LABOUR AND GIG ECONOMY ISSUES: RETHINKING WORKER PROTECTION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The rise of apps-based work has altered the traditional understanding of the employment relationship. In India, drivers, delivery partners, home-service providers and other platform workers often obtain income through digital platforms that deny them the full set of protections associated with standard employment. This creates a difficult legal question: how can labour law preserve flexibility with the prevention of social and economic risk being shifted on to individuals? The issue has become more significant with the growth of the gig workforce and the gradual development of a statutory framework specifically addressing gig and platform workers. The Code on Social Security, 2020 expressly recognises these workers, and the Code was taken effect from 21 November 2025. The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026, notified in May 2026, provide an operational framework for registration and aggregation of worker and platform information. The article focuses on the status of platform and gig workers, including their insecurity of income, social security, occupational safety, algorithmic management, deactivation, collective representation, and data protection and platform accountability. It also considers recent Indian judicial proceedings and the International Labour Organization's Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026. The article argues that recognition in statute is only the first step. The real test is whether workers can obtain portable social security, transparent decision-making, meaningful grievance redressal and minimum economic protection without losing the flexibility that attracts many people to platform work. Regulation of platform labour needs to move beyond the false dichotomy between technological innovation and labour protection.

Key Words: - *Gig Economy, Platform Workers, Labour Law, Social Security, Algorithmic Management, Worker Classification, India*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have become a dominant part of India's labour market. An individuals can now earn by accepting rides, delivering food or goods, providing home services, or completing tasks via an application. The arrangement seems simple at the interface, but the law surrounding the contract between the platform and the individual is not.

NITI Aayog estimated 7.7 million gig workers in 2020–21 and projected it to increase to 23.5 million by 2029–30. The more recent Economic Survey 2025–26 estimated that the gig workforce had reached about 12 million in 2024–25. These figures use different reference periods and methodologies, but both point to a substantial expansion of platform-mediated work.[1]

Traditional labour law assumes a recognisable employer, employee, workplace and wage relationship. A platform typically refers to its worker as a "partner" while determining the fare, allocating jobs, regulating conduct, and controlling access to the app.

The central question is whether law can preserve flexibility without shifting disproportionate risks from the enterprise to the worker.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The article seeks to answer the following questions: What should be the regulatory approach to the classification of gig and platform workers? Are Indian laws adequately positioned to protect workers from income insecurity and social risks? How should the law regulate algorithmic management and deactivation? What are the options to ensure flexibility while protecting rights?

The objective is to connect existing debates on worker classification and social security with new issues such as algorithmic management, data privacy and procedural fairness. The article adopts a doctrinal and analytical method. It examines legislation, delegated legislation, government

[1] NITI Aayog, *India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy: Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work* 1-2 (NITI Aayog, New Delhi, 2022); Government of India, *Economic Survey 2025-26* (Ministry of Finance, New Delhi, 2026).

reports, judicial proceedings, scholarly work and international labour standards. The study is principally India-focused and uses comparative material only where it helps explain emerging regulatory choices.[2]

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The "gig economy" broadly describes work organised around short-term, task-based or assignment-based engagements rather than a conventional continuing employment relationship. Platform work is a specific form of gig work organised or facilitated through digital platforms.

The Code on Social Security, 2020 defines a "gig worker" as a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside the traditional employer-employee relationship. It separately defines a "platform worker" as a person engaged in or undertaking platform work.[3] The distinction is useful because it recognises that digital intermediation is a feature of platform work, but not necessarily of every form of gig work.

In practice, platform labour is visible in ride-hailing, food delivery, e-commerce and logistics, home-repair services, beauty services, domestic services and other on-demand activities. The common feature is the platform's role in connecting customers, organising work, processing payments and generating performance data.

