
Contesting the Platform: Worker Resistance in India's Food Delivery

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ABSTRACT

India's rising food delivery sector, dominated by platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, Eatclub and Eatsure, has become a site of intense labour struggle in recent years. This article critically examines the forms, strategies, and implications of worker resistance in this sector. Drawing on labour process theory and the concept of platform capitalism, this study analyses how workers respond through both everyday tactics and organized collective action. The study synthesizes secondary data from 2019–2025, including protest reports, union statements, and media coverage. This study find that delivery workers have created resistance at multiple levels. Individually, they engage in subtle “jugaad” (hacks) and multi-app strategies to mitigate algorithmic domination. Collectively, they have organized strikes, demonstrations, and even a nationwide “digital strike” by logging off apps. Digital platforms and social media have also become tools for worker voice, amplifying grievances and shaming companies into response. These struggles, including brief references to parallel efforts by ride-hailing drivers, reveal both the possibilities and limits of resistance under platform capitalism. While protests have led to incremental gains (such as restored pay rates and worker amenities), fundamental issues of job security, fair wages, and legal recognition persist. The analysis underscores a need for regulatory intervention and collective bargaining frameworks suited to the gig economy, even as it recognizes the creativity and determination of India's platform workers in contesting their conditions. In conclusion, the food delivery



workforce's fight for dignity and rights exemplifies a broader challenge to platform capitalism, one that balances flexibility with fairness, and innovation with justice.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, app-based food delivery services have become ubiquitous in urban India, reshaping both consumer habits and employment patterns. Companies like Zomato and Swiggy, and more recent quick-commerce platforms such as Blinkit (acquired by Zomato in 2022), now connect millions of customers with restaurants and grocery stores at the tap of a smartphone. This platform-driven boom has created a new class of gig workers – delivery riders clad in branded uniforms and rushing through city traffic to meet tight deadlines. By 2020–21, India's gig workforce was estimated at 7.7 million and projected to triple by 2029–30 (Niti Aayog, 2022). For many, these platforms offer supposed flexibility and quick earnings, touted as entrepreneurial opportunities rather than traditional jobs.

Yet behind the promises of flexible work lies a harsher reality. Platform-based food delivery work in India is characterized by precarious conditions, intense work pressure, and the absence of standard labour protections. Unlike formal employees, delivery “partners” are classified as independent contractors, which means they are excluded from benefits like minimum wage guarantees, health insurance, paid leave, or provident fund contributions (Parwez, 2023). The model of platform capitalism enables companies to act as “mere brokers” between customers and workers, while in practice exerting employer-like control through apps and algorithms. The result is a workforce bearing the costs of fuel, vehicle maintenance, and personal safety, all while being subject to fluctuating pay and arbitrary policy changes by the platform.

By the late 2010s, grievances among gig workers began to spark collective action across India. Early rumblings of dissent were noted in 2019 when food delivery riders and ride-hailing drivers staged strikes in cities like Hyderabad, Nagpur, and Vijayawada, protesting pay cuts and demanding better treatment. These incidents were harbingers of a growing movement. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further highlighted delivery workers' plight: hailed as “essential” workers, they faced heightened risks but scant support, prompting strikes over safety gear shortages and pandemic pay cuts. In the ensuing years, agitations have intensified and become more organized. From the “No AC” campaign by Hyderabad cab drivers in 2025 (where drivers kept car air-conditioning off to protest unsustainably low fares), to the April



2023 mass strike of Blinkit grocery deliverers against a drastic pay revision, India's platform gig workers are asserting their rights in diverse ways. Notably, food delivery couriers – the focus of this article – have been at the forefront of these struggles, even as they share common cause with ride-hailing drivers on platforms like Uber and Ola.

This article critically examines worker resistance in India's food delivery economy, with an emphasis on Zomato, Swiggy, and Blinkit. This study seeks to understand how these workers resist the manifold controls imposed by platform algorithms and corporate policies, and to what effect. This study draws on Labour Process Theory to frame the conflict between management control and worker agency in the gig context, and on analyses of platform capitalism to situate these conflicts in a broader political economy. Methodologically, our study is a synthesis of secondary sources: This study analyzes protest reports, union publications, and media articles that document delivery workers' actions and demands across multiple cities. Through this, this study identifies recurring forms of resistance, from individual "everyday" tactics and digital advocacy to collective strikes and unionization attempts, and the strategies that underpin them.

