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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Skilling for Both the Gig and the Formal Economy

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

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Skilling for Both the Gig and the Formal Economy

 **The Indian Express**

28 June 2026

GS3

GS2

 Source: ujyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India skills millions for formal jobs, but a fast-growing share of work is gig and platform-based. Should skilling and social security follow the worker across both worlds rather than the job?"

 Source: [Original editorial](#)
[The Indian Express](#)
 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The launch of the **Corporate Mitra** compliance-skilling programme and the rollout of the **Code on Social Security, 2020** (in force since November 21, 2025) have sharpened a structural question: India still skills and protects workers as if all work were **formal and employer-based**, even as the **gig and platform workforce** races toward **2.35 crore by 2029-30**. For an aspirant, this is a rich GS3 and GS2 case, the future of work, skilling design, and **social-security portability** (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/portability/>), exactly the forward-looking theme examiners favour.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

India skills workers for **formal jobs**, but a fast-growing share of work is **gig and platform-based**, projected at **2.35 crore by 2029-30**. Skilling must go **dual-track**, technical and compliance skills for formal firms, plus digital and financial skills for gig workers. Social security must follow the **worker, not the job**, using the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, **e-Shram** and **aggregator funds**, with full **portability**.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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| CONCEPT | WHAT IT MEANS | WHY IT MATTERS |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Gig / platform worker | Task-based, app-mediated work outside employer-employee ties | Outside formal skilling and security |
| Code on Social Security, 2020 | Labour code recognising gig and platform workers | Mandates aggregator welfare contribution |
| e-Shram | National database of unorganised workers | Identity layer for portable benefits |
| Portability | Benefits that follow the worker across jobs | Key to protecting mobile workers |
| Corporate Mitra | Para-professional compliance-skilling programme | Skills for MSME formal-sector needs |

THE ANALYSIS: SKILLING AND SECURING A MOBILE WORKFORCE

- ① **The workforce is splitting.** A rising share of livelihoods is gig and platform-based, projected at 2.35 crore by 2029-30, yet skilling is still built around formal, employer-based work.
- ② **Skilling must be dual-track.** Build technical and compliance skills for formal firms and MSMEs, and the digital, financial and platform skills gig workers need to earn and grow.
- ③ **Security must follow the worker.** The Code on Social Security, 2020 recognises gig and platform workers and mandates aggregator contributions, but benefits tied to one platform leave mobile workers exposed.
- ④ **Portability is the missing link.** A worker moving between platforms, or between gig and formal work, must carry accumulated entitlements via e-Shram and a common welfare architecture.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

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NITI Aayog (2022) projects the gig workforce at **2.35 crore by 2029-30**, up from about 77 lakh in 2020-21. **Skilling: Skill India Mission (2015); PMKVY (now 4.0); NAPS apprenticeships; MSDE nodal, with NSDC and NCVET; Corporate Mitra (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Budget 2026-27) via ICAI, ICSI and ICoAI. Social security: Code on Social Security, 2020, in force from November 21, 2025; defines gig and platform workers; aggregator contribution of 1 to 2 per cent of turnover to a welfare fund. Worker database: e-Shram portal (2021), over 30 crore unorganised workers registered. State laws: Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers Act, 2023; Karnataka gig workers welfare Act, 2025. Jobs push: ELI (Employment Linked Incentive) scheme (Budget 2024).**

THE DEBATE

Argument for formalisation first: The priority should be creating secure, formal jobs; building elaborate systems around gig work risks normalising precarity and lets platforms offload responsibility for decent work.

Argument for embracing both worlds: Gig work is here and growing; refusing to design for it leaves crores unprotected. The realistic path is to skill for both economies and extend portable social security to platform workers now.

The balanced verdict: This is not either-or. Continue to expand **formal job creation** through ELI and manufacturing, but **simultaneously** build **dual-track skilling** and **portable social security** so gig workers are protected and can move into formal work. Protect the worker wherever the work is, and keep the bridge between the two open.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

Many welfare and labour answers improve by shifting the unit of analysis from the job to the worker. When work is mobile and informal, benefits tied to a single employer or platform fail. The strong answer proposes portability, entitlements that travel with the individual via a common identity layer (e-Shram). This “person, not post” reframing is powerful across social security, health and labour questions.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Skilling built for formal jobs + security tied to employer -> gig workers (2.35 crore by 2029-30) unskilled for platforms + unprotected. The fix: dual-track skilling (formal + platform) + Code on Social Security 2020 + aggregator funds + e-Shram identity + portability -> worker skilled and secured across both economies.

