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Urban Experience in Kathmandu: Alienation and Social Fragmentation in Khanal's *Pashupati Prasad*

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Abstract

Background: Kathmandu is growing fast. The city now exhibits sharp class divisions, crowded streets, and a growing sense of anonymity. These changes invite an urban-sociological look.

Methods: This study applies Louis Wirth's concept that urbanism leads to social fragmentation and impersonality, alongside Georg Simmel's view that metropolitan life fosters psychological distancing and heightened individualism, to analyze key scenes, characters, and settings in *Pashupati Prasad* (2016).

Result: The film exemplifies several of Wirth's urban characteristics, including weakened social bonds, pronounced class divisions, and impersonal interactions. Through the protagonist's experiences, the narrative reveals adaptive social strategies amid pervasive alienation, thereby contextualizing Western urban sociological theories within the specific socio-cultural realities of Kathmandu.

Conclusion: The film illustrates how rapid urban change can weaken old bonds while forcing new ways of coping in the city.

Novelty: The film's narrative, characters, and urban setting reveal nuanced portrayals of alienation, social fragmentation, and adaptive strategies within Nepal's rapidly transforming capital cityscape today.

Keywords: Dislocation, Identity, Psychological Detachment, Social Stratification, Urban Marginalization

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Introduction

Kathmandu is a city marked by rapid urbanization and a diverse, often fragmented population. The 2016 Nepali film *Pashupati Prasad*, directed by Dipendra K. Khanal, vividly captures the challenges of urban life, focusing on the experiences of a rural migrant who arrives in the city in search of a better life. Set against the backdrop of the 2015 earthquake, the film explores alienation, social disintegration, and the erosion of traditional structures. These themes make *Pashupati Prasad* a compelling narrative for examining the sociological implications of urban living, offering a lens through which the complexities of city life in Kathmandu can be understood.

Literature Review

Urbanization is a global process that is rapidly transforming cities, both in their physical form and social structure. As Singh and Dhakal (2024) note, "over half of the world's population lives in urban areas" (p. 20), although the pace and pattern of urbanization vary across regions. In Nepal, this transformation has been theatrical. Between 1961 and 2021, the number of urban centers grew from 16 to 293, while the urban population expanded from 0.4 million to over 19 million (Subedi, 2023 p. 26). A key factor driving this growth has been rural-to-urban migration, particularly during periods of conflict, such as the Maoist insurgency (Bhattarai, Adhikari, & Gautam, 2023, p. 13). Kathmandu, as the capital and economic hub, has attracted thousands seeking employment and stability, turning it into a "dream city" where people aspire to a better life (Singh and Dhakal, 2024, p. 29). However, this rapid urban growth has also produced visible inequalities, fragmentation, and alienation.

Cinema has the unique ability to visualize and critique urban life. Lima (2008) explains that films allow us to "mentally reconstruct a whole scenario of images" (p. 142), giving viewers a near "first-person contact with the city" (p.144). Cinema does not just reflect city life but reimagines it, often exposing hidden social tensions. As Huat (2008) argues, it gives voice to the marginalized and challenges dominant narratives of urban success (p. 6). South Asian films often depict rural-to-urban migration, showing cities as both hopeful and harsh. Mennel (2019) observes that filmmakers like Ahluwalia and Akhtar portray the challenges faced by migrant laborers, emphasizing their struggle to survive in cities marked by economic inequality (p. 6). Urban spaces in these films become symbols of both aspiration and disillusionment, revealing the fragmented social reality of modern life. Hollywood, however, often depicts cities like Kathmandu through a mystical lens. Films such as *The Golden Child* (1986), *Baraka* (1992), and *Doctor Strange* (2016) exoticize the city, presenting it as a sacred or spiritual space. Dahal (2020) critiques these portrayals for reducing Kathmandu to a "gateway to mystical knowledge" (p. 14), ignoring the real lives and struggles of its inhabitants.

