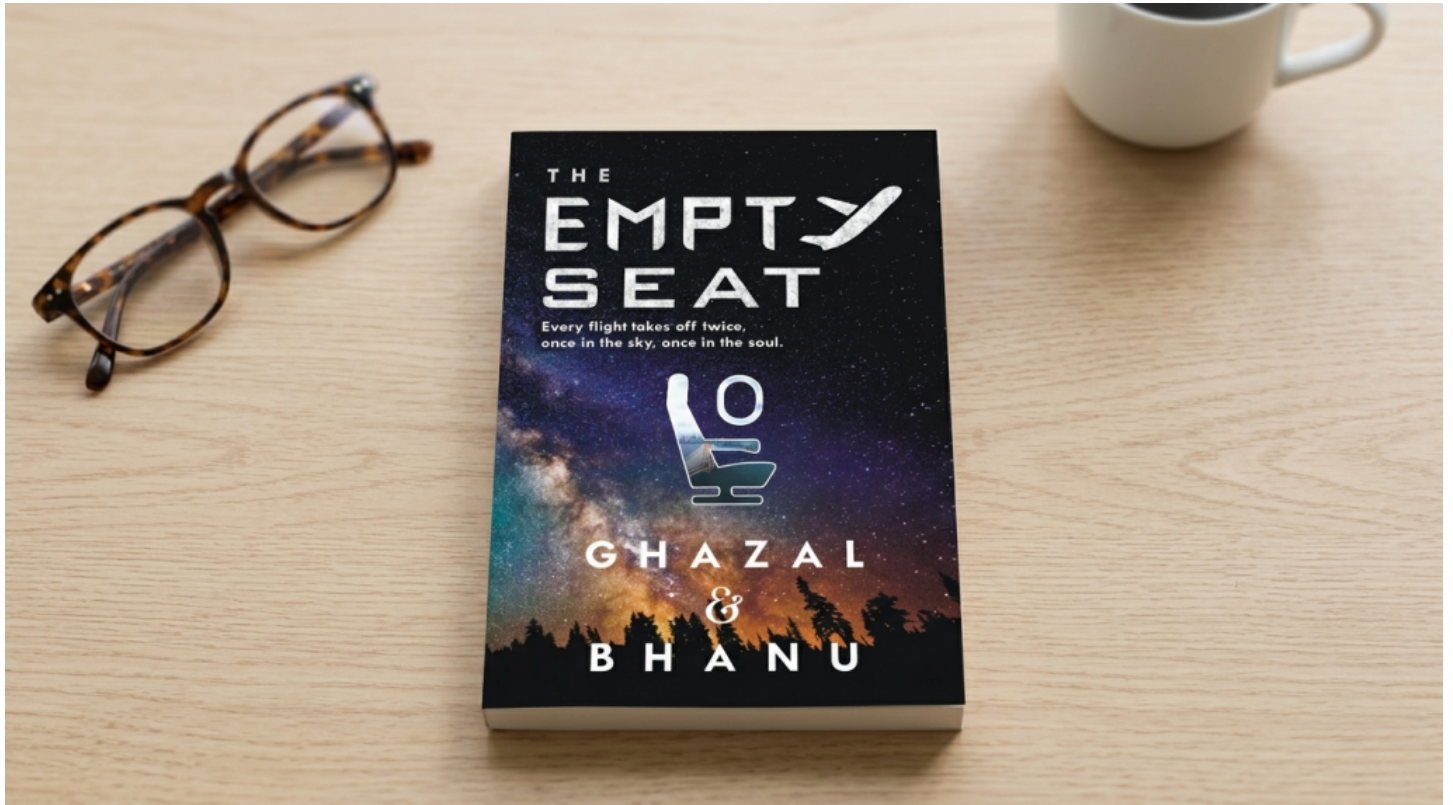


Bhanu Srivastav's New Book 'The Empty Seat' Releases in India: A Two-Hour Flight Becomes a Lifetime Reckoning

Indian author, banker, and AI researcher Bhanu Srivastav releases 'The Empty Seat', a powerful new book co-written with a Chief Flight Attendant about the lives we abandon and the moment we are forced to face them again.



New Delhi, Delhi May 4, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Indian author **Bhanu Srivastav** has released his latest book, *The Empty Seat*, a quietly arresting work of contemporary Indian literary fiction now available on Amazon, Apple Books, Google Books, Barnes & Noble etc. Set in real time across the two hours and thirty-three minutes of a Mumbai-to-Delhi flight, the book has been described by early readers as one of the most unusual Indian books of 2026, a story about a wrong seat that becomes the most important seat a person has ever occupied.

Co-written with Ghazal Srivastava, a Chief Flight Attendant who has spent more than 20,000 hours at 35,000 feet, [The Empty Seat](#) by Bhanu Srivastav arrives at a moment when Indian readers are increasingly turning toward shorter, emotionally precise, philosophically grounded literary fiction, the kind that can be finished on a single flight and yet refuses to be put down for weeks afterward.

The book: a flight that takes off twice, once in the sky, once in the soul

The premise of *The Empty Seat* is deceptively simple. A passenger boards a Mumbai to Delhi flight and, by accident, takes the wrong seat. Seat 23F instead of 23C. In the next two hours and thirty-three minutes, the life that was abandoned at twenty-three quietly takes the seat beside them, the unwritten book, the unfinished painting, the love walked away from because the timing was never right, the version of self that was promised a return one day, when things settled down, when the risk felt smaller,

when the right moment finally arrived. That moment, the book argues, is now exactly two hours and thirty-three minutes long.

