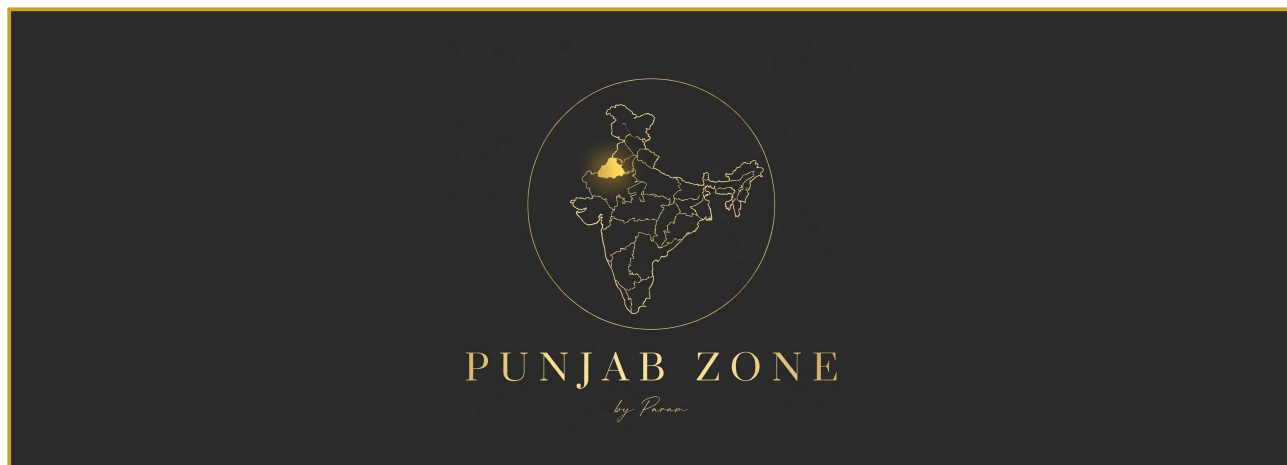




INDIA REGISTRATION & RIGHTS ROADMAP

Registering Punjab Zone in India — and making the name legally yours, so no one can copy it.

Prepared for: **Param**, Founder, Punjab Zone (punjabzone.com) · Business base: Ludhiana, Punjab · Owner: NRI, resident in California, USA

Date: 28 October 2026 · Purpose: a working brief to hand to your CA / trademark attorney in Ludhiana. Research summary — not legal advice.

THE BOTTOM LINE — READ THIS FIRST

- 1. File the trademark FIRST, this week — before any company.** In Indian trademark law, your protection is counted from the **application date**. Every week unfiled is a week a copycat can file ahead of you and block you.
- 2. File in your own name now.** As an individual you pay the concessional government fee of ₹4,500 per class — exactly half the ₹9,000 company rate. The marks can be assigned (transferred) into your company later; that is a routine step.
- 3. Structure:** trade today as a **proprietorship** (your Razorpay and Eko onboarding already accepts it — do not let a company formation delay payments), and incorporate the **Private Limited company you planned** in months 2-3, once a trusted resident director in Ludhiana is in place.
- 4. Budget:** roughly **₹35,000-₹55,000** makes the business fully registered and the first trademark filings live this month; **₹56,000-₹76,000** completes the full name-protection grid (logo + word mark × 4 classes, including professional fees). The Pvt Ltd later adds ₹7,000-₹25,000.
- 5. The one real risk:** “Punjab” is the name of a state. The plain word mark is legally weak and an objection is likely (Section 1.4). Your **logo — the composite mark — is the strong filing**, and it leads the filing set.

1 · PROTECTING THE NAME: TRADEMARK

Trademark registration in India is done with the Trade Marks Registry (IP India) under the Trade Marks Act, 1999, by filing Form TM-A online. One Indian registration protects the name in **all of India** — there is no separate Punjab registration. Because Punjab Zone's principal place of business is in Ludhiana, its applications go to the **Delhi Registry**.