Nepali cinema has recently begun to counter these exotic and romanticized images. The film *Loot* (2012) is widely recognized as a turning point. As Karki (2023) notes, it marked the beginning of 'Nepali urban popular' cinema, moving away from traditional Bollywood-style storytelling to focus on the harsh realities of urban Kathmandu (p. 47). The

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film's depiction of the Bishnumati River, congested alleys, and chaotic streets conveys social fragmentation and urban anxiety (Karki, 2023, p. 49). The male-centered narrative explores themes of survival, disillusionment, and identity, utilizing city spaces such as rooftops and dance bars to symbolize inequality and shattered dreams (p. 53). Films like *Numafung* (2004), *Bato Muni Ko Phool* (2010), and *Anagarik* (2013) also examine themes of exclusion and marginalization. They highlight ethnic, caste, and economic tensions, offering more inclusive representations of Nepali society (Shrestha et al., 2021, p. 135; Thapa, 2021, p. 53). However, few studies have focused on *Pashupati Prasad* (2016) and its detailed portrayal of alienation within urban Kathmandu.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing how *Pashupati Prasad* represents emotional and psychological alienation alongside social fragmentation. While earlier films explored structural issues such as poverty and caste, *Pashupati Prasad* delves more deeply into the personal effects of urban dislocation. By combining cinematic analysis with sociological theories from Louis Wirth and Georg Simmel, this research aims to expose how the film critiques urban inequality and humanizes the often-overlooked costs of city life in Kathmandu.

Urban Complexity and Alienation: Wirth and Simmel's Perspectives

City life fundamentally changes how people interact, leading to more diverse and complex social relationships. Louis Wirth, a sociologist from the Chicago School, explored how urban life shapes social behavior. In his essay *urbanism as a Way of Life*, Wirth defines a city as a settlement where "the number of inhabitants in a settlement [is] increased beyond a certain limit" (Wirth, 2015, p. 117). The city thus becomes a melting pot of diverse populations, creating a complex and multifaceted urban identity shaped by a social variety.

Urban living creates a unique social environment where relationships are more impersonal and functional. Georg Simmel analyzes the paradox of social relationships in cities, showing how urban life influences individual behavior. He explains that "City people are regarded as rather more socially tolerant than rural people … more impersonal and seemingly less friendly—these are merely adaptations to the experience of living in large, dense, socially diverse urban environments" (Simmel, 1964, p. 115). This environment increases social differentiation: "the greater the number of individuals participating in the process of interaction, the greater is the potential differentiation between them" (p. 118). This anonymity and impersonality are adaptations to urban density and diversity.

Social connections in cities tend to be weaker and more impersonal than those in rural areas. In urban settings, "the bonds of kinship or neighborliness, and the sentiments arising out of living together for generations under a common folk tradition are likely to be absent or, at best, relatively weak" (Wirth, 2015, p. 118). These weakened social bonds in cities contribute to more impersonal and fragmented urban relationships. In cities, people live in close physical proximity but often remain emotionally distant from one another. Wirth (2015) notes that urban density shapes social life by creating physical closeness but emotional

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distance among city residents (p. 119). As a result, urban environments often lack meaningful social connections and foster isolation.

Urban heterogeneity significantly transforms social order by breaking down rigid caste lines and complicating class structures. However, this diversity brings "instability and insecurity" as populations compete for limited resources, fostering "a spirit of competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation" (Wirth, 2015, p. 119). Traditional support systems weaken. While cities enable individual growth and upward mobility through voluntary associations, they also increase risks of "personal disorganization, mental breakdown, suicide, delinquency, crime, corruption, and disorder" (p. 119). This duality reveals how urban life simultaneously fosters personal advancement and social pathology, making urbanism crucial for understanding modern social dynamics.

Urban life profoundly changes how individuals experience social and economic struggles. Simmel (1964) explores the psychological and social effects of urban life on individuals and discusses how urban life transforms human struggle. While early humans battled nature "for his bodily existence" (p. 409), modern city dwellers contest survival derived from the support system of the city. Thus, urban life replaces natural struggles with economic competition, reducing individuals to impersonal units within a system driven by money.

City life can create stress and increase feelings of alienation among residents. The city life produces "the intensification of nervous stimulation," forcing residents to erect psychological defenses (Simmel, 1964, p. 410). Urban life can dull emotional responses and weaken meaningful social connections. The urban "blasé attitude" is "the rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves" (Simmel, 1964, p. 414). In this sense, urban life not only reshapes external social structures but also erodes the depth and uniqueness of human experience. People protect themselves by being distant, which can make them feel lonely and alone in cities. Simmel (1964) identifies "reserve" as an urban coping strategy, a guarded stance through which residents shield themselves from constant social stimuli (p. 415). This growing complexity and detachment in urban life ultimately strips individuals of their meaning and connection, leaving them isolated despite being surrounded by crowds.