The significance of these developments is twofold. First, they reveal a contested terrain of labour relations within India's gig economy, challenging narratives that gig work is inherently empowering or benign. Second, they illustrate innovative resistance strategies that may prefigure the future of labour movements in an era of algorithms and apps. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: The Theoretical Framework outlines key concepts of labour process theory and platform capitalism as they apply to gig work. The Methodology section describes our approach to data synthesis. This study then presents an Empirical Analysis on the forms of worker resistance, i.e., collective, and digital, that have emerged in response. A comparative glance at related struggles in ride-hailing is included to highlight common patterns and unique features. In the Conclusion This study summarize the insights while maintaining a balanced perspective that avoids overt polemic or abstraction. Overall, this article demonstrates that India's food delivery workers are not passively accepting the new digital dispensation of work; rather, they are contesting the platform, carving out avenues of voice and dignity in a challenging world of algorithmic bosses.

Theoretical Framework: Labour Process and Platform Capitalism

Labour Process Theory (LPT)



At its core, labour process theory examines how capital manages and controls labour in the workplace, and how workers in turn respond to or resist these controls. Originating from Marx's analysis of labour under industrial capitalism and Harry Braverman's seminal work on the degradation of work (1974), LPT emphasizes the employer's perpetual quest to extract maximum labour effort and the counter-moves by workers to retain autonomy (Braverman, 1974). Classic labour process analysis highlighted tactics like mechanization, Taylorist time-motion controls, and hierarchical supervision as means to subordinate workers and intensify production. Equally, it documented how workers developed informal coping mechanisms, from slowdowns and "fiddles" to shop-floor solidarity, to assert a degree of control over their work (e.g. Roy's (1954) study of "making out" under piece-rate systems).

In the context of app-based gig work, labour process dynamics are both altered and amplified by digital technology. Algorithmic management has been described as a "digital Taylorism" wherein apps and algorithms perform the traditional functions of managers (Kadolkar et al., 2024). Platforms like Zomato and Swiggy algorithmically assign orders, track worker movements via GPS, set performance targets, and enforce customer-rated quality metrics. This creates an opaque, data-driven control system in which workers often do not fully understand how their work is evaluated or why their earnings fluctuate (Bansal, 2022). The "black box" nature of these algorithms means that the means of control – encoded in software, are largely invisible to workers, heightening feelings of alienation and frustration (Huang, 2023). From an LPT perspective, however, this is not a completely novel scenario but a continuation of the capital-labour struggle with new tools (Gandini, 2019). Gig workers, like factory workers before them, seek ways to reclaim autonomy and "make out" within these constraints. As This study will explore, Indian gig workers have developed collective forums and hacks to decipher or game algorithms (e.g., sharing tips to increase order flow or avoid penalties), essentially a form of digital resistance to algorithmic control. Thus, labour process theory provides a lens to analyze how control is exercised (via algorithms, incentives, deactivations) and how workers resist (via informal cooperation, slowdown strategies, etc.) in the gig economy.

Platform Capitalism

The emergence of gig work in India must also be situated in the broader context of platform capitalism. As theorized by Nick Srnicek and others, platform capitalism refers to a business model where digital platforms intermediate between service providers and consumers, leveraging network effects and data extraction as key sources of value (Srnicek, 2017). In the gig economy, this model is characterized by



companies that present themselves as technology intermediaries rather than employers, enabling them to sidestep many legal and financial responsibilities of employment. Platform firms often rely on venture capital funding and market expansion strategies that prioritize growth over immediate profits, which translates into practices like subsidizing services to attract customers and flooding the market with gig workers to ensure speedy service. Labour costs are minimized by design: workers are kept at arm's length, paid per task (delivery) with no guarantee of income, and externalize costs (vehicle, fuel, insurance) onto those workers. In essence, platforms shift business risks downstream to the workforce while maintaining algorithmic oversight that closely directs work activities(ILO, 2021).

Under platform capitalism, control is exercised in “soft” ways through app interfaces, contract terms, and incentive structures, rather than an on-site supervisor. But this control is no less real (Heiland, 2021). Despite the rhetoric of flexibility, gig companies “exercise huge control over the workers, like in the case of a factory boss”, yet use legal fiction to deny any employment relationship. Workers are frequently subject to unilateral changes in terms: for instance, Blinkit delivery drivers saw their per-delivery base pay slashed overnight in April 2023 with a new payout policy, dramatically lowering earnings and prompting immediate protests. Platforms justify such moves as algorithmic or policy updates, often implemented without consultation. The asymmetry of power is stark; an app update can cut a worker's income by half, and the worker has no formal grievance channel or bargaining agent to contest it.