A trademark does not protect a name in the abstract — it protects it **for the services listed in the application, class by class**. The classes chosen are therefore the protection itself. Two kinds of mark are filed: the **word mark** “PUNJAB ZONE” (protects the words in any font, colour or style) and the **device / composite mark** — your gold India-map logo with the words and “by Param” (protects that

artwork as a whole).

1.1 Recommended filing set

Class	What it covers for Punjab Zone	Why it matters
35 — Retail & online store	Online and in-store retail services; bringing together a variety of goods for customers to view and buy; advertising; business administration.	This IS the Local Market. The single most important class — file first.
39 — Delivery	Transport; packaging, storage and delivery of goods; courier services.	Your 30–60 minute Ludhiana delivery promise rides on this class.
36 — Money services	Financial and monetary services; electronic payment processing; mobile-recharge payment facilitation; provision of financial and market information.	Covers the recharge money side and the paid trading-subscription business.
41 — Education & content	Education and training; online publication of market analysis and educational material; information services.	Your trading-markets content and the India calls tier are sold as education — this is their home.

- **Phase 1 (this week):** the **logo** in Classes 35, 39, 36, 41 + the **word mark** in Class 35 — five applications.
- **Phase 2 (month 2-3):** the **word mark** in Classes 39, 36, 41 — completes the grid (2 marks × 4 classes).
- **Phase 3 (when the app launches):** both marks in Class 42 (software / SaaS) and the word mark in Class 9 (downloadable app).
- Note: Class 35 protects your *store's* name, not the brands of products on the shelves — your sellers keep their own marks. The store name is the asset, and this set covers it.

1.2 Fees

Government fee, e-filing Form TM-A, **per mark, per class** (First Schedule, Trade Marks Rules, 2017 — unchanged since 2017): **₹4,500** for an individual, a DPIIT-recognised startup, or an Udyam-registered small enterprise; **₹9,000** for a company, LLP or any other applicant. Physical filing costs ₹5,000 / ₹10,000. Renewal after 10 years is ₹9,000 per class with no concessional rate. An optional expedited examination costs ₹20,000 per class (₹40,000 for companies) and is normally unnecessary.

- Phase 1 government fees: 5 filings × ₹4,500 = **₹22,500**. Full grid: 8 × ₹4,500 = **₹36,000**. (Filed as a company instead, the same grid would cost ₹72,000 — one more reason to file personally now.)
- Professional fees (Punjab/Delhi market, typical): online filing services charge about ₹2,500 per application plus the government fee; a full-service attorney runs ₹5,000–₹15,000 per application, with examination-reply drafting often ₹3,000–₹8,000 extra if the Registry objects. **Negotiate one fixed package** covering search + all Phase 1 filings + examination replies + Journal watch, quoted in writing before you pay.
- The government fee is never refunded — even if an application is later refused. That is why the search (Step 1 of the checklist) comes before the filings.

1.3 ™ versus ® — and what an application gives you from Day 1

- ™ — you may use it from the day you file (strictly, it is a claim symbol anyone can use). It tells the market “this is our mark.” Put it on the website and store branding the day Phase 1 is filed.
- ® — **only after the registration certificate is issued**. Using ® on an unregistered mark is an offence under Section 107 of the Trade Marks Act. Do not print it on banners, packaging or the site until the certificate arrives.
- **Priority from Day 1:** when registration is granted, it is effective **from the application date**, and the 10-year term runs from that date. Anyone who files the same name after you is blocked by your

earlier application.

- **Proof while you wait:** your application number (“TM-A filed”) can be shown to payment partners, platforms and copycats. A court infringement suit needs the certificate, but **passing-off** protection for a trading reputation exists under common law from actual use — so keep dated evidence (screenshots, invoices, ads) from day one.