4. MAJOR LABOUR ISSUES

4.1 Employment Status and Worker Classification

Classification is the starting point because legal status determines access to many conventional labour protections. Courts have repeatedly held that contractual terms cannot override the true relationship between the worker and the employer. In Balwant Rai Saluja v. Air India Ltd., the Court considered the importance of examining the substance of the relationship rather than relying only on the form adopted by the parties.[4]

[2] Karan Sangani, "ReconceptualizingLabour Regulations for Workers in the Gig Economy; 1 NLIU L. Rev. 92 (2020); Valerio De Stefano, *The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce": On-Demand Work, Crowdwork and Labour Protection in the "Gig-Economy"*, Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 71 (International Labour Office, Geneva, 2016).
[3] The Code on Social Security, 2020 (Act No. 36 of 2020), ss. 2(35), 2(61).
[4] (2014) 9 SCC 407.

Platform arrangements complicate this inquiry. A worker may decide when to log in, while the platform still exercises economic and technological control. The legal inquiry should therefore consider actual control, economic dependence, integration, remuneration and bargaining power. A separate statutory category can extend social security without resolving every question of employment status.[5]

4.1.1 A Functional Test for Platform Employment

Indian labour jurisprudence has long recognised that the substance of a working relationship cannot always be determined by the terminology chosen in a contract. In *Hussainbhai v. Alath Factory Thezhilali Union*, the Supreme Court emphasised the economic reality of employment and the importance of identifying who ultimately controls and benefits from the labour performed.[6] The principle is particularly relevent in the platform context, where the contract may describe a worker as an independent partner even though the platform designs the service, fixes or influences prices, controls access to customers and retains extensive performance data.

This does not mean that every platform worker should automatically be treated as an employee. A functional inquiry should instead consider the cumulative effect of control, economic dependence, integration into the platform's business, remuneration, disciplinary mechanisms and the practical freedom available to the worker. The approach adopted by the Supreme Court in relation to non-standard labour arrangements also shows that classification is often a question of substance rather than vocabulary.[7]

For India, a useful legislative approach would therefore recognise a floor of non-waivable rights for all platform workers while preserving the possibility of treating a worker as an employee where the factual relationship satisfies the applicable legal test. This would avoid two opposite errors: denying protection merely because a platform uses aunemployment label, and mechanically treating every flexible worker as an employee regardless of the actual relationship. Such a functional approach would also make the new statutory category of gig and platform workers complementary to, rather than a substitute for, ordinary employment protections.

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[5] Valerio De Stefano, *The Rise of the "Just-in-Time Workforce": On-Demand Work, Crowdwork and Labour Protection in the "Gig-Economy"*, Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 71 (International Labour Office, Geneva, 2016).

[6] *Hussainbhai v. Alath Factory Thezhilali Union*, (1978) 4 SCC 257.

[7] *Steel Authority of India Ltd. v. National Union Waterfront Workers*, (2001) 7 SCC 1.

4.2 Wages and Income Insecurity

Gig workers generally receive task-based or transaction-based earnings. Theirincome is subject to variations based on demand, incentives, penalties, cancellation rules, platform charges and other factors. For drivers and delivery workers, fuel, maintenance, insurance and waiting time can significantly affect the real value of a nominal payout.[8]

The legal challenge is therefore different from simply declaring a minimum amount per task. Protection should consider effective earnings after necessary work-related expenses, including periods spent waiting for assignments.

The constitutional dimension of wages should also not be overlooked. In *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court treated payment below the prescribed minimum wage as capable of attracting the constitutional prohibition against forced labour under Article 23.[9] Although the factual setting of that case differs from app-based work, the underlying principle remains relevant: the absence of a conventional employer-employee label should not make the economic reality of inadequate remuneration invisible to labour law. A minimum earnings standard for platform work should therefore be designed around actual take-home earnings rather than only the nominal amount displayed for a task.

