

Can a Foreign Buyer Shop an Indian Wholesale Market and Export It?



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A foreign buyer can buy in Sadar Bazaar, Surat or Johari Bazaar and export the goods legally, but the shop is rarely the one who exports them. Indian customs needs an exporter with an IEC to file the shipping bill, so in practice a merchant exporter or agent buys from the shop on a proper bill and ships to you. Plan on paying up front, being there at packing, and paying full duty, because market stock usually cannot prove Indian origin.

The Short Version

- Indian customs law puts the shipping bill on "the exporter", and DGFT says nobody exports without an IEC unless specifically exempted.
- No buyer or trader in our forum logs describes a market shop acting as exporter of record.
- Your exporter of record needs the shop's bill, so "without bill" stock cannot be exported properly.
- Preferential certificates of origin need a producer's records, which market stock rarely has.
- Newcomers prepay in Indian markets, and buyers who have been cheated say to stay while the goods are packed.

Yes, you can buy in an Indian wholesale market and export the goods legally, but the shop you buy from is almost never the one that exports them. Indian customs needs a registered exporter with an Importer-Exporter Code to file the shipping bill, and market shops are domestic traders working mostly in cash. So the working route is a merchant exporter or agent who buys from the shop on a proper bill, packs and ships to you, and answers for the papers.

In July 2026 a buyer posted on a Jaipur forum with a simple problem - "I specifically need to ship items out of the Johari Bazaar area" ([r/jaipur, 2026](#)). Four months earlier a US buyer had a parcel sent home from India by courier, paid the import fees as soon as the email came, and watched it sit: "It's been sitting in the Delhi airport since 3/13" ([r/indiatravel, 2026](#)). In our logs, buyers like the first one find their shippers through locals, not through the seller. I'll come back to both at the end. The caveat first - nobody has published how market purchases actually get exported, so the law below is read at source and the practice comes from our review of importer and trader forum threads, 2023 to 2026.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **The shipping bill is the exporter's job, in law.** Section 50(1) of the Customs Act says "The exporter of any goods shall make entry thereof" by presenting a shipping bill electronically, and DGFT says "No export or import shall be made by any person without obtaining an IEC unless specifically exempted". (*[Customs Act 1962](#), [CBIC text](#), [DGFT IEC page](#), both read 18 October 2026*)
- 02 **No voice in our forum logs describes a market shop acting as exporter of record.** The one consolidation service a Sadar trader offered delivered within India. (*[Our forum signals FS-CAT-093, 2024 to 2026](#)*)
- 03 **Newcomers prepay.** Long wholesale credit runs only between established parties, and a Surat maker summed up its terms as "first advance and then delivery of goods". (*[FS-CAT-099, 2024 to 2026](#)*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ Which consolidators near Sadar, Surat's Ring Road or Johari Bazaar file shipping bills for walk-in foreign buyers, and on what terms. We plan to find out by walking the markets.
- ☐ Whether a chamber of commerce will issue a non-preferential certificate of origin for market-bought stock without the maker's records.

1. Who Is Allowed to Export Goods From India?

An exporter, and Indian law is quite specific about who that is. The Customs Act defines "exporter" as including "any owner, beneficial owner or any person holding himself out to be the exporter" between entry for export and shipment (section 2(20)), and section 50(1) makes that person present the shipping bill (Customs Act 1962, as published by CBIC, read 18 October 2026). DGFT adds the gate in front of it. No goods leave without an IEC "unless specifically exempted" (DGFT, read 18 October 2026).

So the question is never "can I take this out of the market". It's "which Indian firm with an IEC will put its name on the shipping bill for these goods". You, as a foreign company, don't hold an Indian IEC, and the shop usually doesn't either. The person who signs as exporter answers to Indian customs for what's in the box and what it's worth. That's why nobody sensible signs for goods they didn't see bought. The IEC itself is explained on IEC, RCMC and export registrations.

2. Will the Shop Ship It for Me?

Sometimes it will put a parcel on a courier, and that's about the size of it. Our forum logs show foreign buyers in Jaipur and Agra finding couriers and cargo firms through locals, and when a shop does send a courier parcel, the buyer pays the destination fees and the parcel can sit in customs at Delhi (FS-CAT-095). For a few gifts, that works. For stock you plan to sell, a courier parcel from a shop with no export paperwork behind it is a gamble at both ends. Ask the courier what export papers it needs for a commercial parcel before you hand it over, and check the import side with your customs broker.

What the shops are built for is Indian retail. "Sadar Bazar is mainly cash market without bills, and prices change daily," a trader wrote in February 2026 (r/IndiaBusiness, 2026). That isn't a criticism. It's a fast domestic trade

doing its job well, run by traders who each work through a few makers. Export is simply a different job, and the shop isn't set up for it.

3. What Does a Merchant Exporter Need From the Shop?

A bill. This is the part most buyers miss. Your exporter of record is about to tell Indian customs what the goods are and what they're worth, and it has to account for where it got them. Our reading is that a cash purchase with no bill leaves it with nothing to show. So "with bill or without?" isn't a pricing question for you. The answer is "with", every time, and in the exporter's name, not yours.