1.4 The honest catch: “Punjab” is a state name

READ THIS BEFORE YOU PAY ANYONE

Under **Section 9(1)(b)** of the Trade Marks Act, a mark that designates geographical origin is refused unless it has **acquired distinctiveness** through use. Courts have refused even heavily used place-name marks — the Calcutta High Court upheld refusal of “SIMLA” for cigarettes because a famous place name cannot be monopolised without proof that the public reads it as one trader's brand. “PUNJAB” is the name of a state of 30 million people, and “ZONE” is a common, weak word. **Expect the examiner to object to the plain word mark PUNJAB ZONE**, and expect any word-mark registration to carry a **disclaimer** — no exclusive right over the word “Punjab” standing alone.

Why the plan still works: (1) A **composite mark is judged as a whole**, not word by word (Bombay High Court, KVIC ruling) — your gold India-map device with Punjab glowing, the serif lettering and “by Param” together make distinctive artwork, so the **logo filing is genuinely strong** and goes first. (2) Filing the word mark now locks the priority date while your use, turnover and customer evidence build the acquired-distinctiveness file that answers objections — marks in exactly this position do get registered as use grows. (3) Even a disclaimed registration stops another Ludhiana store or website trading on the full name “Punjab Zone” — which is the copying you actually care about. (4) Ask your attorney about one extra word filing: **“PUNJAB ZONE BY PARAM”** — the personal-name element materially strengthens distinctiveness.

What no trademark can do: stop a business in a totally unrelated field, or someone using the words descriptively (“the Punjab zone” meaning a region). Anyone who promises you more than this is selling, not advising.

1.5 Realistic timeline (Delhi Registry)

Stage	Typical time	Your action
Filing + acknowledgement	Same day	File; start using ™
Formalities check + Vienna coding (logo)	1–4 weeks	None
Examination report	About 2–6 months	Reply within 1 month of the report — miss it and the application is treated as abandoned
Show-cause hearing (only if objection stands)	+3–6 months	Attorney appears (video hearings are routine)
Journal publication → opposition window	Exactly 4 months (fixed by law)	Attorney watches the Journal
Registration certificate (if unopposed)	2–8 weeks after the window closes	Start using ®; diary renewal at year 10

Total, honest planning range: **about 12–24 months** for an unopposed application; an opposed one can take years. Published estimates for 2026 range from 6 months (cleanest cases) to 24 months — plan on the slower end and treat anything faster as a bonus. The wait is not unprotected time: your rights date back to filing day (Section 1.3).

2 • CONFLICT CHECK: WHO ELSE USES “PUNJAB ZONE”?

Searched 28 October 2026: the official IP India Public Search portal; the IndiaFilings, TMWala and Vakilsearch trademark databases; MCA / company-name sources; JustDial and Google business listings; app stores; and general web search. **Result: no Indian registered trademark, company, app, or operating Indian business in your fields** (retail, delivery, help services, recharge, finance content) was found using “Punjab Zone”. What did turn up — and why none of it blocks you:

Found	What it is	Effect on you
“Punjab Zone Collection”	A small readymade-garments shop in Garhshankar, Hoshiarpur district (JustDial listing, 10 ratings). Unregistered local use, clothing retail only.	Low risk to your filings (different goods), but real: it proves small traders already like this name — another reason to file first. Your Class 35 specification should lead with your actual store range (electronics, groceries, general goods) so a clothing retailer has no hook to oppose it.
“Punjab Zone”, Gujranwala	A scrap dealer's directory listing in Gujranwala, Pakistan (branches.pk).	None in India — Pakistan, unrelated trade.
“Punjab Zone”, Pakistan	Tractor and agricultural-parts importer-exporter (Volza trade data, 400+ shipments).	None today — no Indian registration found. Watch only if it ever sells into India under the name.
“Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (Punjab Zone)”	An industry body's regional chapter label — “zone” there means a region, not a brand.	Descriptive use, not a brand. No conflict.
Punjab government apps (e.g. “Punjab Zameen”)	Pakistan Punjab Land Records Authority's land-records app.	Different name, different field. No conflict.