Urban Heterogeneity and Social Fragmentation

In *Pashupati Prasad*, Kathmandu is portrayed as "a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Wirth, 2015, p. 117), embodying the urban complexity Louis Wirth describes. The film juxtaposes disparate worlds—marked by class, morality, survival tactics, and emotional resilience—within the sacred Pashupatinath precinct, illustrating both the vibrancy and alienation of metropolitan life. At the narrative's center is Pashupati Prasad, a rural migrant striving to repay his late father's debt. Visibly present yet socially invisible, he epitomizes the urban underclass, marginalized by structural indifference. His repeated search for work and dignity highlights the systemic exclusion of rural newcomers. When he asks a university-educated street vendor,

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"Why are you working here instead of finding a nice job?" (Khanal, 2016, 22:01–22:03), Pashupati's naïveté about Kathmandu's labor market and the limited promise of formal education becomes clear. This moment encapsulates the steep social learning curve inherent to city life, revealing the film's critical engagement with urban stratification and adaptation.

Meet Uncle, an elderly cremation worker, symbolizes the psychological toll of urban marginalization through his alcoholism and cynicism, coping with life's hardships on the city's fringes. His resignation contrasts with the protagonist's optimism, illustrating how prolonged urban struggle can erode one's identity. Hanuman Ji, disguised as the monkey god, illustrates urban anonymity and performance; as a corrupt official entertaining tourist, his double life reveals how city dwellers adopt masks to survive. This reflects Kathmandu's commercialization of spiritual spaces for economic gain.

Bhasme Don, a petty gangster, exemplifies a distinct urban survival strategy rooted in aggression and manipulation shaped by a traumatic childhood. He recounts, "My parents took me here from Mugu to admit in a boarding school… But life there was worse than being in jail. If he told us, we had to eat shit and pretend it didn't stink… We had to worship him just like that" (Khanal, 2016, 01:17:49–01:17:52). He further exposes his experience of sexual abuse: "White people paid for and took away many boys who came with me" (01:18:01–01:18:05). Bhasme's turn to gangsterism is less a voluntary choice than the outcome of structural neglect and exploitation. He explains, "I was waiting for a chance to run away… Then the earthquake happened. The school owner was buried under the hostel building while playing Candy Crush. I stole his phone, and now here I am, at the cremation grounds" (01:18:12–01:18:27). His narrative reveals how urban environments can recycle trauma into cycles of power and survival.

The shopkeeper represents the paranoid, profit-driven urban middle class whose fear and selfishness fuel collective violence. His quickness to accuse Pashupati, "Thief! Thief! That man stole my ring!" (Khanal, 2016, 01:58:38–01:58:41) reflects Wirth's idea that urban life, lacking strong kinship ties, often fosters mistrust and reactionary behavior. His actions show how economic interests mixed with fear can lead to injustice. *Pashupati* Prasad employs such characters to portray Kathmandu as a city of stark contrasts—where migrants, misfits, and vendors coexist in a fragmented space defined more by struggle and performance than by harmony. The film portrays Kathmandu as a fractured city where migration, competition, and urban anonymity have eroded family ties, trust, and support systems. A significant theme of fragmentation is the loss of kinship and village support, symbolized through Pashupati's backstory. Orphaned by the 2015 earthquake, he is displaced from his rural home and left to navigate city life alone.

This detachment from familial networks leaves him vulnerable. The loneliness and struggles he experiences reflect a broader urban phenomenon in which migrants must survive independently. A similar sense of abandonment is seen in Aama, who resides in a temple rather than her own home, saying, "The cremation platforms are closer here. It will be easier

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to cremate me—nobody will have to carry me" (Khanal, 2016, 51:07–51:11). The urban experience is defined by isolation, even in a place of cultural and spiritual significance.

A breakdown of trust and exploitation is evident in almost every relationship Pashupati builds. Though Meet Uncle initially offers him shelter, he later betrays that trust by stealing Pashupati's hard-earned savings for alcohol. Likewise, Bhasme Don undermines and bullies Pashupati despite their shared background of suffering and marginalization. These fragmented bonds reflect what Wirth (2015) calls a segmental relationship, which is superficial, transactional, and impersonal (p. 15). Pashupati pleads with Meet Uncle, "Uncle! Uncle! It's me—Pashupati! Don't you recognize me?... I'm your sworn son Pashupati Prasad Khakurel!" (Khanal, 2016, 04:12–04:44) to which Uncle coldly responds, "If every twerp wearing a Pashupati pendant claim to be my sworn son, I'll have to ask at every shop—how many sons have I made today? … Many claim it. You think I should call everyone my son?" (04:30–04:55). These emotional rejections expose the city's emotional numbness and social breakdown.