4.3 Social Security

The strongest statutory innovation in India is Chapter IX of the Code on Social Security, 2020. Section 113 provides for registration of unorganised, gig and platform workers, while section 114 enables schemes covering life and disability, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old-age protection and other social-security measures.[10]

The Code also introduces a funding mechanism under which aggregators may be required to contribute to schemes for gig and platform workers. The statutory formula permits a contribution

[8] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work* (International Labour Office, Geneva, 2021).
[9] *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, (1982) 3 SCC 235.
[10] The Code on Social Security, 2020 (Act No. 36 of 2020), ss. 113-114.

of 1–2% of the aggregator's annual turnover from the relevant activities, subject to the ceiling linked to amounts paid or payable to gig and platform workers.[11]

The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026 provide a practical framework for registration through the designated portal and require aggregators to share worker information. The rules also address eligibility across one or more aggregators. By 25 August 2026, the Ministry reported around 11.5 lakh platform workers registered on e-Shram. This suggests that the administrative architecture is developing, although registration must still translate into accessible benefits.[12]

4.3.1 Social Security as a Portability Question

The practical significance of social security lies not merely in the creation of schemes but in whether a worker can maintain coverage when moving between platforms or forms of work. Platform workers may simultaneously work for several aggregators or move between them over short periods. A fragmented system that ties benefits to a single platform would reproduce the instability that social security is intended to reduce. The e-Shram architecture and the registration provisions of the Central Rules can therefore be understood as the beginning of a portable identification system rather than an end point.[13]

A second issue is financing. Aggregator contributions should be transparent enough to permit public scrutiny without turning the welfare fund into a purely corporate compliance exercise. The governance of any welfare fund should include worker representation, clear eligibility criteria and regular disclosure of collections and expenditure. The objective should be to convert statutory recognition into a predictable entitlement structure.

4.4 Working Hours, Right to Disconnect and Occupational Safety

Platform work is often marketed as flexible, but flexibility can produce long working periods where income is uncertain. A worker may remain logged in for many hours to achieve a target or qualify for incentives. The absence of a fixed shift should not automatically be treated as the absence of working-time concerns.

[11] The Code on Social Security, 2020 (Act No. 36 of 2020), s. 114(4).
[12] The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026, G.S.R. 344(E), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, pt. II, sec. 3(i), May 8, 2026, r. 48.
[13] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "5 Years of e-Shram Portal: Building an Inclusive Social Security Ecosystem," Ministry of Labour& Employment, August 25, 2026.

The occupational risks are equally practical. Drivers and delivery workers work in traffic and may face accidents, extreme heat, rain and other environmental hazards. Occupational safety rules therefore need to respond to risks created by the platform's system of work, not only risks inside conventional workplaces.[14]

4.5 Algorithmic Management

The digital platform is not merely a marketplace. Its algorithms can decide which worker receives a task, what incentives are offered, how performance is measured and whether access to work is restricted. The ILO has identified algorithmic management, opaque ratings, low and volatile earnings and weak social protection as recurring concerns in platform work.[15]

A basic principle of labour justice should be that a worker should not be subjected to a materially adverse automated decision without sufficient information to understand and challenge it. Transparency need not require disclosure of commercially sensitive source code. It should require disclosure of the material factors and consequences relevant to the worker.[16]

4.6 Deactivation and Procedural Fairness

Deactivation may be the platform equivalent of suspension or loss of employment because the worker can suddenly lose access to the principal source of income. Complaints, customer ratings, fraud flags and automated detection may be relevant, but a system that offers no meaningful explanation or review can leave a worker practically remediless.

The reasoning in *D.K. Yadav v. J.M.A. Industries Ltd.* is relevant here because the Supreme Court connected termination of employment with procedural fairness and the requirements of natural justice.[17] The exact employment relationship in a platform setting may be different, but the underlying concern—livelihood being affected without a fair process—has continuing relevance.

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[14] International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026.
[15] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The Role of Digital Labour Platforms in Transforming the World of Work* (International Labour Office, Geneva, 2021).
[16] International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026, arts. 1-2 and provisions concerning automated decision-making and remedies.
[17] (1993) 3 SCC 259.

4.7 Collective Bargaining and Representation

Individual platform workers generally negotiate from a weaker position because the standard terms of a platform contract are not ordinarily subject to individual bargaining. Collective representation can therefore provide a mechanism to raise common concerns about fares, commissions, safety, ratings and deactivation.

