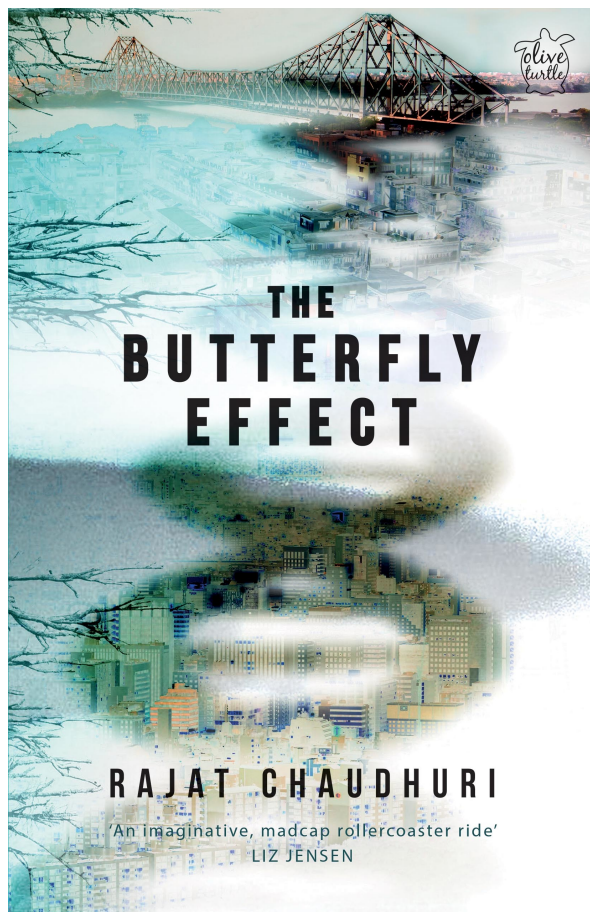


REVIEW

Climate Collapse, but Make It Absurd — A Review of Rajat Chaudhuri's "The Butterfly Effect"

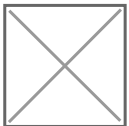
by Sabyasachi Roy



Let's not pretend we don't know what's happening outside. It's September, it's hot when it shouldn't be, storms are tearing up coasts with all the subtlety of a drunk bulldozer, and the news cycle keeps yelling about "unprecedented" this and "record-breaking" that. In other words: Dystopia is here, it just hasn't signed the paperwork yet. Which is exactly why Rajat Chaudhuri's novel *The Butterfly Effect* (Niyogi Books, 2018) feels less like fiction and more like a dispatch from the slightly-more-collapsed near-present.

Rajat Chaudhuri's *The Butterfly Effect* doesn't read like some neat "beware the future" signpost. More like the doc already handed you the chart, scribbled with smudged pen, coffee stains on the corner. The note says: Too late, you're in the mess already. Don't hold out for jetpacks or robot overlords. The end's cheaper than that — just busted offices, damp walls, paperwork stacked to the ceiling, concrete crumbling in slow motion.

And that's what makes the book fascinating — and infuriating. Forget arcs. This thing lurches. More like a pile-up of half-heard phone calls, junk-mail clippings, fever notes. Frankenstein, but stitched with chewing gum and whatever the dog dragged in. You want clean genre fiction? Go stream Netflix. You want to feel like you've been dunked headfirst into a polluted river with no idea what's swimming under you? Welcome.



Rajat Chaudhuri (c) Crabandbee CC BY-SA 4.0

The Set-Up (or What Passes for One)

The novel jumps between characters and cities, throwing you into eco-terrorism plots, biotech experiments, climate refugees, and corrupt governments. There's no neat protagonist you can pin the story on — just shifting perspectives, like the camera operator had a nervous breakdown.

At its core though, *The Butterfly Effect* is about climate collapse and human stupidity colliding at full speed. It's India, but not the postcard version. It's India in a fever dream, choking on its own exhaust fumes, improvising survival strategies while the rich build escape hatches.

One moment you're with activists plotting sabotage, the next you're staring down mutated creatures that feel like a lab intern's prank gone too far. And then, right when you're adjusting, Chaudhuri shoves in a grotesque image you can't unsee. The one that hooked me early on: "A flaccid ball, pink like raw skin, poked its head above the deserted houses of avenue 3 which had once been named after a Soviet leader" (p. 10).