Even mother-child relationships are affected by urban detachment. Aama, the older woman at Pashupatinath, finds emotional solace only in strangers. When her biological son visits from the U.S., he justifies abandoning her by saying, "Hire a servant and stay at home… or live with a relative" (Khanal, 2016, 01:41:29–01:41:33). Her response—"If my son and his family think of me as a burden… how can others love me?" (01:41:34–01:41:40)—is painful testimony to the emotional severance modern city life imposes, where utilitarian calculations replace familial bonds. The son's final dismissal—"Nobody understands my problems. I'm leaving now" (01:41:58–01:42:02)—cements the city's alienating nature.

Pashupati's experience in *Pashupati Prasad* highlights the city's lack of institutional protection and pervasive social fragmentation. When he tries to sell a gold ring honestly, shopkeepers dismiss him due to lack of proof, embodying suspicion rather than assistance. His eventual lynching by a mob—based on a false accusation—illustrates the dangerous consequences of distant social relations; as Simmel (1964) observes, "Physical contacts are close, but social contacts are distant" (p. 14). Despite many witnesses, no one intervenes during the lynching, reflecting urban indifference. Economically, the city is fragmented, with vendors, beggars, gangsters, and street performers competing for scarce resources. A street vendor laments, "People don't let you earn an honest living here" (Khanal, 2016, 21:33–21:35), while Pashupati complains about being chased away: "Those boys—I try to make some money, they chase me from there" (21:36–21:41). This hostile environment exemplifies Wirth's (2015) assertion that the city "fosters a spirit of competition, aggrandizement, and mutual exploitation" (p. 18), where survival often undermines solidarity and ethical values.

Urban fragmentation is also explored through the contrast between appearance and reality. Hanuman Ji, who dresses as the monkey god and entertains tourists, is later revealed to be a corrupt bureaucrat. This performance of divinity masks a life of dishonesty, exemplifying how anonymity in the city allows individuals to live double lives. Even sacred

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spaces like Pashupatinath are no longer immune to market logic and deception, showing how the urban economy commodifies and corrupts spiritual roles. Another form of fragmentation is educational disillusionment, as illustrated by graduates selling food. Despite holding an English degree, he is left to run a food cart. When Pashupati asks him why, he says, "To make money, loads of it!… Trade has infinite possibilities, brother" (Khanal, 2016, 22:03–22:05). His story exemplifies how cities no longer guarantee employment or success to the educated, reflecting a breakdown in the social contract and further alienating the urban youth.

The film ends in tragedy, not simply because of individual betrayal but because of a systemic societal failure. Pashupati's death is the culmination of being failed by people, institutions, and ideals. The film powerfully critiques Kathmandu's urban culture, where traditional values have collapsed, relationships are transactional, and individual suffering is invisible. The city, as shown in the film, is a collection of disconnected lives, reflecting deep social fragmentation in the wake of modernity, migration, and inequality.

Identity, Anonymity, and Psychological Adaptation

Pashupati Prasad offers a profound cinematic portrayal of urban alienation and identity erasure through the protagonist's journey. Simmel (1964) asserts that the individual in the metropolis develops a "protective organ" (p. 325) to withstand the overstimulation and impersonal pace of city life. Pashupati, a naïve yet morally grounded villager, enters Kathmandu with a singular goal: to repay the debt left by his father. This mission becomes the axis of his identity. Early in the film, he declares, "Father wanted to repay his debts before he died. The earthquake played havoc with his wish. I am still among the living. Whatever it takes, I need to repay Father's debts. After that, the gates of heaven will surely open for my parents" (Khanal, 2016, 15:01–15:15). His identity is rooted not in personal ambition but in familial obligation—an ideal quickly destabilized by the city's brutal indifference.

Pashupati's experience reveals how metropolitan life reduces individuals to anonymous figures whose identities are defined by economic legitimacy. His attempt to sell a gold ring fails due to lack of formal proof, prompting suspicion despite his honesty, reflecting how urban legal and economic systems invalidate marginalized, undocumented lives. Tragically, he is beaten to death by a mob mistaken about his guilt, symbolizing the city's erasure of individual identity; only Hanuman and Meet Uncle attend his funeral, underscoring Simmel's (1964) view that urban life denies intrinsic human value without economic or legal validation. Unlike others, Pashupati relies on intangible qualities such as trust and resilience, forming surrogate familial bonds with Aama, Hanuman, and Bunu, which emotionally anchor him and preserve his rural identity amid urban alienation, highlighting his moral integrity and emotional maturity.