The International Labour Organization has treated freedom of association and collective bargaining as part of the broader decent-work debate in platform work. Indian regulation should similarly ensure that gig status does not, by itself, prevent workers from organising or making collective representations.[18]

5. INDIAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of India provides the broader normative foundation for labour protection. Article 14 supports equality before law, Article 21 protects life and personal liberty, and Articles 38, 39, 41, 42 and 43 express Directive Principle commitments relating to social welfare, livelihood and humane conditions of work.[19] In *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*, the Supreme Court recognised livelihood as closely connected with the constitutional protection of life.[20] The constitutional framework does not itself convert every gig worker into an employee, but it supplies an important background against which labour and social-security legislation should be interpreted.

The Code on Wages, 2019 consolidates wage law and establishes a statutory framework for minimum wages and a floor wage.[21] Its relationship with platform work requires careful attention because the Code's operation may depend upon the category of worker and the relevant provisions brought into force.

The Code on Social Security is more directly relevant. Its express references to gig and platform workers mark a departure from older labour statutes that were drafted without digital platforms

[18] International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026.
[19] The Constitution of India, arts. 14, 21, 38, 39, 41, 42 & 43.
[20] (1985) 3 SCC 545.
[21] The Code on Wages, 2019 (Act No. 29 of 2019).

in mind. The Ministry of Labour and Employment states that the Code was enforced on 21 November 2025 with an objective of wider social-security coverage and portability.[22]

The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026 deepen this framework by addressing registration and information sharing. Their implementation is especially important because a right that cannot be registered, verified or claimed remains largely formal.[23]

A further layer is data protection. Platform labour necessarily involves extensive collection of personal and performance data. The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 create the broader regulatory setting for processing digital personal data, although their staggered commencement means that not every rule became operational at the same time.[24] The labour question is therefore not only how data are protected from external misuse, but also how workers are informed about data used to evaluate or manage them.[25]

5.1 Other Labour Codes and the Classification Problem

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 are also relevant to the broader regulatory picture. The former consolidates rules concerning occupational safety, health and working conditions, while the latter reorganises the law relating to trade unions and industrial relations.[2627] Their principal limitation in the platform context is structural: both were drafted within a legal framework in which coverage commonly depends upon statutory definitions of establishments, employers, employees or workers. The existence of a separate category of gig and platform workers under the Code on Social Security therefore does not automatically import every protection contained in the other labour codes.

This creates a coherence problem. A worker may be expressly visible to the law for social-security purposes but less visible when the issue concerns working time, collective bargaining,

[22] Ministry of Labour& Employment, Government of India, "Social Security for Gig and Platform Workers," Press Information Bureau, January 29, 2026.
[23] The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026, G.S.R. 344(E), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, pt. II, sec. 3(i), May 8, 2026, rr. 48-49.
[24] The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, G.S.R. 846(E), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, pt. II, sec. 3(i), November 14, 2025, r. 1(2)-(4).
[25] The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (Act No. 22 of 2023).
[26] The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (Act No. 37 of 2020).
[27] The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 (Act No. 35 of 2020).

occupational safety or termination-like decisions. A future reform should consequently examine cross-code consistency instead of treating gig work as an isolated social-security problem. The legal framework should answer a simple question across statutes: which minimum protections follow the work itself, irrespective of the contractual label attached to the worker?

Occupational health also has a constitutional dimension. In *Consumer Education & Research Centre v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court connected workers' health and medical protection with Article 21.[28] Platform labour brings this principle into a less conventional workplace, where the road, vehicle, weather and algorithmically determined pace of work may together create occupational risk.

6. JUDICIAL AND POLICY PERSPECTIVE

The Supreme Court proceedings in *Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) v. Union of India*provide an insight into the policy challenges in relation to platform work. The petition concerns social-security protection for app-based workers. In an order dated 18 February 2025, the Court recorded the status of the rules and schemes required for Chapter IX and sought information from the Union Government regarding their formulation and implementation.[29] The proceedings are significant because they show that the legal issue has moved beyond academic discussion into constitutional litigation.

