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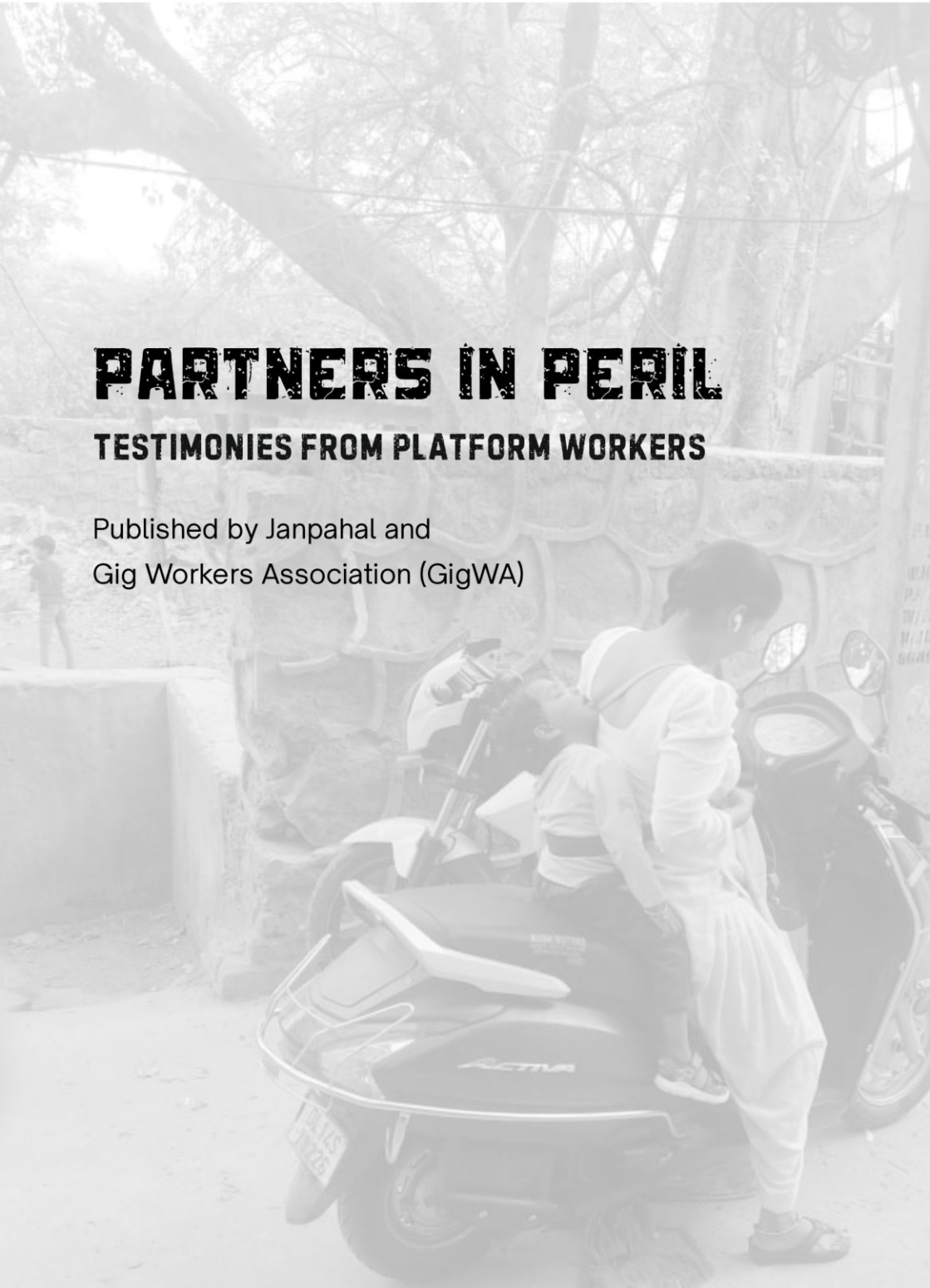
GIG WORKERS ASSOCIATION (GIgWA)

PARTNERS IN PERIL

TESTIMONIES FROM PLATFORM WORKERS



PARTNERS IN PERIL

TESTIMONIES FROM PLATFORM WORKERS

Published by Janpahal and
Gig Workers Association (GigWA)

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NOTES

Janpahal

Janpahal is a Delhi based not-for-profit organisation with pan India operations working since 2005 with distribution sector workers with the perspective of livelihoods, social security, rights and dignity. Janpahal played a key role in the last two decades by contributing significantly to the debates around protection and promotion of retail democracy. Securing the rights of workers in the local informal economy and platform economy in the national and global context is one of the key objectives of Janpahal. To realise the objectives, Janpahal engages the stakeholders across the distribution supply chain including small and marginal farmers, micro, small and medium enterprises, small independent businesses, self-employed and wage workers, warehouse and delivery workers and consumer groups. Janpahal envisions democratic distribution services which are good for all. Details may be found at www.janpahal.com

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The Gig Workers Association (GigWA)

The Gig Workers Association (GigWA) is a collective of platform-based workers who work with companies like Amazon, Flipkart, Zepto, Rapido, Blinkit, Dunzo, Urban Company, Swiggy, Instacart, and others. GigWA raises its voice to advocate for the rights and protections of these workers. It is active in 35 cities across India, organizing gig workers to raise awareness, build solidarity, and empower them.

GigWA believes that platform-based economies should not be left entirely in the hands of companies. There should be a central law and a regulatory framework to ensure accountability. It also demands the establishment of a tripartite board (comprising representatives of platform workers, platform companies, and the government).

GigWA further demands that all platform-based gig workers be legally recognized as workers and brought under the purview of labor laws. It also seeks guaranteed access for gig workers to welfare schemes such as ESI (Employees' State Insurance), PF (Provident Fund), Gratuity, and Maternity Benefits, among others.

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This booklet would not have been possible without the voices, experiences, and relentless efforts of platform-based gig workers across the country. Their daily struggles, acts of resistance, and aspirations for a just and equitable future form the very foundation of this work. We are deeply grateful to the workers who came forward to share their realities, often at personal risk, and placed their trust in us to carry their voices forward.

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This publication stands as a tribute to the courage and dignity of platform-based gig workers, those who continue to fight for recognition, fair pay, social security, and safe working conditions in the rapidly evolving world of platform-based labour.

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Introduction

The gig economy promises freedom—flexible hours, quick earnings, and the chance to "be your own boss." But for the millions of delivery riders, cab drivers, and other gig workers who keep this system running, the reality is far from liberating. Instead, it is a world of relentless pressure, shrinking pay, and invisible chains controlled by algorithms. This booklet, compiled by the Gig Workers Association, collects the voices of those who know this struggle firsthand. The testimonies are largely collected from Delhi NCR, in addition to a case study from a strike organised by workers in Patna. Their stories reveal the truth behind the glossy ads—the exploitation, the risks, and the growing movement of workers fighting back.

For many, gig work is not a choice but a last resort. Some enter the job after losing stable employment; others are pushed in by debt or desperation. Once inside, they find a system designed to squeeze every drop of labor while offering no security. Companies like Swiggy, Zomato, Uber, and Ola lure workers with the illusion of easy money, only to trap them in a cycle of long hours, unpredictable earnings, and constant surveillance. The so-called "flexibility" means no fixed wages, no benefits, and no protection when things go wrong.

The first section of this booklet, 'Testimonies on the Work Lives of Gig Workers', dives into their daily realities. Workers describe how opaque algorithms dictate their lives—arbitrary ratings, sudden pay cuts, and unexplained account suspensions that leave them with nothing. They speak of racing through dangerous traffic, working 12 to 14-hour shifts, only to see their earnings vanish after fuel and maintenance costs. Many share stories of injuries on the job, with no company support or compensation. The mental toll is just as heavy — the stress of maintaining high ratings, the fear of customer complaints, the knowledge that one wrong move could mean losing their livelihood overnight.

