposed such revolutionary positioning of mommy blogs and instead pointed out their role in legitimizing normative notions of ideal motherhood, commodifying labour and gendering care-work (Chen 2013; Cummings 2017; Lehto 2019). However, scholars on both sides of such polarizing discourse have failed to consider Global South(s)/Majority World contexts where such blogs do not exist in binary configurations and instead narrativize complex intersectional positions, including but not limited to caste, class, gender, and disability, across the diverse the registers of informational capitalism.

In this presentation we analyze mommy blogs from India as symptomatic of the limitations, potential, and revolutionary possibilities of *Digital Maternal Cultures*, which demonstrate "the material transformations that the electronic age has brought about" (Raley 2004), as evoked in the CFP for DH2023. Through operationalizing Sen and Nussbaum's capability approach (Nussbaum 1988, 1992, 2020; Sen 1993a, 1999: 14, 24; Walsh 2000) which notes that "freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance and that well-being should be understood in terms of people's *capabilities* and *functionings*" (Robeyns 2020), our intervention highlights that digital affordances much like analogue factors such as personal, socio-political, and environmental conditions, can become crucial "conversion factors" for enhancing or impeding maternal collaborative opportunities and communities. Through an analysis of representative blogs such as *Fabulous Mom Life*, *Kreativemommy*, *Obsessivemom* and *Maa of All Blogs* where the interconnectedness of gender politics, neoliberal ideologies, transnational media infrastructures and cultural practices become materialized, this intervention interrogates how revolutionary possibilities are constituted, produced, and challenged within the diverse affective economies of Indian digital platforms.

## Bibliography

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