Furthermore, platform capitalism thrives on what scholars call “flexibility on demand” deploying labour when and where needed, and dissipating it when not. In practice, this translates to reserve army of labour. Companies continuously recruit new delivery persons (even charging them entry fees for uniforms and bags) to ensure a reserve army that can be activated at peak times. For workers, this oversupply means intense competition for each order and a dilution of individual bargaining power. As told by a union leader, despite riders' pleas to limit onboarding of new workers during a strike (to prevent strike-breakers), the company “continued excessive hiring...making striking riders easily replaceable”. This on-demand scalability is central to platform economics, but from a labour perspective it functions as a control mechanism: it undermines collective action by ensuring that the supply of labour outstrips demand, so that if some workers refuse tasks or protest, others are waiting to log in.

In summary, platform capitalism provides the structural context in which the labour process of gig work unfolds. It establishes the framework of precarity and asymmetry – low capital commitment to labour, high labour availability, mediated by technology – within which delivery workers negotiate their day-to-



day reality. The theoretical intersection of LPT and platform capitalism suggests that This study will observe heightened tensions: companies continuously refining tech-driven control and cost-cutting, and workers exploring new forms of resistance suited to a dispersed, flexible, and digitally managed workplace. The following sections apply these lenses to the evidence on India's food delivery sector, detailing how control is exercised over workers and how the workers push back.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in the analysis of both primary as well as secondary sources. Key sources include:

Secondary academic and policy literature: To situate our analysis in broader debates, this study reviewed scholarly work on algorithmic management and labour in India's gig economy. Although academic literature specifically focusing on Indian food delivery workers is nascent, this study drew on general studies of platform labour, and policy papers (such as Fairwork India ratings and NITI Aayog reports) for background on the size of the gig workforce and regulatory environment. This study also referenced international comparisons where relevant to highlight common patterns of platform-based control and resistance.

News articles: This study reviewed coverage in media that reported on gig worker strikes, protests, and working conditions. These provided chronological accounts of major events, company responses, and reactions from workers or union representatives.

Union and NGO reports: This study incorporated insights from publications by gig worker collectives such as the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT), the All India Gig Workers Union (AIGWU), and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU). Some of these came in the form of press releases or social media threads (for example, union Twitter handles amplifying protests), while others were collaborative reports (e.g., People's Union for Democratic Rights' study on gig work). These sources offered context on workers' grievances and the evolving strategy of collective action, as seen from the perspective of worker organizations.

Statements, charters, and campaigns by worker unions and collectives: including the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT), All India Gig Workers Union (AIGWU), Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU), and GIPSWU. These sources, often posted on union websites or



social media handles, provided access to protest demands, strike justifications, and narratives of worker resistance.

Social media content: Posts primarily from Twitter and YouTube, was systematically reviewed to trace digital mobilization, protest campaigns, and worker testimonies. These included protest videos, user-generated content by delivery partners, and Twitter threads documenting and amplifying worker actions

Using these sources, this study conducted a thematic analysis. All identified instances of protests or worker action were tabulated with details on date, location, triggers, demands, and outcomes. Themes identified around Forms of Resistance, instances or descriptions of how workers fight back (e.g., strikes, union formation, social media campaigns, informal coping tactics). Within resistance, sub-categories for individual, collective, and digital forms were used to differentiate these modalities.

Empirical Analysis

Worker Resistance: Collective, and Digital Tactics

Despite working in a dispersed and digitally managed environment, India's food delivery workers have not remained atomized or powerless. On the contrary, they have engaged in a range of resistance strategies – some quiet and individualized, others highly public and collective – to contest the conditions described above. This study categorizes these responses into three overlapping spheres: individual resistance on the job, collective action and protests, and digital activism and networking. Together, these forms of resistance illustrate

Collective Resistance: Strikes, Protests, and Unions

Collective action among gig workers marks a significant escalation from individual tactics, as it directly challenges platform practices in a confrontational, public manner. Organizing delivery workers is inherently difficult – they are dispersed across cities, work irregular schedules, and lack a unifying workplace. Nevertheless, since 2019 there have been numerous strikes and protests by food delivery workers across India, indicating a growing collective consciousness and organization.