That's not just a weird line. That's the book in miniature. Looks soft, but wrong-soft. Like spoiled fruit or drywall after rain. History's leftovers squatting in the present, swelling over rooftops like something the city inspector ignored. Ugly on purpose.

This Ain't Dystopia With Shiny Props

A lot of dystopian fiction loves toys — gleaming skyscrapers, slick gadgets, omnipresent surveillance systems that run smoother than your phone's autocorrect. Chaudhuri laughs in the face of that. Everything in here sags. Cracks in the plaster, wires taped with black electrical tape, bribes under the table. A world patched up the way you fix a shoe with cardboard inserts. The dystopia here is recognizably Indian: jammed streets, political doublespeak, buildings falling apart, half-baked science experiments that should've stayed in the lab but didn't.

If Western dystopia often feels like an engineer's nightmare, *The Butterfly Effect* feels like the municipal dump after monsoon rain. Plastic choking drains, animals foraging in garbage, politicians cutting ribbons at the wrong ceremony. This isn't a thought experiment; it's the present, just pushed five inches further into the abyss.

And it works. Because the horror isn't that different from what we already scroll past every day.

Structure, or Why You'll Keep Flipping Back Pages

Don't expect linear. The narrative hops like it's had too much cheap caffeine. Characters drift in and out, some alive, some maybe dead, some maybe mutated. Whole sections feel like collages — scene fragments, paranoid mutterings, bureaucratic reports, dream sequences.

Yes, you'll lose track. Yes, you'll get annoyed. But that confusion? That's the point. Collapse isn't orderly. It doesn't wait for you to keep up. Chaudhuri wants you disoriented because his characters are disoriented. The whole place spins. Not dizzy-fun, but lost-in-your-own-house disoriented. Reading it is like doing a puzzle on a damp table — pieces keep curling, sliding off, disappearing under the radiator.

Satire in Eco-Horror

The book has monsters, but not the sci-fi kind you can laser-beam into oblivion. The monsters here are systems: corporations patenting life, governments turning survival into a lottery, scientists messing with genetics because they can. The horror is bureaucratic, which makes it worse.

There's satire everywhere. Chaudhuri can't resist mocking the absurdity of human responses to crises. You get grotesque experiments side by side with sharp digs at politicians who treat catastrophe as photo ops. He folds in today's headlines — air pollution, displacement, profiteering — and exaggerates them just enough to make you laugh nervously before realizing it's barely an exaggeration.

Which is scarier than any mutant creature.



"The Butterfly Effect" by Rajat Chaudhuri

The Genre Question, or How Not to Care

So what do you call this? Climate fiction? Dystopia? Gothic absurdity? All of the above, and none of them. The book refuses to sit neatly on a shelf. It's too fragmented for conventional sci-fi, too grotesque for pure realism, too political for straight horror.

But that slipperiness feels right. Because collapse doesn't wear a label. It doesn't show up with a genre tag attached. It arrives like that raw-skinned orb rising over empty houses — unclassifiable, unsettling, wrong.

Why It Works (and Why It'll Drive You Nuts)

No comfort read, this. Don't expect your chapters to tuck you in or tie themselves up neatly. *The Butterfly Effect* shrugs at you — no bows, no closure. You close it annoyed, like the TV remote just died mid-scene. You won't close it with a satisfied sigh. More likely, you'll mutter, "What the hell did I just read?" and then remember fragments days later — the flaccid ball, the choking streets, the sense of systems eating themselves alive.

That's its power. It lingers like bad air. You can't escape the imagery, the paranoia, the sense that this isn't "speculative fiction" at all but a mirror tilted slightly forward.

Chaudhuri doesn't moralize. He doesn't say "learn from this before it's too late." He just shoves the mess in your face and says: This is the texture of collapse. Ugly, absurd, bureaucratic, unstoppable.

Final Thoughts, or a Shrug With Teeth

The Butterfly Effect is necessary precisely because it's unpleasant. It doesn't flatter the reader with heroics or solutions. It shows you a fever-dream India stumbling through disaster, where survival feels like a badly rigged game show.

You come out unsettled, paranoid, maybe grossed out. But also sharper. More awake to the absurdities already around us.

It's not entertainment. It's a scratch on your mind. A warning disguised as grotesque fiction. A reminder that dystopia isn't sleek or distant. It's already in the air, already in the water, already poking its raw-skinned head over your own street.