Yet, despite these hardships, workers are not staying silent. The second section, 'Organising and Union-Busting', documents their growing resistance. Denied

the legal status of employees, gig workers have been excluded from traditional labor rights. But across the country, they are building unions, staging strikes, and demanding fair treatment. Their collective power has forced companies to take notice —but instead of listening, corporations are fighting back with brutal tactics. Workers who speak out are mysteriously deactivated. Unions face smear campaigns and legal hurdles. Companies manipulate contracts to keep workers isolated, setting up fake "feedback forums" to drown out real demands.

This booklet is more than a collection of testimonies—it is proof that the gig economy thrives on exploitation, and that workers are rising against it. Their fight is not just for better pay, but for dignity, safety, and the right to be seen as human beings rather than disposable data points. As you read these stories, remember: the convenience of instant deliveries and cheap rides rests on the backs of workers who are tired of being invisible. It's time their voices were heard.

Section 1:

Testimonies on Work Lives of Gig Workers

1 Work went on, life kept changing

In the words of Ram Prakash Verma

My name is Ram Prakash Verma. I am 51 years old and belong to Begusarai district in Bihar. My family consists of my mother, wife, and three grown-up children. The entire responsibility of the household rests on my shoulders. For the past four years, I have been living alone in Noida, working in delivery to support my family.

I have studied up to 12th grade. To meet life's demands, I have taken up various jobs—sometimes doing maintenance work in a private school, other times working as a security guard. I also drove a rickshaw in Delhi and Noida for 5-6 years. But since the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been in the delivery business, and currently, I work as a delivery boy for Swiggy Instamart. I had no prior connections in this field. By talking to and observing those already in delivery work, I started this job myself. I have worked with Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy, and Zomato—creating IDs for all. But a major issue is that once an ID gets blocked, you can't create another one with the same documents.

The biggest challenge in this job is getting leave. Only after working continuously for 10 days do you get a single day off. If you need leave, you have to apply, and approval is granted only if there is enough staff.

At Zepto, payments are made weekly, but punctuality is strictly enforced. Even a 5-minute delay cuts into your incentives. Swiggy Instamart pays on time and has slightly better policies, but even there, a customer complaint can get your ID blocked immediately.

Zomato's rules are even stricter. Once, during heavy rain, it was difficult to take the scooter out. I was afraid the battery might get damaged if I fell into a pothole, so I refused the order. Just for that, after working for 14 days, my ID was blocked. Discipline is enforced very strictly there. One unique aspect of

this field is that you can work whenever you want, but the flip side is that there is no job security. If you meet with an accident or fall ill, there is no support.

Initially, I delivered on a bicycle, which was very exhausting. But for the past month, I have been using a rented electric scooter, which helps me meet targets faster. By working 13-14 hours daily, I earn between Rs. 5000 to Rs. 7000 a week. However, companies keep changing their policies frequently.

I have three brothers and four sisters. Earlier, we all used to farm in the village. Each brother got about 5-6 *kathas* of land. When farming in the village became insufficient, I moved to the city and started delivery work. There is work here, but no stability. I have three brothers and four sisters. Earlier, we all used to farm in the village. Each brother got about 5-6 *kathas* of land. When farming in the village became insufficient, I moved to the city and started delivery work. There is work here, but no stability.

My children are good in studies. My son has completed a diploma in polytechnic, and both daughters have graduated, but none of them have found jobs yet. I don't pressure them to work. I want them to focus on their preparation and secure good jobs. That's why I've given them complete freedom to decide their future path.

The Invisible Backbone of E-Commerce

Bhushan's Struggle

2

Bhushan, a 28-year-old from Betia district in Bihar, carries the weight of his entire family on his shoulders. His household includes his parents, a sister, his wife, and their two children. He is the sole breadwinner—his father, a farmer, struggles with a small piece of land, while his mother is a homemaker.

Though he once dreamed of completing his BA, life had other plans. On August 13, 2017, a friend helped him secure a job at Amazon Flex. **"The work is relentless, but the pay is meager,"** he says with frustration. "No ESI, no PF—no social security at all." Every day is a gamble. The roads are dangerous, and the fear of accidents looms large. "If something happens, we're on our own," he admits. Deliveries to upscale apartments come with their own humiliations— guards often treat riders with disdain, making an already difficult job even harder. His family isn't happy about his work, but what choice does he have? "We have to keep going," he sighs.

The only silver lining? A sense of freedom. "Once you get an order, you're on your own—no one micromanages you." But that autonomy is hollow when the company refuses to acknowledge riders as workers. "We endure so much hardship, yet we remain invisible."

For Bhushan, every delivery is a battle—against time, against exploitation, and against a system that refuses to see him as anything more than a replaceable cog in the machine.

Riders Deserve Respect and Dignity

Testimony of Lata

3

My name is Lata Bharadwaj. I live in Maujpur with my husband and children, while the rest of our family lives in our village in Uttar Pradesh. My husband is an Uber driver. My husband and I send money to my mother-in-law, and I also pay for my younger son's college fees and conveyance. He is studying chemical engineering.

My husband's income could not support our household expenses, so I started working very early on. I worked first as a garment worker stitching buttons and denim clothes at home making very little money, Rs.1500 a month after working 8-10 hours a day. I progressed slowly from working at home to a salaried job making Rs.4000, to finally Rs.10,000 a month at a small factory unit in Karkardooma. When that factory closed down, I lost my job.

It was then that I was referred to Zomato by a neighbour. For the last two years, I have been working as a rider 12 hours a day completing targets of 24-25 orders.

Now its become almost worthless to work on Zomato: I make Rs. 1200 a day without expenses where one year ago I would make Rs. 1800 for 12 hours of work. And we have to work 12 hours to make enough money because we rely on incentives, and just our expenses worth Rs. 300 a day. Another issue is that there are so many workers now, and our waiting times have increased. People such as me who are working for 12 hours a day face the brunt of this, because so many part-time workers login in the evening and compete with us.

During the heat we stand under the shade of a tree and rest on our bikes and even these spots get crowded. Companies have not given any additional

support to women workers. I go around looking for bathrooms in societies and restaurants and use the same ones used by the staff there. I go to unsafe areas to deliver orders but have no option to cancel them because of penalties.

We cannot contact anyone if we need help in the evening. We have to call them through the app, and get no option to call the company in the evening. I have taken contact numbers of a few other Zomato workers, they are the only ones I can rely on in times of need. Some other women I know even carry around knives for their own safety.

If I have to talk about the worst thing we have to face, it is the attitude of customers. They always insist that we drop the order at their doorstep on the third and fourth, regardless of what time it is. There was one time my foot was hurt so I asked the customer to send a basket to take the order, but she did not agree. Customer care told me I have no other option but to drop it.

Women riders have to face another issue of harassment on the streets. I speed up my bike whenever I see someone following me. Many times I have thought about changing my job but don't know what else to do. I have learnt a lot doing this work and working on the streets, but now the incentive is so low that sometimes it seems like its not worth it.

I request Zomato to stop this practice of sending women workers to the customer's doorstep late at night with no security. Even during the day, it is unfair to ask us to climb four flights of stairs for a Rs. 20 order with no extra pay. There is also no regulation on zones - they don't give the option to work in your own zone if I want, especially at night.

In the Words of a Delivery Associate

Abhay Saroj's Experience

4

My name is Abhay Saroj, and I live in Azadpur, Delhi.

Since 2018, I have been working as a delivery associate at an Amazon warehouse near Pulbangash Metro Station. Before this, I worked at a steel line factory, but when I lost that job in 2018, I started working here.

In the beginning, everything was fine. I could save a decent amount, the items to deliver were usually light groceries, and I didn't have to carry heavy loads. But as the company expanded, its policies began to change, and the pressure kept increasing.