One of the earliest notable strikes occurred in 2019, as food delivery platforms expanded aggressively. In May 2019, hundreds of Swiggy riders in Hyderabad went on strike over a reduction in per-order pay. The very next month, Zomato delivery workers in Nagpur staged protests (with support from a local political party) over unspecified grievances. By August 2019, Swiggy workers in cities like Chennai and



Vijayawada struck work, prompting involvement from established trade unions like the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) to back their cause. These early protests were often spontaneous and location-specific, responding to immediate triggers such as pay cuts or incentive withdrawal. For example, Times of India reported a wave of strikes in mid-2020 when Swiggy eliminated its monthly incentive due to the pandemic, slashing incomes; workers in Chennai, Hyderabad, and Noida coordinated strikes demanding its restoration. The initial strikes had mixed results – companies occasionally made small concessions (like marginally increasing per km rates) but largely stayed their course on major pay revisions. However, the strikes served to galvanize workers and drew media attention to their plight.

Over time, collective actions became more organized and spread to new locales. Chennai emerged as a hotbed of food delivery strikes. In March 2022, Zomato delivery partners in Chennai, under CITU's banner, protested increasing working hours and low pay, explicitly demanding an assured minimum wage and social security measures. This protest showed a maturation of demands – not just reacting to a pay cut, but articulating broader labour rights like social welfare. Although Zomato did not immediately meet those demands, the protest indicated a deepening alliance between gig workers and traditional labour movements (CITU being a national union federation).

Perhaps the most disruptive collective action in recent memory was the Blinkit strike of April 2023. Blinkit, a rapid grocery delivery service, introduced a new pay structure in April 2023 that significantly cut earnings (as mentioned earlier, reducing base pay and paying only per kilometer). In response, thousands of Blinkit delivery partners across multiple cities – Delhi (NCR), Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune – went on strike almost simultaneously. Videos on social media showed workers burning Blinkit T-shirts and effigies and holding placards demanding the new rates be revoked. This strike was notable for its geographical spread and coordination; it wasn't confined to one city, suggesting communication networks among workers nationwide. The strike caused substantial service disruption – Blinkit's app was unable to service many orders, and at least 50 of its dark stores (local warehouses) were shuttered due to lack of delivery staff in Delhi-NCR. The impact even drew political attention, with a local politician publicly criticizing Blinkit for the wage cut. After days of deadlock, there were reports (unofficial) that Blinkit quietly rolled back some of the cut by raising per-trip payouts again. The Blinkit strike's significance lies in demonstrating that gig workers could exert pressure comparable to a traditional strike, forcing a major platform to adjust policy due to collective withdrawal of labour.



Other major protests have targeted specific unfair practices. In July 2023, for instance, over 200 Urban Company service providers (primarily women beauticians, analogous gig workers in home services) protested outside the company's office in Gurugram against arbitrary ID blocking and absurd rating requirements. Although not food delivery, it was part of the same gig workforce trend and was supported by AIGWU and CITU. Urban Company eventually conceded to some demands, such as reducing commissions and unblocking certain accounts, indicating that protests can yield tangible wins.

Within food delivery, collective demands have coalesced around a few themes: better pay (or reversal of pay cuts), protection from arbitrary changes, compensation for accidents, and recognition as workers. In numerous protest memoranda, workers have asked for a return to earlier, higher pay rates when platforms cut payouts drastically. They also frequently demand payment for every kilometer traveled (including pickup distance, which is often unpaid) and for waiting time at restaurants beyond a threshold. Safety and compensation are critical issues – after several fatal accidents of delivery riders, protests have called for insurance or ex-gratia for families. For example, riders in Delhi once demanded ₹1 crore compensation for any rider who dies on duty and ₹50 lakh for serious injuries, highlighting the dire lack of any coverage. Lastly, a recurring strategic demand is for government intervention and regulation: protesters have submitted petitions to labour commissioners and even the central Labour Ministry (e.g., at a demonstration at Delhi's Jantar Mantar) urging the creation of laws for gig workers and an end to their “independent contractor” misclassification.