The limit, stated plainly: the official Registry search portal now sits behind an OTP login plus a captcha, so no outside party can scrape a registry-grade answer. The Ludhiana agent's first paid task (checklist Step 1) is the formal search on the portal — wordmark and phonetic search in Classes 35, 39, 36, 41 (with 9 and 42 on watch) — **before** filing. Budget one day for it. If that search surfaces a live conflicting mark, the fallback is: file the logo first (artwork is far harder to conflict with) and take the attorney's advice on the word mark before paying for it.

3 • THE BUSINESS ENTITY — AS AN NRI OWNER

The name and the company are separate questions in India. The trademark is filed in a person's or a company's name; the company is the vehicle that trades, banks and pays tax. You need both, but not at the same moment — and the order matters for cost.

3.1 Your four options

Structure	NRI position	Cost & time
Proprietorship	You trade personally (“Paramjit Singh, proprietor, Punjab Zone”). No MCA registration. An NRI's investment into a proprietorship sits on a non-repatriation basis under FEMA — fine for a business that earns and spends inside India; your CA confirms the funding route. Liability is unlimited — it is you, personally. Right for today.	₹0 entity cost; stack ready in days

Structure	NRI position	Cost & time
One Person Company (OPC)	Indian citizens only. Since 1 April 2021, Rule 3 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules reads “an Indian citizen whether resident in India or otherwise ” — so as an Indian-citizen NRI you can be the sole member from California (older articles saying otherwise, or insisting on 120 days in India, are pre-2021; the 120 days now only defines who counts as “resident”). BUT Section 149(3) still requires every company to have a director who stayed in India 182+ days in the financial year — if you are the only director and live in the US, you must add a second, India-resident director. A nominee (Indian citizen) is also mandatory. Limited liability; cannot take investors. Only pick this if the Pvt Ltd plan stalls.	₹7,000–₹18,000 all-in; 7–12 working days
Private Limited Company	The structure you planned. An NRI may hold shares and be a director; 100% FDI is automatic in your sectors. Needs: at least 2 directors, one of them resident in India (182 days), and at least 2 shareholders (they may be the same people — e.g. you plus a family member). Your US-side documents (passport, US address proof) must be notarised and apostilled in the US. Shares allotted to you trigger an FC-GPR filing with the RBI within 30 days — your CA files it; do not skip it. Statutory audit every year regardless of turnover; the heaviest annual compliance. Right for months 2-3.	₹7,000–₹25,000 all-in; 7–12 working days + apostille time
LLP	Needs a resident designated partner. FDI into LLPs is allowed only in automatic-route sectors with no FDI-linked performance conditions, and an LLP cannot easily issue shares or take VC. Lightest ROC compliance; audit only above turnover ₹40 lakh or contribution ₹25 lakh.	₹7,000–₹15,000; 10–15 working days

3.2 The recommendation: two phases

- **Phase A (now): proprietorship + full stack + trademarks in your name.** Payments proceed on this: both Razorpay and Eko onboard proprietors, and both allow the account to be migrated to the company later. Do not let company formation delay payments.
- **Phase B (months 2-3, or when monthly revenue crosses roughly ₹1-2 lakh): incorporate “Punjab Zone Private Limited”** — check MCA name availability first (company-name approval is separate from trademark; Phase A's filings protect you in the meantime). Appoint your Ludhiana resident director, complete the FC-GPR, then assign the trademarks to the company, move GST to a company GSTIN, switch Razorpay/Eko to the company, and open the company current account.
- Skip the OPC unless Phase B stalls on finding a resident director — it has the same resident-director problem with fewer benefits.