Now, the situation has become such that where we used to handle 36– 40 kg loads earlier, today, delivering 60–65 kg has become common. After one or two delivery slots, if the bike falls into a pothole, the jolt causes pain in my back and neck. At night, it feels like something is piercing my spine. After working for five days, I need two days of rest just to recover enough to work again.

The company claims in writing that the total weight per slot should not exceed 44 kg, but in reality, no one monitors this. When delivery associates protest, they are told, "If you want to work, take it; otherwise, don't pick up the slot." This attitude makes it clear that our health is of no concern to them. Now, I can only manage two slots a day, and the exhaustion is so severe that I need 10–12 hours of sleep just to feel somewhat normal again.

My family consists of me, my brother, and my mother. I'm not married yet. Both my brother and I work, but even then, we struggle to cover household expenses.

Back when petrol was ₹70–72 per liter, the rate per slot was ₹250. Now, petrol costs over ₹100 per liter, but the slot rate remains the same—₹250. Earlier, I could easily complete four slots, but now, attempting four slots leaves my body completely drained. After 10 hours of hard work, I barely manage to save ₹500–700.

Despite all this effort and burden, no one listens to us. All we hope for is:

- **Strict enforcement of the prescribed weight limits.**
- **An increase in slot rates according to current expenses.**
- **And respect for our hard work and health.**

If the company's profits have increased, a small portion of that should be invested in the well-being of those who work day and night to bring it this success.

Delivering Dreams on Two Wheels

Amit's Journey

5

Amit, a 24-year-old Zomato delivery rider, hails from Sitamarhi, Bihar. While navigating the bustling streets of Delhi, he juggles his third year of college studies alongside his gig—a necessity rather than a choice. His family—parents, two brothers, and two sisters—relies on his earnings to make ends meet. His father drives an auto-rickshaw, while his siblings are still students. Together, they live in a rented house in Tughlakabad Extension, their home for the past three years.

Amit admits he isn't happy with his job, but in a city where opportunities are scarce, he clings to it out of necessity.

"Family expenses keep piling up, and my income just isn't enough," he shares.

He joined Zomato on a friend's suggestion, and since then, the app's notifications have dictated his daily grind. "Until I find something better, I'll keep doing this," he says with resigned determination.

But the job wears him down in more ways than one. "The company doesn't treat us as workers—just replaceable numbers," he explains. The roads are unforgiving, with the constant fear of accidents lurking at every turn. And then there's the unwelcoming glares from apartment security guards, who often treat riders with disdain when they arrive for deliveries.

"They act like we're intruders, not people just doing our jobs."

Amit pedals on—through Delhi's scorching heat and its chaotic traffic. His story isn't unique; it's echoed by thousands of gig workers who keep the city fed while fighting for dignity, better pay, and a shot at a brighter future.

Will the road ever get easier for Amit?
Or will the algorithm keep him running
in circles?

Ravi's Struggle In and Out of Gig Work

6

I live in North Delhi. I've been doing Rapido bike taxi work for the past 8 months. During the COVID-19 lockdown, companies removed many workers, around 120–125 were terminated where I was and I was one of them. My commute used to be about 110 km round-trip, taking over 3.5 hours daily.

I used to start my day by 10 AM, no matter the season, be it scorching summer or freezing winter. Seeing the instability in jobs, I tried to start my own business, but due to lack of money and resources, it didn't grow. After that, I worked with a property dealer for 2–3 years, but he stopped paying my salary. I have four family members: my wife, son (5 years old), and my mother. Thankfully, we own our house, otherwise paying rent would have been another major burden. For the couple of months, I've been trying to find a stable job, but no one is willing to consider my work with Rapido as valid experience. They don't see this as "real" work, especially because there's no official proof or documentation. That's why I'm unable to get hired. I returned to Rapido few months ago. I chose it because I didn't have the capital to run a business, and no job was coming my way. At least with Rapido, I just needed a bike. I bought one on EMI, especially after my old bike was stolen last April.

Many people working in Rapido are those who have failed to get conventional jobs. Some are not very educated, many are 12th pass, some are older, and employers don't consider them capable anymore, even for computer-based jobs.

I leave home around 7 AM after a light breakfast. During the summers, the heat is unbearable by 11 AM. From 1 to 4 PM, it gets so hot that I often feel like canceling rides. I've thought of telling customers to take someone else's ride for free, just to avoid the heat.

Buying bottled water multiple times a day becomes expensive, it's not feasible to spend Rs.10–Rs.20 each time. Drinking hot water leads to nausea and vomiting. Sometimes I look for petrol pumps just to get water, but often they don't have any. It affects my health, I don't feel like eating, and sitting on roads in the heat can ruin the food too. There are no proper resting places; we look for shade or sit wherever we can, even if it's the roadside.

Initially, Rapido offered Rs.19 for 24 hours, plus GST. Then came Rs.39 and Rs.99 plans — but all were structured to keep us working continuously. The company charges customers Rs.8–9 per km but pays us only Rs.7–7.5. Out of that, we pay for petrol, maintenance, tire punctures, and so on.

If my new bike gives me an average of 55–60 km/litre, I still end up spending Rs.2/km on petrol. If I travel 250 km in a day, around 50 km is spent just reaching the customer, and 200 km is with customers. That brings in around Rs.1,500, but after all deductions, I barely make Rs.1,000 a day.

Sometimes customers book parcel rides instead of passenger rides, which causes problems. If we cancel, the company favors the customer. I once did 6 rides in a day, and my rating dropped from 20 to 7–8 just because one customer gave a bad rating. Now I keep worrying that I might get blocked if my rating drops below 5. I even have to plead with customers to give me good ratings.

Even though there's a 'home' option in the app, I've never once been able to get a ride back to Burari after working in South Delhi. I often have to return from far-off locations, using my own petrol without any earnings.

When a ride shows ₹150 and traffic delays it to an hour, the fare goes up due to surge pricing, but customers refuse to pay more. They say they'll only pay what's shown originally. The company doesn't help, they just tell us to deal with it ourselves. We get random virtual numbers and can't reach the actual customer. There's no follow-up or reasoning from the company if a customer

doesn't pay or pays less. If we raise a support ticket, we hear nothing back. Once, a customer outright refused to pay, and I suffered a huge loss.

If we raise a complaint, the company listens only to the customer. At the very least, they should give us a chance to explain. There should be a dedicated support team for drivers to handle these issues.

The Path of Courage

Pooja's Story

7

I live in Delhi. I have a small house where I live with my husband and five children (four daughters and one son). My husband is a contractual employee with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and earns around ₹20,000–22,000 a month. But managing the responsibilities of five children, their education, and other household expenses—all within this income—was extremely difficult. When COVID-19 hit in 2020, life came to a standstill. My husband lost his job, and there was no source of income left in the house. Many days, we had to survive on the ration provided by the government. During such tough times, I gathered courage and decided to step out of the house to work.

One day, I asked my neighbor about job opportunities. He asked me, "Can you deliver orders?" Hesitantly, I replied, "I don't even know how to use a phone properly..." Still, I went to the workplace. The vendor there created an ID for me and asked for some money. I paid it because there was no turning back now.

My journey began with Flipkart. The work was new, and I was very scared. At that time, I was also pregnant, yet I was sent to crowded areas like Gandhinagar and Raghubirpura for deliveries. I worked for six months until my husband objected, but by then, I had gained confidence in myself.

I worked with Flipkart for two years, then with Myntra for two and a half years, followed by companies like Blinkit and Shadowfax. During this journey, I even met with an accident, but I didn't stop.

However, this path was never easy.

Once, while delivering an order on Swiggy, a customer falsely complained

about me. He had told me to hand over the order to the guard, which I did. But later, he claimed he never received it. The guard insisted he had delivered it, but the company deducted ₹250 from my earnings without even hearing my side. That day, my heart was deeply hurt.