Supporting these mobilizations are nascent unions and collectives. IFAT (Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers) was formed in 2019 as an umbrella body and has since grown to over 35,000 members nationwide. AIGWU (affiliated with a national trade union, CITU) has been active in Delhi and other areas, aiding protests and raising awareness. City or state-specific groups like TGPWU in Telangana focus on local issues (TGPWU has led Hyderabad cab and delivery driver campaigns). These organizations often operate with limited resources and in a quasi-underground manner (since gig companies do not formally recognize unions). Nevertheless, they have played a critical role in coordinating strikes and giving workers a collective voice. For example, AIGWU volunteers have helped draft charters of demands and amplify protests on social media. IFAT, for its part, took the legal route in 2021 by filing a petition in the Supreme Court seeking recognition of gig workers as employees entitled to social security. While that case is pending, it has at least brought national attention to the issue.



It should be noted that not all collective actions have immediately succeeded. A strike by Zomato delivery “partners” in a tier-2 city in 2021 lasted 10 days but ended with no concession from the company, largely because the company managed to hire replacement drivers and wait out the strike. Such setbacks illustrate the challenges gig workers face in sustaining long strikes without an income floor or strike fund. Yet, even these struggles often bring longer-term gains in solidarity and public sympathy. Each protest builds networks – for instance, WhatsApp groups formed during a strike remain active afterward, serving as platforms for mutual aid or future mobilization.

In sum, collective resistance in India’s food delivery sector has evolved from isolated city-specific strikes to coordinated multi-city actions and the emergence of formal unions. The workers’ demands have broadened from purely economic (pay issues) to encompass recognition and rights. The involvement of traditional labour unions and support from civil society (students, political activists, etc., sometimes join their demonstrations) has grown. These developments mark a significant step in bringing gig workers into the fold of the labour movement. However, as the next part explores, a key element in their collective action has been the savvy use of digital tools and media, an arena where their battle is also being fought.

Digital Resistance and Advocacy

Delivery workers have leveraged the very technology that facilitates their exploitation as a means of resistance, using Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and other digital forums to organize, amplify their voices, and win public support. This “digital resistance” operates in synergy with on-ground action, sometimes even substituting for physical protests when those are not feasible.

A key aspect is the use of social media to amplify grievances and pressure companies. In several instances, what may have been a small local protest turned into a nationwide trend on Twitter due to clever hashtag campaigns and tagging of media. For example, during the Urban Company protest by women workers in 2021, sympathetic techies and unionists ran a campaign on Twitter using handles like @DeliveryBhoy, @ZomatoPartners, and @SwiggyDEHyd (apparently run by worker groups or supporters) to highlight the workers’ issues. This online amplification caught attention such that Urban Company felt compelled to publicly address the matter, and indeed the company quickly announced policy changes (lower commission, helpline, unblocking IDs) on October 14, 2021, just days after the issue trended. A Times of India report credited behind-the-scenes AIGWU tech volunteers and social media buzz for forcing that outcome. This suggests that Twitter became a “negotiation table” of sorts when traditional channels were absent.



Gig workers have also grown adept at using social media for naming and shaming. IFAT's president Shaik Salauddin noted that earlier a company could ignore a small protest by simply blocking the protestors IDs and onboarding new workers, but “now this study use social media to name and shame them”, which has started to pay off. A vivid example occurred after a Zomato delivery boy's accident and death in 2021; when Zomato offered almost no compensation, activists and netizens on Twitter criticized the company, eventually prompting Zomato's founder to announce a “gig workers relief fund” (though critics deemed it inadequate). Such public shaming via social media has exposed issues like delivery riders being made to pay for spilled orders, or forced to meet impossible delivery times, stories that companies initially deny, but then often address once they spread widely.

Another dimension of digital resistance is secure coordination and community-building via messaging apps. WhatsApp groups serve multiple purposes: sharing tips (as discussed earlier), warning each other about practical issues, and crucially, mobilizing protests or strikes. Calls for strikes are circulated in these groups, sometimes as voice messages from union leaders or posters listing demands and a strike date. For instance, the planning of the October 2024 “Digital Strike” (where workers were to log off on Diwali) was done through WhatsApp broadcasts and Telegram channels managed by GIPSWU and others, instructing workers on how to participate and post on social media about it. The connectivity offered by smartphones lowers the barrier for organizing – no need for all to physically meet in advance; consensus can be built through chats and votes in the groups.