3.3 The registration stack around the entity

Item	Why / rule	Fee · Time
Your PAN	Everything keys off it. Confirm yours is active; a fresh e-PAN, if ever needed, is free and instant.	₹0
Udyam (MSME) registration	Free, online, Aadhaar + PAN. Gives MSME recognition (payment protection, scheme access) and evidences small-enterprise status.	₹0 · 1 day

Item	Why / rule	Fee · Time
Punjab Shops & Commercial Establishments Act, 1958	Mandatory for the Ludhiana establishment within 30 days of starting, via the Punjab Labour Department. Government fee is nil-to-small by category (owner-run, no-employee establishments are nil on the old schedule; larger ones run to a few thousand rupees); agents charge ₹1,000–₹2,999. Keep the certificate — banks and Razorpay ask for it as business proof. Ludhiana filers' files include photos of the premises, including an external photo with a Punjabi-language signboard .	Nil–~₹1,000 govt · 3–10 days
GST registration	Government fee ₹0; 3–7 working days with Aadhaar authentication. Mandatory when services turnover exceeds ₹20 lakh/yr, or goods exceed ₹40 lakh (Punjab is a normal-threshold state), or you make inter-state taxable supplies of goods, or you sell through a marketplace that must collect TCS. Selling through your own website keeps the normal thresholds. Not mandatory for you at launch volumes — but register voluntarily now if your CA agrees: partners prefer a GSTIN, you can claim input credit, and US subscription receipts are cleaner as export-of-services paperwork.	₹0 govt · 3–7 days
Proprietorship current account	With PAN + Udyam + Shops certificate. This is the account Razorpay settles into and Eko reads KYC from.	₹0 · 1–3 days
Later (only if needed)	FSSAI — only if you ever sell food (your store currently carries none; a basic registration is ₹100/yr). A Ludhiana trade licence — only if a physical shopfront opens.	As needed

3.4 Documents: from you in the US, and from a person in Ludhiana

- **From you in California (scans):** Indian passport; OCI card only if applicable — **note: if you hold US citizenship with OCI instead of Indian citizenship, the OPC route is closed to you and Pvt Ltd shareholding is FDI — your CA must confirm your exact status first**; PAN card; Aadhaar card (keep the Aadhaar-linked Indian mobile reachable — OTPs run the whole system: Razorpay, Eko, Udyam, GST, IP India); US address proof (utility bill / bank statement) — for the Pvt Ltd, **notarised and apostilled** copies; passport-size photo; signature specimen; a Class-3 Digital Signature Certificate (can be issued to you abroad with video verification); and the trademark Power of Attorney (Form TM-P) for your agent — ask the CA whether he accepts a scan or needs notarisation in the US *before* you sign.
- **From a person in Ludhiana:** registered-office / establishment address — rent agreement or ownership proof, owner NOC, latest electricity bill; the **resident director** for the Pvt Ltd (182-day rule) — a trusted family member is the usual answer, never a paid “name-lender” you do not know; premises photos including the Punjabi signboard; bank-branch visit support for the current account if the bank insists; and a physical GST verification visit, only if the officer orders one (Aadhaar-authenticated applications usually skip it).

4 · COSTS & TIMELINE — THE WHOLE PLAN

Item	Government fee	Professional fee (typical, Punjab)	Time
Trademark — logo, 4 classes (Phase 1)	₹18,000	In package below	Filed in 1–2 days; registration 12–24 months
Trademark — word mark, Class 35 (Phase 1)	₹4,500	In package below	Same

Item	Government fee	Professional fee (typical, Punjab)	Time
Professional package: formal search + 5 filings + examination replies + Journal watch	—	₹12,000–₹30,000 (negotiate one fixed price, in writing)	Search 1 day; filings this week
Trademark — word mark, Classes 39/36/41 (Phase 2)	₹13,500	₹5,000–₹12,000	Month 2–3
Udyam (MSME)	₹0	₹0 (self-filed)	1 day
Punjab Shops & Establishments registration	Nil–~₹1,000	₹1,000–₹2,999	3–10 days
GST registration (if taken now)	₹0	₹0–₹2,500	3–7 days
Proprietorship current account	₹0	—	1–3 days
Private Limited incorporation (Phase B)	SPICe+ fee ₹0 (authorised capital up to ₹15 lakh) + Punjab stamp duty at actuals + DSC ≈ ₹2,000–₹3,000	All-in market total ₹7,000–₹25,000	7–12 working days + 1–3 weeks apostille
Trademark assignment to the company (Phase B)	Registry recordal fee applies	₹5,000–₹10,000	2–6 weeks processing
Pvt Ltd annual compliance (audit, ROC, ITR)	—	₹15,000–₹50,000 per year	Every year