I work day and night, often returning home at 2 or 3 AM. Sometimes, I take my youngest child along on my scooter—when he falls asleep, I tie him securely with my scarf and continue delivering orders. Most of the time, I keep my middle daughter with me so she can hold the baby while I work.

There are no washrooms for women, no drinking water facilities, and no safety measures. We work hard, but when injustice happens to us, no one listens.

**"For companies, the customer is God,
but riders have no respect."**

Still, I didn't stop. Now, I work at Blinkit—for my children, for my home, and most importantly, for my self-respect.

Daily Cycle of Disrespect

Raj's Story

8

Raj Kumar, 26, has been living in Delhi since 2020, sharing a rented house while working as a Zomato delivery rider. Originally from Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh, he is the eldest of three brothers—one still studying, the other working a private job. His father farms their land, and his mother is a homemaker.

After completing his B.Sc., Raj struggled to find work. With no opportunities back home, he followed a friend's advice and moved to Delhi. For the past three years, he's been riding for Zomato.

"The good part? I'm not tied to one place or one boss—I have freedom," he says. "The bad part? The roads are dangerous. Every day, I fear accidents or worse." His family is unhappy that after so much education, he's stuck delivering food. But with no other options, he continues.

Raj faces daily disrespect—guards at societies often treat him poorly, and Zomato doesn't even recognize riders as proper employees.

"We're just numbers to them," he says bitterly.

Yet, he rides on.

The Journey of Responsibilities

Khursheed's Story

9

My name is Khursheed. I am from Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, and the youngest among my five brothers. For the past 25 years, I have been carrying the burden of life in the streets of Delhi, living in a rented house. My education ended after the ninth grade because my childhood vanished too soon—circumstances forced me to shoulder responsibilities early.

In 1998, after passing the ninth grade, I started working with my elder brother in spray painting. The work continued, but the daily interference from the police, their threats and intimidation, exhausted us. They claimed that the paint caused pollution. Eventually, in 2002, we had to shut down the business.

After that, I worked with another brother supplying stationery for PWD, but that didn't last long either. Then, I started working at a fan manufacturing unit owned by a Jain gentleman in Laxmi Nagar. I worked there continuously for 12-14 years, but without PF or any job security. My salary started at just Rs.1,400 and reached Rs.11,000 by 2015. Once, during a big order, I worked extremely hard, and the Jain gentleman was pleased—but rewards? Nothing changed. When the factory shifted to Bawana, I had to leave the job.

After that, life felt like a constant struggle. I sold kurtis, did labor work, took up labor supply contracts—but nothing lasted. For a year, I worked in a restaurant doing deliveries for Rs.11,000. Then, I worked at Bharat Chicken Store in Geeta Colony, where even standing idle was frowned upon. When I asked for my payment, it took a month and a half to settle the dues.

In 2018, with a friend's help, I started delivering for Swiggy. Initially, there was some relief—a Rs.3,000 bonus for 26 days of work, weekly incentives of Rs.1,250, and up to Rs.5,000 from points—this was how I managed the household. When the pandemic hit, I delivered masks, sanitizers, and toothpaste from Noida Sector 18 to 25. Sometimes, I had to travel up to 80 km just to deliver one order.5,000 from points—this was how I managed the household. When the pandemic hit, I delivered masks, sanitizers, and toothpaste from Noida Sector 18 to 25. Sometimes, I had to travel up to 80 km just to deliver one order.

Life took another turn in May 2024—my mother passed away. Around the same time, I met with an accident during a delivery, severely injuring the bone in my toe. The swelling worsened, and two days later, an X-ray revealed a fracture. I informed the company, but they said, *"You reported it late; we can't do anything."* I had to take a loan for treatment. Someone bandaged my foot for Rs.200 per day. I had to stay home for two months.

After that, I worked 17 hours a day to repay the debt. A fixed amount had to be paid daily—a delay of even one day incurred a Rs.128 penalty. Life was just dragging on.

In 2023, one day, my vehicle broke down, causing a late delivery. Swiggy falsely accused me of "not delivering the food" and terminated my ID. Fortunately, I had created a Zomato bicycle ID back in 2018. Relying on delivering again. Until recently, I earned Rs.40 per order with a Rs.5 surcharge and an extra Rs.15 on weekends. But now, even that has stopped. Today, my Zomato ID is for a bicycle, but I ride a petrol vehicle. There are no extra benefits. Still, the work continues—because I can't stop.

"There's nothing left in this line of work... I can't do this my whole life. I'm doing it for my children. Just managing to survive, nothing more." Khursheed

Penalties Wipe Out Zomato Worker's Pay

10

Vijay was penalised for failing in delivery due to cancellation of the order by the customer. For an order that would have earned him Rs.31.55 only. He was penalised by Rs.3200.00 while his online log performance for the week shows a penalty deduction of Rs.1632.55.

He was penalised for not delivering the food. Though, he spoke to the customer who, according to him, withdrew her complaint. Even then, he was penalised and an amount of Rs.3265 was deducted from his weekly earnings. From the weekly earnings, he received Rs.668 only. Protesting against this, he reached out to his team leader. He was assured of a refund for double deduction of penalty for not delivering the food. The error was rectified. Still he was charged the penalty of Rs.1632.55.

We advised him to file his complaint with the labour welfare officer. The screenshots below shared by Vijay shows the evidence of deduction of penalty of Rs.1499. However, looking at the final payment of the week, it is clear, he received only Rs.668. This means, he suffered double deduction for one complaint for the order.

Vijay is living in a rented accommodation. This earning would have enabled him to pay for rent. He said he knew the location of the customer. We advised him to write to the customer on home address if her intervention could enable to get the penalty deduction from his earnings refunded.

When he reached out to his team leader for assistance; he got removed from the WhatsApp group. However, his ID remained alive. He was asked to meet the Team Leader.

Is there any legal mechanism available to him at this stage in Noida? None. Can he invoke any law since he is not recognised as a worker? At this stage, he has no choice but to accept the fate of losing his weekly earnings in the form of penalties. This was indeed devastating for Vijay.

Same Pay, Higher Burden and Costs

Pappu's Story

11

My name is Pappu, and I live in Delhi's Azadpur area. My family includes my mother, wife, a son, and a daughter. I work as a delivery boy—and honestly, every day, I don't just deliver packages, I deliver life itself. Sometimes it's hope, sometimes exhaustion, and often, humiliation.

Before joining this profession, I was a supervisor at a printing company, but when it shut down, I had no choice but to take up delivery work. It's been eight years since I started walking this path.

I began with Amflex. Back then, a single slot had 21 orders, and that's exactly how many we got. Now, they keep adding more orders to the same slot, but the time remains just two hours. If there's a VIP delivery, we have to wait. In areas like the embassy, delivering a single order can take hours because security checks are so strict.

Earlier, the weight limit was 35 kg, but now it's been increased to 44 kg. The reality, though, is that a single customer's order often weighs 60-70 kg. I've personally carried loads of 80-85 KG. Riding a bike with that much weight isn't easy—the balance gets disturbed, and the risk of accidents is always there.

Three years ago, the rate for one slot was Rs.260, and it's still the same today. Not a single rupee more, no additional relief. Petrol prices are skyrocketing, and that expense comes out of our pockets. We can get a maximum of 24 slots a week, but on average, it's only 20. If I get slots back-to-back, I can earn around Rs.1000 in 8-10 hours. Otherwise, I have to roam around for 12-14 hours. My monthly income is roughly Rs.20,000, out of which Rs.5000 goes into petrol. That leaves just Rs. 15,000 —and that's what I have to run the entire household on.

This job offers no social security, no physical safety, and no guarantee for the future. As long as we're working, we're earning—otherwise, nothing.

