



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: ECONMOY

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TOPIC: GIG ECONOMY

The dystopian side of Insta-commerce

Daily Struggles of Urban Labourers

- Workers in urban centers often gather in the morning, waiting for job offers from contractors.
- Desperate for work, they accept low wages due to the large unemployed workforce.
- These workers experience a daily auction for jobs, where the lowest wage wins, causing financial insecurity.

Gig Economy: A Virtual Labour Market

- Digital platforms act as middlemen, offering jobs through apps, replacing human interaction.
- Gig work operates on a piece-rate model with no job security or fair wages.
- These platforms disguise exploitation as "freedom of choice," but workers have little bargaining power.
- Workers check their phones for job opportunities, often settling for low wages.

What is a Gig Worker?

- A gig worker takes up short-term or freelance jobs instead of permanent employment.
- They work on a task-by-task basis through platforms like ride-sharing, food delivery, or home services.
- Gig workers lack job security, fixed wages, and benefits like health insurance or paid leave.
- Their income depends on demand, and they often work under uncertain conditions with no legal protection.

Exploitation Through Ratings and Low Wages

- Digital platforms isolate workers, preventing collective bargaining for better conditions.
- Workers must accept tasks on the app's terms, with no negotiation or protection against job loss.
- Customers don't recognize the struggles, long hours, and harsh conditions faced by gig workers.
- Ratings have replaced fair wages, as workers must seek high ratings to maintain employment.

New Forms of Gig Exploitation: Insta Maids



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- Some services offer domestic workers for as low as ₹49 per hour, devaluing their labour.
- These models exploit desperate workers who need immediate employment but are not given fair pay or dignity.
- Workers are starting to protest, demanding rights and recognition of their humanity.

Challenges in Passing Protective Laws

- Workers have successfully pushed for legislation on social security, work data access, grievance redress, and a tripartite board for discussion.
- However, political decisions and industry opposition have delayed these laws, leaving workers unprotected.
- Business associations argue that gig workers are "partners" rather than employees.

Corporate Hypocrisy and the Need for Change

- Business leaders promote worker welfare publicly but privately oppose legal protections.
- The promise of "financial security and dignity" contradicts efforts to prevent fair wages and job security.
- Without legal protections, gig workers continue to face exploitation.
- Ending unfair platform-based gig work is essential for ensuring justice for workers.

Conclusion

- The gig economy needs to evolve to provide fair wages, dignity, and legal protections.
- Ethical algorithms, worker protections, and legal safeguards can transform platform-based jobs into sustainable livelihoods.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-dystopian-side-of-insta-commerce/article69344349.ece>

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