THE WAY FORWARD

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- 1 **Design dual-track skilling** that serves formal firms and MSMEs and equips gig workers with digital and financial skills.
- 2 **Make social security portable** through e-Shram and a common welfare fund that follows the worker across platforms.
- 3 **Operationalise aggregator contributions** under the Code on Social Security, 2020 with transparent welfare delivery.
- 4 **Pair technical with life skills**, financial literacy, digital safety and compliance, for both the formal and gig workforce.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

“India’s skilling strategy must serve both the formal economy and the gig workforce, pairing technical skills with portable social security.” Critically examine. (250 words)

“India cannot skill for one economy and protect in another; benefits must follow the worker, not the job, because the modern worker is mobile.”

Code on Social Security 2020 (in force Nov 21, 2025) · gig and platform worker definitions · aggregator contribution 1 to 2 percent · e-Shram (30 crore plus) · Skill India, PMKVY, NAPS, MSDE, NSDC, NCVET · Corporate Mitra · NITI Aayog gig projection (2.35 crore by 2029-30) · Rajasthan and Karnataka gig laws.

When work is flexible and app-mediated, who owes a duty of care to the worker, the platform, the State, or both, and how is it shared?

Connects to GS3 PYQs on employment, skilling and the changing nature of work, and GS2 on welfare and social security; probable forward question is the “person, not post” framing above.

static GS3 on employment and skill development; GS2 on social-sector schemes and vulnerable sections.

Sources: *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com>), *NITI Aayog* (<https://www.niti.gov.in>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in>)

Source: Skilling for Both the Gig and the Formal Economy — Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

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India's skilling effort must serve both the formal economy and the fast-growing gig and platform workforce, pairing technical and compliance skills with portable social security that follows the worker rather than the job.

 **SUPPORTING**

- The gig and platform workforce is projected to reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30, yet skilling and social-security systems are still built around formal, employer-based work.
- Schemes like Skill India, PMKVY and the new Corporate Mitra compliance-skilling can build employable and entrepreneurial skills if they cover both formal and platform pathways.
- The Code on Social Security, 2020, now in force, recognises gig and platform workers and mandates aggregator contributions, but benefits must be portable across platforms and over time.

 **COUNTER**

Some argue formalisation should come first, that the priority is creating secure formal jobs rather than entrenching precarious gig work by building systems around it.

 **WAY FORWARD**

Design dual-track skilling for formal and platform work, make social security portable through e-Shram and aggregator funds, and pair technical skills with financial, digital and compliance literacy for both worlds.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

"India's skilling strategy must serve both the formal economy and the gig workforce, pairing technical skills with portable social security." Critically examine. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

The nature of work is splitting. India skills people for formal employment, but a growing share of livelihoods is gig and platform-based, and the two systems rarely meet.

BODY

India's skilling architecture, Skill India Mission, PMKVY, apprenticeships under NAPS, and newer initiatives like the Corporate Mitra compliance-skilling programme, is largely oriented to formal, employer-based jobs. Yet the gig and platform workforce, projected by NITI Aayog to reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30, works outside that frame, on flexible, task-based, app-mediated arrangements.

Two gaps follow. First, skilling must be dual-track: it should build technical and compliance skills for formal firms and MSMEs, and also the digital, financial and platform skills that gig workers need to earn and progress.

Second, social security must follow the worker, not the employer. The Code on Social Security, 2020, now implemented, recognises gig and platform workers, defines the aggregator, and mandates aggregator contributions of one to two per cent of turnover to a welfare fund; the e-Shram portal already registers over 30 crore unorganised workers, and States like Rajasthan and Karnataka have enacted gig-worker welfare laws.

The missing piece is portability: a worker moving between platforms, or between gig and formal work, must carry accumulated benefits. Skilling and social security must be designed for mobility, because the modern worker is mobile.

CONCLUSION

India cannot skill for one economy and protect in another. The task is a unified system, dual-track skills and portable social security, that follows the worker across both the gig and the formal world.


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