Now, we don't even get nearby orders like before. We have to deliver to far-off places, which means we often miss the next slot. Sometimes, we have to wait 2 to 6 hours between slots. During that time, we just sit near the warehouse because there's nothing else to do. In 2018, I started working with Swiggy. Initially, I could earn up to Rs.15,000 a week. I even helped several others get jobs there. But the lockdown changed everything. Once, I lent my ID to an acquaintance for a short while, but they committed fraud. As a result, my ID was permanently blocked, no matter how much I tried to resolve it.

If I compare Swiggy and Amazon, I find Amazon much better. There, I can earn Rs.1000 in 8 hours of hard work, whereas with Swiggy, the same earnings take 14-15 hours. A friend of mine still works with Swiggy—he leaves home at 5:30 AM and returns at midnight. Out of his Rs.1500 earnings, Rs.500 goes into petrol, leaving him with just Rs.1000.

Companies claim they'll cover medical expenses in case of accidents, but the ground reality is—we get nothing. No insurance, no help.

Our demands are very clear:

1. **We should be given sufficient slots regularly.**
2. **The rate per slot should be increased.**
3. **We should be treated with dignity, as human beings.**
4. **We should be provided social security like ESI and PF.**

Today, companies offer plenty of benefits to vendors, but the delivery rider remains the most neglected. Delivering in areas like Gurudwara Road in Chandni Chowk is a risky job. Taking a vehicle there can result in a fine of up to ₹24,000. Still, we go—because the delivery must be made.

Right now, this profession may not seem to have a future, but if we get the necessary facilities—safety, respect, and stability—we can make it a permanent livelihood.

I'm Not One to Give Up

In Aarti's Words

12

My name is Aarti. I'm 28 years old and have been working with Zomato for the past year. Some time ago, my life changed completely when I became the victim of a road accident. In that accident, my spine was fractured. At first, I couldn't even sit properly, but I had made up my mind—I wouldn't let circumstances defeat me.

Slowly, with treatment and courage, I pulled myself together. Now, with the help of an electric wheelchair, I work as a delivery partner for Zomato. I earn around Rs.300 to Rs.400 daily, and this income means a lot to me and my family.

My family includes my parents, my brother, his wife, and their children. My brother runs a small cold drink stall. We live in a rented house, and making ends meet is a struggle. That's why I want to work and support my family.

Many people have asked me why I haven't gotten married yet. My answer is simple—"I don't want to be a burden on anyone. And I don't trust that someone

would accept me without selfish motives." Maybe my thinking seems harsh, but I've seen and learned a lot from life.

At Zomato, I get Rs.80 per order. I don't have any major complaints about the company, but considering my physical condition, they should pay attention to delivery distances. Sometimes, orders from very far away are assigned to me, which makes things difficult. Some customers also behave rudely, which hurts.

I have one wish—**if only I could get an electric scooter.** With that, I could take on more work and increase my earnings. I want my family to never lack anything.

Whatever I'm able to do today is only possible because of my courage, my self-confidence, and the support of my loved ones. I've learned that challenges will come, but if your determination is strong, a way will always open up.

Deep Drive Into Wages Across Sectors

13

In **Zomato**, riders often talk about the difference between **big zones** and **small zones.** In big zones, there are plenty of orders, while in small zones, orders are scarce. In big zones, **riders earn Rs. 20 for deliveries between 1 to 5 km** and manage to complete **30 to 40 orders a day.** However, in small zones, even during peak seasons, **they barely get 20 to 30 orders.** On regular days, there's a **target of 12 orders to earn a Rs.100 incentive**, but often, they don't even get that many orders.

A Zomato rider from Delhi shares his experience: "We get paid Rs.5–6 per kilometer per order. To complete 24 orders, we have to keep our IDs active for 6 hours, but in reality, it takes 8 to 10 hours to finish them. If we complete all 24 orders, we get a Rs.300 incentive, but if we only manage 20, the incentive drops to Rs.250." He believes riders should be paid Rs.10–12 per kilometer. Payments are made weekly.

Meanwhile, a **Swiggy** rider explains their system: "For deliveries **within 1–2 km, we get ₹20**. If the distance exceeds 2 km, **an extra ₹5 per km** is added. Completing **18 orders in an hour earns a ₹200** incentive, while **25 orders fetch ₹325**." Payments are made alternate days. He recalls that **during COVID-19**, the rate was **₹35 per delivery** and believes it should return to that level.

An **Okhla warehouse** worker shares his side: "During peak hours, we handle **100–110 packets**, but on normal days, it's around **50 packets**. We deliver within a 4–6 km radius and earn **Rs. 15 per packet, with weekly payments."**

He adds that payments are based on stalls—each stall requires delivering **55–60 packets within a 3–4 km radius**. Initially, they were promised **Rs. 900 per stall,** but they **only receive Rs. 875**. Payments are monthly, but there's no family support.

An **Amazon Flex** rider explains their structure: "In the morning slot, delivering **25–30 packets earns Rs. 520**, while the **evening slot (18–22 packets) also pays Rs, 520.**" Payments are weekly.

Then there's **Urban Company**, where riders face a different struggle. "When joining, workers have to **deposit Rs.5,000 to Rs.25,000 as security**, based on their work area. The earnings go directly to the company, which first deducts GST, service charges, etc., before transferring the remaining amount." For example, if a worker earns **Rs.16,000–17,000 a month, after 30% GST, 30% fuel expenses, only 40% (around Rs.6,000– 7,000) reaches them.** This exploitation is rampant across all working areas. Recently, the company has also ventured into domestic worker services, where similar exploitation exist.

Whether it's Zomato, Swiggy, Amazon Flex, or Urban Company, gig workers face low wages, exhausting hours, and unfair deductions. Many demand better pay per kilometer, timely incentives, and transparent payment systems. The struggle is real—will their voices be heard?

Section 2:

Testimonies of Organising and Union Busting

Food delivery workers show their strength:
Case study from Patna

1

Online platform workers had been restive in Patna over several issues which were being faced by them such as variable rates, identity blocks, their status as delivery partners, absence of proper grievance redressal mechanism etc. A meeting was held in this regard in the month of December 2024 and later a press conference was held for organising a strike on 28th January 2025, in which GIGWA was also involved.

Run up to the Strike

Swiggy, Zomato, and Amazon delivery workers in Patna decided to go on a one-day strike looking at the lack of action around their concerns. This suggested growing frustration among gig workers and delivery personnel. The strike was successful but some of the leading online platform workers suffered identity blocks.

A press conference was held in Patna on 18th at Amrapali Hotel to announce the strike which was to be held in Patna on 28th of January by delivery workers of Amazon, Swiggy and Zomato.

The press conference on January 18 at Amrapali Hotel in Patna was a significant event. Online workers leaders and Mr. Dharmendra Kumar, President (Amazon India Workers Union) emphasized that the strike would lead to a total shutdown of deliveries and called it a historic moment for the gig and platform economy.

On the Day of Strike

Collective logout was successful as online platform workers logged out en masse and they appointed vigil for online platform workers to ensure that none logged in to pick up orders. On January 28, the strike culminated in a protest at Birsa Munda Chowk, Gardanibagh, where hundreds of workers participated. With a total shutdown of food delivery in Patna, the impact of the movement was clearly felt. During the protest, workers voiced their frustrations over company policies and the government's continued inaction. This public demonstration of discontent could push authorities and companies to respond.

Identity Block of the leaders

We witnessed this during the collective logout of the online platform workers in Patna on 28 January, 2025. The identities of the Zomato workers were deactivated and participating in the collective logout and leading the same was given the reason. We took up the cases with Zomato through social media and through interpersonal contact with the Zomato team at the Headquarters in Gurgaon.

Thus, apprehension of identity blocks is the major barrier in organising. Despite this, online workers are organising for sharing their concerns. Identity blocks cause serious issues in financial and mental wellbeing.