Policy development has also occurred outside the union framework. The Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 establishes a welfare board and fund and contains provisions concerning occupational health and safety, automated monitoring and decision-making, dispute resolution and aggregator obligations.[30] This state legislation is notable because it treats algorithmic transparency and grievance mechanisms as labour-policy questions rather than as purely contractual matters.

Internationally, the International Labour Conference adopted the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193) on 12 June 2026. The Convention is the first international labour standard dedicated specifically to the platform economy. It addresses employment

[28]*Consumer Education & Research Centre v. Union of India*, (1995) 3 SCC 42.
[29] Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT) v. Union of India, W.P. (C) No. 1068 of 2021 (Supreme Court of India, order dated February 18, 2025).
[30] The Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 (Karnataka Act No. 72 of 2025).

classification, social protection, occupational safety and health, automated decision-making and effective remedies.[31] For India, it offers a useful comparative reference even though the domestic legal consequences of an ILO Convention depend upon national constitutional and legislative processes.

6.1 Collective Representation and Institutional Voice

Collective representation deserves separate attention because platform workers often negotiate with large enterprises from a position of informational and economic disadvantage. Article 19(1)(c) protects the freedom to form associations, but the Supreme Court has distinguished the constitutional right to form an association from an automatic constitutional right to collective bargaining or industrial action.[32] This distinction matters for gig workers. Legislation need not create a conventional employer-employee relationship merely to permit collective voice. It can instead recognise platform-worker associations, consultation mechanisms and collective grievance procedures as independent institutions.

Such mechanisms can also improve regulatory administration. Worker organisations may help identify recurring problems concerning road safety, payment calculations, unfair rating systems and arbitrary deactivation. A regulatory model that treats workers only as beneficiaries of welfare schemes, without giving them a voice in the design and monitoring of those schemes, is likely to be less responsive to the practical realities of platform work.

7. RESEARCH GAP AND ORIGINALITY

A large part of the Indian literature on gig work was developed before the present statutory framework became operational. Earlier studies correctly identified worker classification, social security and collective organisation as the central problems, but the post-2025 legal position requires a fresh examination.

This article addresses that gap in three ways. First, it studies the consequences of the enforcement of the Code on Social Security rather than discussing the Code as a future reform. Second, it considers the Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026 and the practical problems of

[31] International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026.
[32] *All India Bank Employees' Ass'n v. National Industrial Tribunal*, AIR 1962 SC 171.

registration, information sharing and portability. Third, it brings algorithmic management, data use and deactivation into the same labour-law analysis. The contribution is therefore not to propose a new label for gig workers, but to examine whether the emerging legal framework can produce a more complete model of decent platform work.

8. ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE GIG ECONOMY

Platform work can lower entry barriers, provide alternate sources of income opportunities and allow workers to combine paid work with education, family obligations or other occupations. It can also expand access to services and provide work opportunities in regions where conventional employment may be limited.[33]

However, these advantages are accompanied by uncertainty. Earnings may fluctuate, bargaining power can be low, social-security protection can require registration, and work allocation can be influenced by opaque technological systems. Flexibility and insecurity are not the same concept; regulation should preserve the former while reducing avoidable insecurity.

9. MAJOR REGULATORY CHALLENGES

The first challenge is classification. A separate category can improve social-security coverage, but it may also leave unresolved the status of workers who function substantially like employees.

The second is enforcement. Platform work is geographically dispersed and may involve multiple aggregators. A worker can therefore fall between administrative systems unless registration and benefits are portable.

The third is platform accountability. Platforms possess information that workers usually cannot independently verify, including rating histories, allocation logic and deactivation criteria.

The fourth is privacy. Data generated through platform work can be used for commercial and managerial purposes. Workers should know what information is collected, why it is collected and how it affects decisions concerning them.

[33] NITI Aayog, *India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy: Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work* (NITI Aayog, New Delhi, 2022).

The fifth is institutional coordination. Labour regulation, social security, data protection and digital regulation often operate through different legal authorities. Fragmented governance can create gaps precisely where the platform economy crosses traditional regulatory boundaries.