Pashupati's psychological adaptations to urban life reach a breaking point with Meet Uncle's betrayal, revealing the fragile nature of trust amid the harsh realities of Kathmandu. When Pashupati discovers his piggy bank emptied by Meet Uncle, he exclaims in disbelief:

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> "Where did the money go? Where's the money gone? … Who took the money? Did you drink it away? - Paid at the shop? Look at me! You are my father. -So I can't raise my hand on you. You didn't squander away my money—but your own good fortune." (Khanal, 2016, 01:04:44–01:05:15)

This act shatters Pashupati's dream of owning a food cart. It marks a profound psychological rupture, leaving him feeling defeated: "I've gone to square one—just like I was when I arrived in Kathmandu. Naked! Just like this broken temple" (01:09:28–01:09:35). His anguished cry, "Sworn Father—are you my friend or foe?" (01:12:05–01:12:08), captures his existential confusion and emotional vulnerability in a world where trust is fragile and often betrayed. This emotional collapse reflects that while urban survival demands emotional detachment, Pashupati remains deeply exposed, highlighting the emotional toll of life in a fragmented city.

Pashupati's story in *Pashupati Prasad* exemplifies the psychological and moral challenges faced by individuals in urban environments dominated by suspicion, greed, and rigid formalism. Despite his kindness, honesty, and strong work ethic, Pashupati is vulnerable because, as Simmel (1964) describes, money acts as a "frightful leveler" (p. 414), determining one's worth in the city. His inability to monetize the gold ring or safeguard his savings renders him disposable within the urban economy. His violent death, inflicted by a mob without trial or mourning, starkly embodies the extreme alienation that urban life can produce. Pashupati's experience shows the profound psychological cost of failing to conform to such a system, where appearances and outward success are valued far more than genuine meaning or personal integrity.

Social Dislocation and Urban Marginalization

Pashupati Prasad vividly portrays the social dislocation and urban marginalization faced by rural migrants in Kathmandu. The protagonist, Pashupati, embodies how structural forces, such as natural disasters, poverty, and urban indifference, push individuals to the margins of society. His migration is triggered by the 2015 earthquake, a common cause of rural-to-urban displacement in the Global South. Pashupati recounts, "We wanted to come to visit Pashupati, but the earthquake destroyed everything. My parents were at home. I was at work. The house fell, and my parents died. We dug them out after three days" (Khanal, 2016, 9:10–9:25). This traumatic loss forces his relocation not for opportunity but survival. Drawing on Wirth's and Simmel's urban theories, the film illustrates how Pashupati's experience reflects broader themes of alienation, displacement, and the breakdown of familial and community bonds in urban settings. Despite arriving in the city with hope, Pashupati's suffering deepens amid exploitation and emotional isolation, underscoring the harsh realities confronting many rural migrants in Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu, Pashupati feels invisible and easily ignored by the people around him. Facing precarious employment and homelessness, Pashupati takes on degrading jobs—collecting wood, selling corpse clothes, and vending on the street—to repay his father's debt. When Meet Uncle introduces him to a contractor, he appeals emotionally: "This is my sworn

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son. He is in bad days. Please give him a job" (Khanal, 2016, 39:58–40:03). This plea reveals reliance on informal networks rather than institutional support. Further marginalizing him, Hanuman suggests collecting clothes from cremation grounds to sell: "There are contractors for it. Collect those clothes, wash them and iron them neatly. There'll be riots over them" (54:28–54:36). These grim recommendations depict the limited, morally ambiguous labor options available to the urban poor, underscoring the harsh realities of survival in the city's informal economy.