How did the companies respond?

Special incentive of Rs. 2500

A special incentive was given by Zomato for combating the impact of the collective logout which was decided. However, this did not impact the resolve of the online platform platform workers on that day for staying strong. This resolve was so strong that some online platform workers went on the vigil to prevent online platform workers from picking up orders even though the number of those not responding to the call of collective logout was significantly low.

Relaxation in the shift

Swiggy offered the possibility of joining the second shift of their work. This was relaxed for making online platform workers log in for picking up deliveries. However, this was not accepted on that date since the resolve of the online workers for making their collective logout an example to the companies was too strong to be weakened by special relaxation.

Collective logouts by online platform workers are being used as an instrument increasingly across the cities. On 28th January 2025, 90 per cent of the online platform workers participated in the collective logout in Patna. There is a need to ensure negotiation platforms by online platforms for securing the interests of the platform economy. At the same time, there is a need to secure protection of identities by those who are participating in the collective logout. Identity blocks should never be used as a tool for preventing logouts. Negotiation and persuasion is the way forward.

Response of the Labour Department in Bihar for the complaints by the strike participants:

The collective logout generated casualties in the form of identity of blocks of some leading online platform workers. Their cases were taken up by GigWA leaders in Patna. Upon acceptance of the cases, the labour department cited the absence of labour laws. Zomato representatives attended the hearing and they submitted that their delivery partners are partners and not workers as per the law. The identity of Vikas Kumar **remains blocked till date.**

The Voice of a Delivery Rider

Irfan's Story

2

My name is Irfan, and I am 39 years old. I am from Madhubani district in Bihar. In my family, there are five siblings—four brothers and one sister. Back in 1996, I ran away from home and came to Delhi with dreams and hopes in my heart. When I arrived in Delhi, I had nothing, but I was determined to make something of myself. Here, I learned printing work and gradually started working in this field. I worked at a printing company called 'Chipko Stickers,' where I gained a lot of experience. Later, I joined 'Logitech Enterprises,' where I worked until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. My monthly salary there was Rs.19,500. Then, the coronavirus and lockdown brought life to a standstill. Work at the company reduced drastically, and I had to leave. But I didn't give up—I started working in delivery to support my family's needs. Today, I live in Delhi's Shastri Nagar area with my wife, three sons, and two daughters.

For the past four years, I have been working in food delivery. I started this work as a means of employment, but over time, I realized that despite the hard work, there is little respect and security in this job. The biggest problem during deliveries is Cash on Delivery (COD). Often, customers don't pay the full amount, and the shortfall comes out of our own pockets. Later, when we deposit the money, an additional 1% or 2% fee is deducted. We believe the company should return 2% of the amount we deposit to compensate for our losses. Alternatively, the extra amount should be collected from the customer and given to us.

I have worked with both Zomato and Swiggy. Zomato has more COD orders, and about one out of every ten orders gets canceled. Swiggy is better than Zomato because they don't immediately deactivate IDs. However, when there are too many delivery partners in a zone, some IDs are blocked. My delivery zone covers about a 10-kilometer radius.

The number of delivery partners keeps increasing, but orders per person keep decreasing. When there are too many riders, companies reduce the order rates. They call us "partners," but they keep the majority of the profits. We don't want fake partnership—we want to be recognized as workers so we can receive our labor rights.

For the past year and a half, I have been associated with an organization called Gigwa. I have brought 8-9 fellow riders into Gigwa myself. We have been raising our demands for a long time, but companies don't listen. Riders feel that companies won't heed our concerns, but we don't lose hope.

Once, I went to support the **"Make Amazon Pay"** protest. Someone recorded my video and shared it in a group. Later, a field coach called me and said, "You went to the protest, so your ID has been blocked." I replied—**"Work is important, but dignity and rights are even more important."**

Companies immediately block a rider's ID if there's any complaint, without even hearing our side. Our suggestion is that they should first issue a warning, then suspend the ID temporarily if necessary—not permanently block it right away.

Companies lure new riders with joining bonuses and referral bonuses. New riders accept orders at very low rates, leaving older riders without work. Full-time workers should be given priority because their entire livelihood depends on this job.

We riders want organizations like Gigwa to regularly engage with us, listen to our concerns, and take to the streets to raise our voices. Alone, we can't do much, but if we unite, we can definitely bring change.

BluSmart: A Case Study of Employment Impact of Unregulated Platforms

3

BluSmart, the electric cab start-up once hailed as a 'smart' solution for sustainable urban mobility, has been at the centre of a financial storm. SEBI has launched a probe into the company's promoters — Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi — for allegedly diverting over Rs.25 crore from a government-backed loan of Rs.71 crore. The funds were meant to expand BluSmart's EV fleet, but SEBI claims a large chunk was misused for personal indulgences. From a Rs.43 crore luxury apartment in Gurugram's ultra-elite 'The Camellias' to foreign currency buys, credit card payments, and even a Rs.26 lakh US-made golf set, this is no ordinary start-up scandal. BluSmart reportedly acquired only 4,704 EVs against a sanctioned 6,400. Meanwhile, money was allegedly routed to Gensol Ventures (a promoter entity), Anmol Jaggi's family members, and other personal expenses. As the investigation deepens, Gensol Engineering's stock has taken a beating, and BluSmart's cab operations in Delhi and Bengaluru have come to a standstill. Reports suggest a possible tie-up with Uber as BluSmart scrambles for damage control.

In the background of the grounding of the fleet of BluSmart and the abrupt suspension of operations by BluSmart, there was massive suffering among the drivers. This unexpected halt has left thousands of drivers without income or clarity about their employment status.

In light of these developments, we demand that BluSmart ensure the following:
1. Immediate disbursal of arrears including earned income and weekly incentive of Rs.8000 /-

2. Provide immediate compensation equivalent to three months' income to all affected drivers, ensuring financial stability during this period of uncertainty.

3. Offer alternative employment opportunities or facilitate job placements for the displaced drivers to mitigate the impact on their livelihoods.

4. Take back the charger and pay back Rs. 5000 deducted for the chargers.

The sudden cessation of BluSmart's services has not only disrupted the lives of its drivers but also raised concerns about the accountability of platform-based companies towards their workforce.

BluSmart drivers organised a protest to share their demands. Among protestors mobilised by Mr. Kamil Hussain, we found 12 women drivers of BluSmart who attended the protest which was organised by Parivahan Morcha Aathawale and supported by Gigwa India. We spoke to Trisha, Ghazala Khan and Asha. All the women drivers are bold but in deep distress due to the loss of their livelihood. Speaking on the possibility of joining Ola and Uber, Asha said paying a rent of Rs 1300 will be very difficult especially for women drivers since they have to look after children. There is a deep sense of insecurity which is generated by loss of daily income.

Mr. Kaamil Hussain, the lead organiser of has organised more than 500 drivers. Mr. Hussain informed that ILarge numbers were expected to join the protest. But many didn't join to protect their identities. However, Kamil Hussain, the leader of the drivers said, they were not against the company since they had lost the livelihoods Coming from low wealth groups, he said revival of the BluSmart or it's takeover by other company should be ensured.

Mr. Kamil Hussain argued that the issue of 1000 BluSmart cars which has not yet been brought by Gensol Company should be sorted out instead of grounding the entire fleet of BluSmart taxis. Drivers are planning to meet the Chief Minister of Delhi for presenting the case of their livelihoods and suggesting that since EVs are to be introduced in Delhi government could also consider finding solutions for BluSmart.

We are arguing for giving them time for the purchase of 1000 vehicles which was not bought in time. Securing the well-being of the online platforms and online platform based workers and partners /cooperative members in the case of forthcoming SAHKAR is the key concern for us.