Totals: Phase A (this month) ≈ **₹35,000–₹55,000 all-in** and the business is fully registered with five trademark applications live. Adding Phase 2 completes the full name grid at ≈ **₹56,000–₹76,000**. The Pvt Ltd in Phase B adds ₹7,000–₹25,000 plus its annual compliance. At roughly ₹83–84 to the US dollar, Phase A is about \$420–\$650.

5 • DO IT IN THIS ORDER

This week

1. Your CA/agent runs the **formal IP India search** (OTP portal): “PUNJAB ZONE” wordmark + phonetic, Classes 35, 39, 36, 41, with 9 and 42 on watch. One day. If a live blocker appears, he calls you *before* filing the word mark.
2. **File Phase 1 trademarks in your own name:** logo in Classes 35/39/36/41 + word mark in Class 35. Put ™ on the website and store branding the same day; keep the application numbers safe. **This is the step that cannot wait** — the filing date is the protection date.
3. **Udyam** registration + **Punjab Shops & Establishments** registration for the Ludhiana establishment (needs the premises photos with a Punjabi signboard — arrange them the same day).

Weeks 2–4

4. Open the proprietorship **current account**; finish **Razorpay** activation and **Eko** onboarding against the proprietorship (already in motion — the company upgrade must not block this).
5. **GST decision** with your CA — voluntary now versus at threshold — and file if yes.
6. File **Phase 2 word marks** (Classes 39/36/41). Start the **use-evidence file** (dated screenshots, invoices, ads, customer counts) — this is the acquired-distinctiveness ammunition if the word mark is objected to.

7. Buy **punjabzone.in** (and .co.in) and redirect them to punjabzone.com — five minutes, about ₹600/yr. It closes the cheapest copycat door there is.

Months 2-3

8. **Incorporate Punjab Zone Private Limited:** apostilled documents from the US, resident director in Ludhiana, SPICe+ filing; company PAN/TAN arrive with incorporation.

9. **FC-GPR within 30 days** of the share allotment to you — your CA files it; calendar the deadline the day the shares issue.

10. **Move everything into the company:** assign the trademarks, transfer the domain, open the company current account, migrate Razorpay/Eko and GST, and update the website footer and legal pages with the company name and CIN.

Ongoing

11. **Diary the deadlines:** examination-report reply (1 month from the report), Journal watch through the 4-month opposition window, trademark renewal in year 10 (₹9,000/class), and the ROC / income-tax / GST calendar once incorporated.

12. **Enforcement habit:** a 10-minute monthly search (Google, IP India, app stores) for “Punjab Zone” copies. The first response to a copycat is an attorney's notice citing your application / registration numbers.

6 · HAND THIS TO YOUR CA — SIX QUESTIONS

1. Confirm my citizenship / FEMA status on file (Indian-citizen NRI vs OCI) — it decides the OPC question and the funding route.

2. Your fixed package price, in writing, for: IP India search + 5 trademark filings + examination replies + Journal watch.

3. GST: voluntary now or wait for the threshold? Show me the input-credit maths on my recharge and store volumes.

4. Who do you propose as resident director, and what paperwork protects me (board controls, a signed resignation letter held in escrow)?

5. FC-GPR and FEMA: who files, and exactly what do you need from my US side, with dates?

6. The Phase B trademark assignment: Punjab stamp-duty treatment and total cost, quoted now so there are no surprises later.

Sources (checked 28 October 2026)

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Disclaimer: This roadmap is a research summary prepared for Param's planning on 28 October 2026. Government fees are as per the published schedules cited; professional fees are typical Punjab market ranges, not quotes. Fees and rules change. Final filings must be reviewed and made by the Ludhiana CA / trademark attorney engaged for the work. Nothing in this document is legal advice, and nothing in it has been filed.