Digital strikes and online campaigns represent a novel form of collective action pioneered in this sector. The nationwide “App Off” protest on Diwali 2024, spearheaded by the women-led GIPSWU, was essentially a digital strike. Thousands of gig workers simultaneously switched off their apps on one of the busiest festival days. They accompanied this with an online campaign hash tagged #BlackDiwali, sharing selfies at home with family to emphasize that they too deserve holidays and rest. By doing so, they turned a symbolic protest (not working on a holiday) into a media event that drew public attention to gig workers' lack of off-days and harsh conditions. The New Indian Express reported that this digital strike spread across 11 major cities and was coordinated via social media, marking perhaps the first labour action in India conducted primarily online and via app deactivation. The success lay not only in slight disruption of services (which did occur) but in the awareness raised – it reframed Diwali, a day of lights, as “Black Diwali” for gig workers under exploitation.



Social media has also been used to gain public empathy and support. Many delivery workers or their family members have shared personal stories on Twitter, which sometimes go viral and prompt crowd-funding or media stories. One delivery worker's tweet about having to bring his child along on deliveries (because he couldn't afford childcare) sparked an outpouring of support and highlighted the lack of benefits like childcare or reasonable hours. The collective sharing of such experiences builds a narrative that gig workers are exploited and deserving of better treatment, countering the platforms' narrative of them being "independent contractor".

Finally, digital media facilitate alliances beyond immediate worker circles. Twitter and Instagram have seen support for gig workers from urban middle-class customers who use these services. For instance, during the #StandWithBlinkitWorkers campaign in 2023, many consumers tweeted that they would boycott Blinkit until workers' pay was restored. Such public solidarity, even if limited, puts reputational pressure on companies' conscious of their brand image. Gig workers have also garnered support from political activists, journalists, and academics on social media, who amplify their campaigns and sometimes intervene (as in tagging government officials or writing open letters). The digital sphere, therefore, becomes a coalition-building space, uniting disparate stakeholders around the issue of platform worker rights.

In summary, digital resistance has become an indispensable part of gig worker activism in India. It complements on-ground efforts by increasing visibility and scale, and in some cases substitutes for physical presence (as with the digital strike). It also offers some protection: online pseudonyms and collective handles allow workers to speak out without immediately risking personal retaliation (recall that workers even ask volunteers to post on their behalf to avoid being identified by companies). Of course, digital activism alone cannot solve workers' problems, but as part of a multi-pronged resistance strategy, it has shown notable effectiveness in holding platforms accountable in the court of public opinion and rallying worker unity across geographic distances.

Conclusion

The rise of app-based food delivery in India has opened a new frontier in the world of work – one where algorithms manage labour, flexibility is extolled but precarity prevails, and the traditional bonds and breaks of employment are conspicuously absent. In this frontier, as our analysis shows, conflict between workers and platforms is not only present but mounting. The evidence of 2019–2025 reveals a workforce that, contrary to early depictions of gig workers as entrepreneurs. Delivery workers have contested the



platform on multiple terrains: in the streets through strikes and protests, in courts and government halls through petitions and advocacy, and online through tweets, hashtags, and virtual campaigns. Gig workers lack formal recognition as employees. They continue to work without assured income or safety nets, at the mercy of shifting algorithms and intense competition. No single strike or court case has yet broken the core of the independent contractor model that reinforces platform capitalism's profitability.

However, to focus only on policy outcomes would be to miss the broader significance of what is unfolding. In the process of resisting, food delivery workers in India have forged a nascent labour movement built on new forms of solidarity and communication. They have demonstrated that even in a dispersed workforce, collective identity and action can emerge – a fact with deep implications for the future of work and worker organization. Unions like IFAT, AIGWU, and GIPSWU, though young, have shown ingenuity in organizing this precarious workforce, whether by holding monthly meetings under the radar or by launching all-India digital strikes. These efforts may well set precedents for other gig sectors and for labour movements globally, as companies everywhere grapple with the questions of how to treat gig workers, and workers grapple with how to gain rights in return.

For the platforms and policymakers, the message from these contestations is clear: the gig work model, as currently practiced, is economically and socially unsustainable if it perpetuates poverty wages and disregards worker welfare. Continued unrest could disrupt services and tarnish companies, and it underscores the urgency of establishing a more equitable framework. Experiments like Rajasthan's Gig Worker Welfare Act are promising starts towards that framework, but require effective implementation and scaling to the national level to truly make an impact.

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