Short History of Organising in the Food Delivery Sector

4

Testimony of Vinod Rai

I am Vinod Rai, working in Swiggy as a rider since 2017. I was already working as a supervisor in an RWA society for 3 years before I joined Swiggy. I started working for a few hours everyday, but my income kept rising - you would be surprised at how much I was earning. I would earn Rs. 50,000 every month by working nights, there was so much work to be done.

I have always been a night worker, as the son of a farmer I have been taught by my father how to work nights on the fields. For two years, I did the same in Swiggy and earned a good income. I was diligent and would never leave any orders pending. My fleet manager was happy with my work, and would send new riders to me for field training for which I would get paid extra as well. The company had a direct relationship with its riders. They would give us hot tea and soup in the cold and glucose tablets in the heat.

Slowly all of this changed.

Some changes happened before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, we would be paid Rs. 8 per KM for picking up orders, and Rs. 10 per KM for the drop. They changed this to Rs. 8 for both segments, shaving off Rs. 2 per KM. We were very unhappy with this change and immediately protested. In response, an area manager from Swiggy came and told us our protests are for nothing, this policy will not be rolled back.

Also in 2019, the base rate for all riders was changed from Rs.45 to Rs.35, whereas earlier only some new IDs were being given the lower base rate. In 2020 they changed the base rate for new riders straight to Rs. 15 from Rs. 35.

We couldn't believe our eyes. Just as this happened, the countrywide lockdown was imposed because of the pandemic. People lost work, and flooded into Swiggy and online companies. All IDs were suddenly shifted to Rs. 15 per order for its base rate. This was at a time when people were faced with a question of survival, so no one protested these policies. Paralelly, they also brought down the per KM rate to Rs. 6 and then to Rs. 4. This happened when there were restrictions on movement and Section 144 of the CRPC was applicable.

In a span of 3 months the company made sweeping changes to all aspects of earnings - to base rates, KM rates, and incentives.

We couldn't do anything then, but discontent was brewing.

It was easier to mobilise then as compared to now, mainly because there weren't lakhs of riders, we were much fewer in number. We had been given one space for all riders to gather because of movement restrictions during the pandemic. This was a very good system, we got connected to each other, we would gossip and talk about our lives, and even the new workers were part of this. 300-400 workers would gather everyday, in Sector 18 in Noida.

This was also a time during which we were the only people on the road, anything that needed to reach households from food to medicines would go through us. And unlike all other workers, we were still working and earning enough to sustain ourselves during the pandemic, although rent and larger expenses had become difficult with the little earnings we made.

When movement restrictions lifted, riders immediately went on strike. A massive spontaneous wave spread across Noida lasting at least 6-7 days. Our group of riders went to the Noida administration and a representation of 6 workers went to the District Magistrate. We did an internal election and sent a representation with the demands to bring back the minimum daily and monthly earning guarantee, and increase the base rate. He sent us to the Labour Commissioner for a meeting, who received us well. He told us something that pulled the ground from under our feet. He said "But there is no law governing gig workers. Lakhs of workers are doing this work but there is no law covering your work." This is the first time I learnt about the word "gig" and what a "gig worker" is. He said you are not considered employees or labourers by the companies or covered under any law so I can't help you. Some local media covered this story but not much happened. We lost 6 days of income, and the only response from the company was to increase the base

rate from Rs. 15 to Rs. 20. That's the only thing the company responded to.

I have never seen a big organised strike in Noida after this. There have been small scale strikes on accidents and other issues but no broad-based strike for working conditions.

Now the company has changed all its systems - we are left to deal with only AI and customer care with no fleet managers to solve our problems. Now ID blocking has increased for all aspects of work. There are caps on order cancellations and requirements for acceptance, increased penalties, fewer incentives and a new slot booking system has been introduced in 2024. We have to book a slot in advance and stick to that timing for work. Another big change is they have removed the base rates and per KM calculations, we can only see the total we can earn per order. There is no way for a rider to calculate the disaggregation of waiting time, first mile and last mile KMs, or how much is our bonus. All of these now happen in a phased manner with some riders each week, so there can't be any unity across riders.

Who has the Right to Strike?

Story of Rohan and Girish

5

This is the story of 2 riders Rohan and Girish, one 23 and 25 years of age, who have been working for Blinkit in Noida for the last 3-3.5 years.

They recently participated in a strike at our store for provisions of drinking water, a resting space for riders to sit and a fan. For a few hours, all riders stopped work. This was a successful strike, and we have been given all of these provisions now.

Rohan said, “In the previous store I used to work at, about a month and a half ago we stopped work for a few hours because of a reduction in pay to Rs. 30 from Rs. 50 per order. We completely shut down the store for those hours. Our orders were being sent to another store at that time. We asked our manager, why is our payout being cut? He said we used to be given too much money earlier, it is only now that we are receiving fair wages. The strike was during holi so our manager asked us to work with the promise that we’ll get a good payout during holi and after as well. Aniket was highlighted and his ID was blocked for 2-3 days, and other workers had to threaten a longer strike to get it unblocked.” He said that one of the main issues workers raised was the absence of a rate card. “We striked to know our rate card, to know how much we are being paid per KM. They didn’t even tell us this. They just started threatening us and writing down our names if we went and spoke to our manager.”

Rates are different at all stores, so it's difficult to know how much we are being paid.

Both of them said they are in a position to raise their voice and stop work for some time. But there are people who are doing it for survival, they have to work 12 hours instead of 8 hours now but at least they are able to make an income. People have different needs and some people even work for survival. When new riders join and are completely unaware of the system, they are happy to work with whatever they are being paid. People keep gradually leaving because of this and new people keep joining. I myself hold the capacity to strike but I can't convince everyone else to go along. In this situation, if a few workers end up striking, they are told there are 10 people to replace you, it's up to you if you want to work or not. A lot of the Blinkit managers are local to Noida, they have a bit of an attitude and threaten riders so a lot of workers are afraid of them.

Girish started his work at Blinkit when it used to be Grofers. "There were no strikes back then. Strikes only happen when there are poor working conditions. When it was Grofers, we were happy and I would earn Rs. 1800-1900 a day. Things became much worse once Zomato took over. The number of workers in the field line has grown so much, everyone who is losing their job is joining. The most anyone is making now is Rs. 1000 for 15-16 hours of work after removing petrol expenses. It's similar to working as a daily wage earner."

Rohan said, **"Riders have no value in this system. We spend hours on the phone with customer care and still they don't resolve our problems, even as basic as cancelling an order. We have accidents and die on the side of the road, very few people get insurance claims or any other support from the company."**

Girish said he had a bad enough accident that two of his toes were split and still haven't healed, and he received no support from Blinkit even though this happened during work. "We even have to pay for our own bags and tshirts if they get torn. The only support we have is riders helping each other, and even that does not happen when there are new riders."

Conclusions

The platform economy is a major growing sector of the Indian economy. It is likely to grow at a fast rate. Though its presence was already significant in the metros and big cities, we see its penetration in smaller cities and rural areas as well. This means that more and more people will be working in this economy, part-time or full-time.
Unfortunately, India does not have an appropriate legal framework to regulate this economy and ensure the welfare and rights of people working in this sector. Those working in this economy are, most often, not even recognised by the companies as workers, and they are called partners to camouflage the environment about their working conditions and rights. As a very high number of such workers in India are working full time in this economy, the use of the term 'gig worker' for them is becoming obsolete.

The testimonies shared in this book throw light on several issues affecting online platform workers. They show the harsh realities of work and life that these workers face on a daily basis. The dictatorial and insensitive attitude of the companies is a regular feature in their life. There are no avenues of redress. Their IDs are blocked, and they are thrown out of work for the smallest mistakes or no mistakes. Society also looks at them with disrespect. Most of these workers are not yet organised, and there are only a few initiatives to organise them. Companies are thwarting any attempts by the workers to organise and unionise themselves. Any initiative for organising, protesting and raising demands is met with termination of work.