Housing insecurity is another central theme. Pashupati's appeal for shelter is met with indifference. He asks Hanuman, "Will you let me stay with you?" (Khanal, 2016, 1:11:01–1:11:03), but Hanuman replies, "Earthquake damaged the house where I lived earlier. It was a struggle for me to find a room. I can barely stretch myself to sleep on the floor" (1:11:04–1:11:11). With nowhere else to go, Pashupati chooses to live in a ruined temple, stating, "I am a man of grand fortunes, Hanuman. I won't live in rooms anymore. I'll have a house to myself" (1:12:35–1:12:41). His choice to spend the night in the temple broken by earthquake is not freedom but resignation. The temple—a sacred space—becomes a shelter for the marginalized. His vulnerability in open spaces reflects a broader housing crisis where the urban poor face theft, violence, and exposure to the elements. This scene portrays how the urban poor are left to survive alone, without support, protection, or a place to call their own.

The breakdown of traditional family structures is further illustrated through the character of Aama, an elderly woman abandoned by her children. She lives in an old-age home, a fate Pashupati vows to prevent for his own parents—even after their deaths. His dream of repaying his father's debt and securing spiritual salvation is heartfelt: "After I buy the cart—I'll earn stacks of new money. I'll go home and slap the creditor with wads of cash. After that the doors to heaven will open for my parents" (Khanal, 2016, 1:42:45–1:45:57). This contrasts starkly with Aama's condition. While Pashupati seeks to uphold filial duty, Aama's children discard her, illustrating Wirth's (1938) notion of the declining social significance of the family in urban life.

Urban life can be harsh and unforgiving, especially for those on the margins of society. Despite his honesty and loyalty, Pashupati faces constant humiliation and mistreatment. When he finds a gold ring from a cremated corpse, he briefly believes his fortune has changed, saying, "Gold is at 49,500 rupees per 11 gram today" (Khanal, 2016, 1:55:47–1:55:50). However, his hope is crushed when goldsmiths refuse to pay him fairly, and one falsely accuses him of theft: "Thief! Thief! That man stole my ring! Catch him!" (1:58:39–1:58:43). Although Pashupati pleads, "I didn't steal, I found it" (1:58:43–1:58:47), he is beaten to death by a mob, while the real thief—the shop owner—escapes with the ring. This moment reflects Simmel's (1964) idea that the city reduces individuals to "mere cog[s] in an enormous organization," stripping them of identity, value, and dignity (p. 412). Pashupati's tragic end reveals how urban systems devalue human life, turning compassion into suspicion and justice into violence.

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Urban poverty exposes how hope collides with structural barriers. Pashupati clings to the modest goal of earning a living, declaring, "I'll start a food cart" (Khanal, 2016, 39:39–39:41), yet the plan stalls as he drifts between markets, cremation grounds, and sidewalks, never securing a stable place or community. His perpetual motion aligns with Wirth's (2015) idea that spatial disconnection in cities fractures lasting bonds and turns encounters into "brief and transactional" exchanges. (p.118). Institutions that should protect him likewise fail: the supposedly pious Hanuman Ji cheats mourners; Aama cannot shield her ward; and Bunu remains unaware of his death. Even Kathmandu's sacred core is tainted, as Meet Uncle laments, "The rich secretly pocket the jewelry of their dead … I have seen sons steal the gold from their dead mothers on the pyres" (33:23–34:07). In such a climate, even acts of devotion become commercial transactions. The film's title, *Pashupati Prasad*, sets the divinity of Pashupatinath Temple against this grim urban landscape, ultimately showing how alienation and greed hollow out traditional values.

In this way, the film offers a powerful commentary on the contradictions in life in Kathmandu. The city promises liberation but delivers fragmentation. It offers space but not home, work but not dignity, relationships but not care. Through Wirth's and Simmel's lenses, Pashupati's story becomes emblematic of broader sociological truths: urbanism fosters detachment, commodifies labor, and erodes the bonds that sustain humanity. His tragic end—dying misunderstood and unloved in the shadow of a holy site—lays bare the city's moral failure.

Conclusion

Pashupati Prasad offers a critical examination of the challenges of urban life in Kathmandu, particularly for individuals migrating from rural areas in search of better opportunities. The film portrays the protagonist's struggle to maintain his identity and dignity in a city driven by economic survival. The film shows how the absence of social support, financial resources, and personal connections intensifies feelings of loneliness, exclusion, and psychological distress. For many migrants, the city brings not only financial difficulties but also emotional isolation and a breakdown of community ties. Through Pashupati's experience, the film illustrates the human cost of rapid urbanization and calls attention to the need for more inclusive and compassionate approaches to urban planning. Rather than focusing solely on physical development, the film urges consideration of social equity and cohesion. In doing so, Pashupati Prasad makes a meaningful contribution to the discourse on urban development and social justice in South Asia.

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