Ask your exporter how it wants to buy. Some will send their own person to the shop and buy on their own account, which is cleanest. Some will take goods you've chosen and paid for, if the shop raises the bill to them. Either way, agree it before you choose anything, because the shop will want to know who the bill is for while you're still standing at the counter. Merchant exporters are a normal and fair business model in India, and how to judge one is on [trading companies and merchant exporters](#).

A forum reply to a Canadian saree importer in 2026 offered "transport companies with/without bill, Hawala agents etc etc" (the whole thread is on [India's wholesale markets](#)). That's the opposite of what you need. Unbilled goods paid for outside the bank system can't be tied to an export, so walk away from any offer built on them.

4. Can Market Stock Get a Certificate of Origin?

It depends which certificate, and for the one that cuts your duty the honest answer is usually no.

A **preferential** certificate, the one that opens 0% under the Australia, UK or other Indian agreements, needs origin working behind it – a cost sheet showing how the goods meet that agreement's rule, with the source of each input. Our [certificate of origin guide](#) walks through the steps, and the working is where it bites. A market shop can't say which workshop made a piece, and a merchant exporter can't certify what it can't trace. Insiders in our logs also say some Sadar and Crawford Market stock is imported or copied (FS-CAT-096). Goods that aren't Indian can't get an Indian certificate at all. They need the back-to-back kind that points to the real origin.

A **non-preferential** certificate only says the goods are Indian, with no duty cut. The exporter applies on DGFT's eCoO system and a chamber of commerce or another listed agency issues it. Whether a chamber will sign one for mixed market stock without the maker's records is something we haven't confirmed. Check it with your customs broker and the exporter before you rely on it.

So plan market goods at the full duty rate. If your exporter can trace a line back to a named maker with its own records, that line might qualify, and treat it as a bonus you didn't budget for. What the paper means at your border is on [certificate of origin](#).

5. Why Do Market Sellers Want Paying First?

Because credit in Indian wholesale is earned, not offered. "B2B runs on heavy credit and long period like 90–120 days," one trader wrote in January 2026, but that runs between parties who know each other ([r/IndiaBusiness, 2026](#)). A Surat maker put the newcomer's terms plainly – "No credit policy, first advance and then delivery of goods" ([r/surat, 2024](#)). And cash talks. "For cash, we give an additional discount since we have the money which can be rotated sooner" ([r/IndiaBusiness, 2025](#)).

A first-time foreign buyer is the newest newcomer there is, so expect to prepay. The safer shape is to pay your exporter of record through the bank and let it pay the shops, so the money trail and the export papers match. Why advance terms are normal in India, and what to offer instead on a factory order, is on [why Indian suppliers ask for full advance](#).

6. Why Do Buyers Say Stay While It's Packed?

Because packing is where substitution happens. Surat buyers are blunt about it. "Visit once or twice initially to build rapport. First shopping stay there when they pack stuff," one advised in 2025, and another in the same thread had been cheated the month before and "never got anything back" ([r/surat, 2025](#), [r/surat, 2025](#)). A shop's shelf holds goods from several workshops, so what gets packed after you leave the counter can come from a different maker than what you handled.

If you can't be in India for packing, someone you trust has to be. Not the shop, and ideally not only the exporter, since it's the party you're checking. Keep a sealed sample of what you chose and compare against it at the consolidation point. If you'd rather hand the buying, the check at packing and the export to one team, [SourcingSync](#) does this for foreign buyers in India's markets.

7. What Should I Ask an Exporter of Record Before I Buy?

Ten questions, all before you spend a rupee in the market.

1. What is your IEC, and will your firm's name be on the shipping bill and the commercial invoice?
2. Will you buy from the shops on your own account, or take goods I choose? Who will the shop's bill be made out to?

3. Where will the goods be consolidated, and can I or my inspector check them there before packing?
4. Which port or airport will they leave from, and who files the shipping bill?
5. Which certificate of origin, if any, can you honestly get for these goods, and on what records?
6. How do I pay you, which bank account receives it, and in whose name? (It should be the exporter's own business account.)
7. What exactly do I pay you for, line by line, so nothing new appears later?
8. What happens if a shop substitutes stock or a line comes up short?
9. Who keeps the bills and packing lists, and will I get copies?
10. Have you exported market-bought goods to my country before?

An exporter who answers all ten in writing is one worth paying. One who answers number 1 and goes vague on the rest is telling you something too. What each market is good for, one by one, is on [India's wholesale markets](#), with detail on [Sadar Bazaar](#) and [Surat's textile markets](#).

Questions Buyers Ask

Can I export from an Indian market without an IEC? ^

You don't need one, because you're the importer. The Indian firm that exports does, unless an exemption applies. Ask your exporter of record for its IEC.

Is it illegal to buy in Sadar Bazaar as a foreigner? v

Can I get 0% duty on market-bought goods? v

Is a courier parcel from the shop enough? v

8. Back to Johari Bazaar

The Jaipur buyer needed to ship out of Johari Bazaar, and the US buyer's parcel sat at Delhi airport. Neither problem was the market's fault. Both buyers asked "how do I ship this?" after they'd bought, when the question that saves the trip is "who exports this?" before the first purchase. Ask it at the hotel, not at the counter, and the market becomes what it's good at – a fast, honest way to see a huge range in a day.