Despite such authoritarian approaches by the companies, every year, many cities in India are witnessing the struggles of online platform workers, their protests, their demonstrations and their strikes.

India's economy will be best served if a proper legal framework is put in place, as soon as possible, to regulate the online economy, the aggregator companies

and working conditions of the workers in this sector. Though the new Social Security Code mentions this category of workers, and the Government of India is also taking initiatives to improve the social security measures of these workers, the legal and policy framework needs to go beyond social security and address the working conditions and accountability of the employers comprehensively.

There is also a need to create more opportunities and platforms for interaction of workers in different sub-sectors of the online economy, such as the delivery of goods, delivery of food, services and transport. The more they interact with each other, the higher will be the degree of their unity and the impact of their struggles for their rights and dignity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Wage/ Income

1. Based on logged-in hours, a minimum wage/income should be assured.
2. The continuous reduction in the rate cards for workers should be stopped. Appropriate rates should be decided on the basis of the income needed for a dignified life under the inflationary economy. The Government can set a mechanism to monitor this.
3. Surcharge collected from consumers should be properly shared with the workers.
4. Illogical and hefty penalty charges for looting the weekly earnings of the workers should be stopped.

ID Blocking

1. The Ministry of Labour should instruct the aggregators to follow transparent practices by sharing the reasons for ID blocking and providing workers with an opportunity to explain before ID blocking. The possible reasons for ID blocking should also be mentioned in the contract letter. Aggregators should not block the IDs in a one-sided manner. At least a 14-day notice should be given before any suspension or termination.
2. Aggregators should be prevented from blocking the ID of online platform workers for raising their demands through protests.

Social Security

1. A Social Security Policy for Online platform workers should be declared.
2. Coverage of ESI and EPF should be extended to online platform workers.
3. Heat-generated ailments should be considered occupational health issues for online platform workers and should also be covered in the PMJAY coverage extended to Gig workers after registration in E-Shram.

Working Conditions

1. Aggregators should also give a fair weightage to the explanations by workers and need not always side with the consumers.
2. In the management decisions based on AI, the participation of workers should be ensured and their opinions considered.
3. After 48 hours of work, one day of paid leave should be provided by the aggregators.
4. In the light of continuous and increasing work in the platform economy, the aggregator companies should hire a certain number of workers on a permanent basis, and the gig workers should be given the option to choose whether they want to take a permanent work or gig or part-time work.

Inclusion, Dignity and Safety

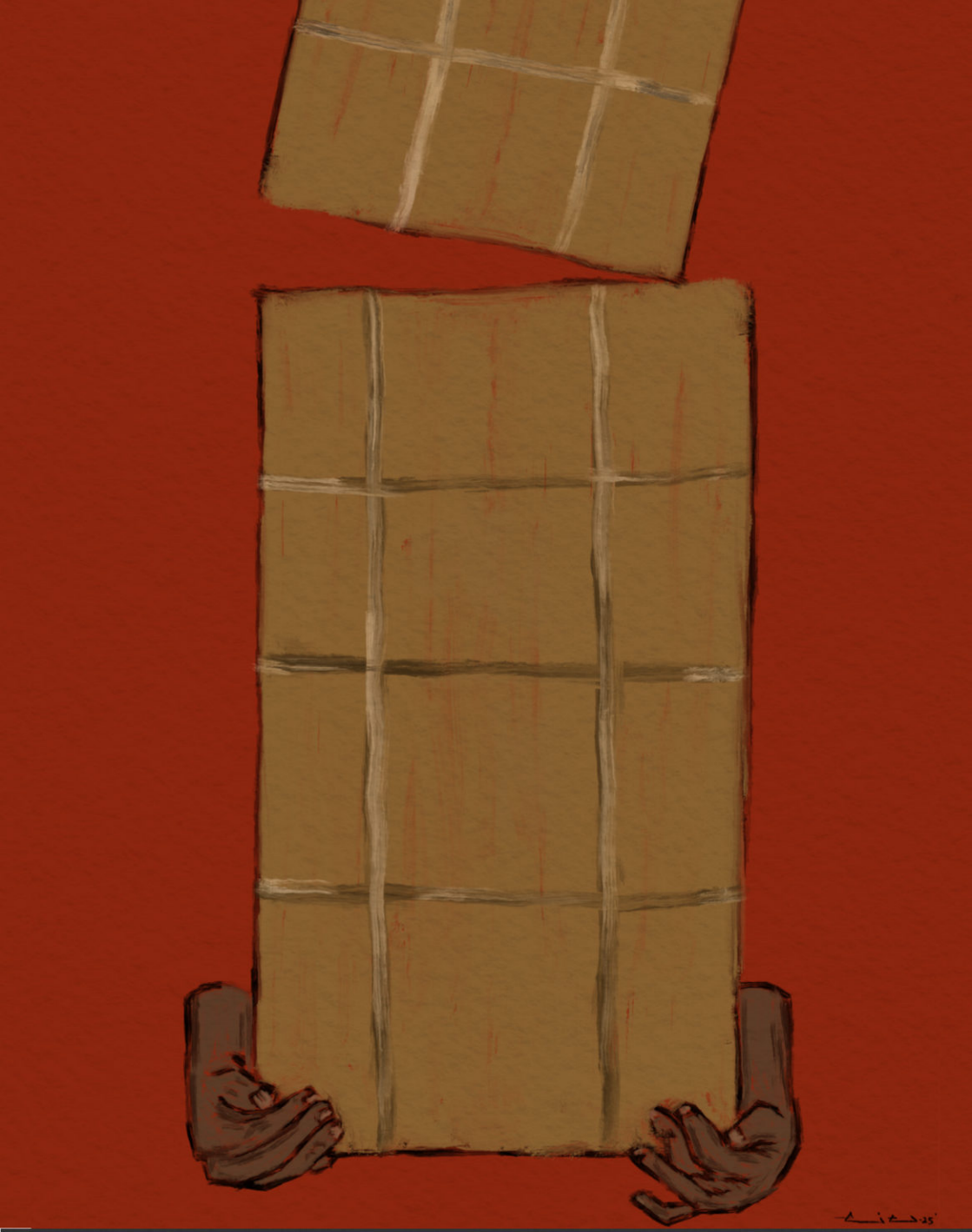
1. To ensure and increase the participation of women and the disabled in the emerging platform economy, sensitisation drives should be conducted for construction companies and builders. related government units and society at large to arrange for physical accessibility to the disabled in all establishments and the safety of women workers.
2. The online platform workers should not be subjected to undignified and discriminatory behaviour by customers, resident welfare associations and security guards in different buildings. Appropriate sensitisation and penal provisions should be developed.

Infrastructure

1. To reduce the hardships of the online platform workers during the harsh weather conditions (heat, cold, rain etc), the aggregators and local governments should ensure that there are shelters/ centres at regular distances in the cities to provide them resting space, wash rooms/ toilets for men and women, clean drinking water, mobile charging stations, repair facilities for bikes, creches, free parking, first aid and emergency support etc.
2. The entire urban planning system should incorporate the needs merging platform economy and online platform workers.

Legal Framework

1. The app-based online platform workers should be recognised legally as workers and employees to ensure that they are covered by all labour laws. Similarly, the aggregator companies should be legally recognised as their employers.
2. In the context of the platform economy and online platform workers, there is a need to enact a comprehensive law that ensures the welfare and rights of online platform workers and governs the aggregator companies, covers the aspects related to working conditions, wage and income sharing issues, social security, occupational health and safety aspects, collective bargaining and dispute resolution mechanisms and grievance redressal.
3. A tripartite welfare board should be formed with representatives from the aggregator companies, workers and the government. This board should collect cess/ contributions from the companies, register all the workers and manage their social security aspects.



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