It is a book about the particular Indian middle-class grief of having chosen the sensible thing. About arriving at destinations that feel nothing like home. About the soul's quiet, almost polite insistence that something else was meant to happen. *The Empty Seat* sits within an emerging category of Indian literary fiction - short, philosophical, almost fable-like in shape, that has begun to find a serious readership in the country over the past two years.

"The question is: will you move before the plane touches down? Two hours and thirty-three minutes to decide. A lifetime to live with the answer."

That sentence, which appears late in the book, has been widely quoted by early readers and is rapidly becoming the line most associated with Bhanu Srivastav's 2026 release. *The Empty Seat* book is being read across India by professionals in their late twenties to mid-forties, the demographic the book most directly addresses, and the one most quietly haunted by the seat it describes.

A banker who left the corner office, a flight attendant who has watched twenty thousand hours of human choice

What gives *The Empty Seat* its unusual texture is the pairing of its two authors. Bhanu Srivastav spent years inside the upper rooms of Indian banking before walking away to build the future his work, his music, and his writing demanded. His co-author, Ghazal Srivastava, has spent two decades observing, at very close quarters, the small private moments in which strangers make or postpone the decisions that will define the rest of their lives, passengers staring out windows, passengers crying quietly into airline napkins, passengers turning a wedding ring on their finger, passengers writing on a boarding pass the message they will never send.

The book reads, accordingly, with a doubled intelligence: the structural rigour of someone who has built systems for a living, and the close human observation of someone who has been a witness to twenty thousand hours of the human soul mid-air. It is this pairing, more than any single sentence in the book, that has drawn comparisons in early reviews to authors like Mitch Albom, Paulo Coelho, and the contemplative end of Ruskin Bond though Bhanu Srivastav's voice remains very much its own: spare, unsentimental, and disarmingly direct.

About the author: [Bhanu Srivastav](#)

Bhanu Srivastav is an Indian author, songwriter, and technologist whose work has, over the past several years, quietly built a body of writing notable for its emotional clarity and its refusal of cliché. Born in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, Bhanu Srivastav trained as a mechanical engineer before building a long career in Indian banking and finance, working across business process reengineering, information technology, cyber security, innovation, human resources, and industrial relations.

Alongside his professional career, Bhanu Srivastav completed two postgraduate degrees and earned more than one hundred professional certifications in information technology and information systems security. These include the *Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)* credential from ISACA in the United States, *ISO/IEC 27001 Lead Auditor* certification from the British Standards Institution in the United Kingdom, the *Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)* credential from the EC-Council in the United States, and a specialised certification in *Artificial Intelligence* from ASCI, Hyderabad. His research in artificial intelligence has been published by the University of Munich, placing him among a small group

of Indian practitioners whose work bridges literature, financial systems thinking, and applied AI.

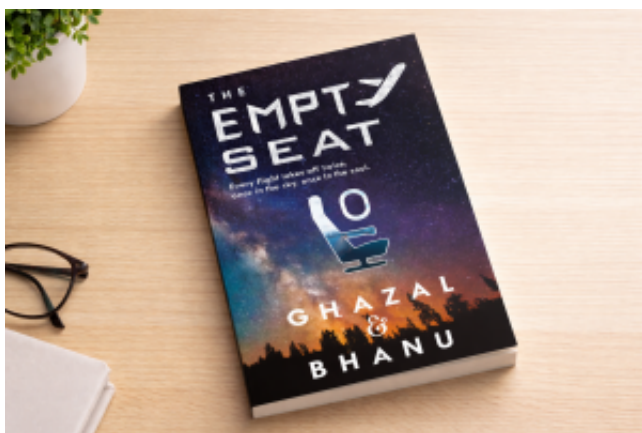
Yet for all of these credentials, the writing of Bhanu Srivastav is most distinctive for what it leaves out. He does not posture. He does not preach. He writes, in his own description, to move hearts, to spark thought, and to inspire the kind of inner revolution that does not need an audience. As a songwriter, his music carries the same sincerity that fills his pages, lyrics and melodies crafted to comfort, to question, and to heal. Away from his desk, he is known among friends for ordinary acts that he treats as serious: cooking carefully, listening fully, telling stories slowly. “Greatness,” one early reviewer of *The Empty Seat* wrote, “often lives in everyday grace, and that is the territory Bhanu Srivastav writes from.”

His earlier published work includes *The Empty Seat*, co-authored with Ghazal Srivastava, and the recently released *The Alchemy of Supergirl*, a deeply personal exploration of one-sided love and inner transformation that has begun to find a quiet but devoted readership across India. Bhanu Srivastav is also the founder of the Udaan Foundation, a Section 8 non-profit working in the empowerment of women and girls in India.

Who the book is for: Early readers of *The Empty Seat* by Bhanu Srivastav describe it consistently as a book that finds the reader, rather than the other way around. It has been most strongly recommended for those who chose the sensible thing and have been quietly grieving the other thing ever since; for those who keep promising themselves a return to a different, truer version of their own life when the time is right; for those who are tired of arriving at destinations that feel nothing like home; and for those who once allowed someone to convince them that their dreams were too big.

The book is short enough to be read in a single sitting and dense enough that most readers, by their own account, do not. They put it down. They walk to the window. They come back to it. They underline. *The Empty Seat*, in the words of one early reader, “is the book they wish they’d read at twenty-three. But it changes you at any age.”

Availability: *The Empty Seat* by Bhanu Srivastav is now available across India in paperback and Kindle e-book editions on Amazon. Bulk and corporate-gifting orders are available through the publisher.



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