The deeper regulatory difficulty is therefore not simply the absence of legislation. It is the fragmentation of rights across different legal categories and institutions. A worker may have a social-security identity, a platform contract, a bank transaction record and a body of performance data, but no single institution may have the complete picture. This fragmentation can make enforcement expensive and discourage individual workers from pursuing small but recurring claims. An effective framework should reduce that administrative burden through common registration, standardised disclosures and a single or coordinated grievance pathway.[34]

10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LEGAL REFORMS

First, worker classification should rely on the factual relationship between the parties. Contractual terminology should not be decisive where actual control and economic dependence point elsewhere.[35]

Second, minimum earnings protection should take the form of one that recognizes unavoidable work-related costs. A nominal task payment is not a complete measure of economic protection.

Third, social-security benefits should be portable across platforms, and as far as practicable, across States. The registration architecture under the Social Security (Central) Rules can provide the foundation for such portability.

Fourth, platforms should provide workers with intelligible information about material factors used for allocation, ratings, incentives and adverse decisions. This can improve accountability without requiring disclosure of proprietary algorithms.

Fifth, serious deactivation should be accompanied by notice, reasons and access to human review, particularly where the decision threatens a worker's livelihood.

[34] The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (Act No. 22 of 2023), ss. 4-8; The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, G.S.R. 846(E), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, pt. II, sec. 3(i), November 14, 2025.
[35] (2014) 9 SCC 407.

Sixth, grievance mechanisms should be accessible, time-bound and independent enough to command worker confidence. Collective representation should be expressly accommodated within the regulatory framework.[36]

Finally, platform regulation should be coordinated across labour, social-security and data-protection institutions. A worker should not have to navigate several disconnected administrative systems to obtain a basic social-security or grievance remedy.

The implementation mechanism should also be measurable. Periodic publication of aggregator contributions, registration figures, claims received, benefits delivered and deactivation-related grievances would allow Parliament, courts, regulators and workers to assess whether the statutory system is functioning in practice. The objective is not to create a heavy compliance structure for its own sake, but to make platform accountability visible and verifiable.

11. CONCLUSION

The gig economy has revealed a structural weakness in traditional labour regulation: the law often begins by questioning whether a person is an employee before it questions whether the person is economically vulnerable. Platform work makes that sequence increasingly difficult to sustain. A worker can be subjected to extensive digital control while lacking many of the institutional protections attached to with standard employment.

India's legal response has now entered a new phase. The Code on Social Security, 2020 expressly recognises gig and platform workers, and its enforcement on 21 November 2025 gives legal effect to a framework that had previously remained largely prospective. The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026 add procedures for registration, information sharing and contribution mechanisms.[37] State legislation such as the Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025 and international developments such as ILO Convention No. 193 further demonstrate that platform work is becoming a distinct area of labour-law regulation.

[36] International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026.
[37] The Code on Social Security, 2020 (Act No. 36 of 2020); The Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026, G.S.R. 344(E), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, pt. II, sec. 3(i), May 8, 2026.

The remaining question is implementation. Registration must lead to actual benefits; transparency must lead to understandable information, and grievance mechanisms must provide a genuine remedy rather than a formal complaint channel. At the same time, regulation should reflect the value that many workers value the ability to choose when and where they work.

The appropriate legal approach is therefore neither unrestricted deregulation nor an assumption that each platform worker fits the conventional employment model. What is required is a rights-based framework in which minimum standards of social security, occupational safety, fair procedure, data protection and collective representation accompany the flexibility of digital work. The strength of Indian labour law in the platform economy will ultimately be measured not by the number of workers it classifies, but by the practical security and dignity that those workers can actually claim.[38]

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[38] Sabina Dewan and Praavita Kashyap, *Opportunities and Challenges for Decent Work in the Platform Economy in Asia and the Pacific*, ILO Working Paper No. 164 (International Labour Organization, 2026); International Labour Organization, *Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026 (No. 193)*, adopted June 12, 2026.

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