

Print Email Facebook Twitter More

Nepalese woman, two sons die of suffocation in 'menstrual shed' after lighting fire for warmth

By [Tracey Shelton](#) and wires
Updated 14 Jan 2019, 4:36pm



PHOTO: A 14-year-old girl sits inside a chhaupadi hut in the hills of Legudsen village. (Reuters: Navesh Chitrakar)

A woman and her two sons have suffocated in a remote Nepalese town after being banished to a windowless shed during the woman's menstruation.

The mother, identified by local media as 35-year-old Amba Bohora, and her two sons aged nine and 12, were found wrapped together in a blanket in the morning and were believed to have died from smoke inhalation after lighting a fire to sleep by overnight, said Bajura district administrator Chetraj Baral.

"They died of suffocation because there was no ventilation and they had made the chamber airtight to beat the cold," police official Uddhav Singh Bhat said.

"We pulled out their bodies with burned limbs."

Bohora had been banished to the "menstruation hut" in temperatures well below zero in a practice known locally as chhaupadi.

RELATED STORY: [Nepal's 'untouchable' women could be on the brink of a 'period revolution'](#)

RELATED STORY: [Padman, the 'taboo' Bollywood film about sanitary pads, causes controversy in South Asia](#)

Key points:

- According to a Hindu tradition, menstruating women are seen as impure or bad luck
- The woman was banished to the "menstruation hut" in a practice now banned under Nepalese law
- The woman's children were aged 12 and nine

'Taboo' film causing controversy

TOP STORIES

- **SPORT** 'Fight to get myself back in the pool': Shayna Jack vows to clear her name
- Judge jails teacher who 'manipulated and corrupted' young girls for her own gratification
- Mass killer asks public to fund challenge against historic indefinite jail sentence
- Controversial former far-right senator Fraser Anning facing bankruptcy
- Worried about your memory? Try these ancient indigenous techniques
- Jury takes just 10 minutes to clear Perth charity founder of stealing \$120,000 from dying mother
- Lloyd Rayney faces being struck off as a lawyer over secret recordings of murdered wife Coryn
- 16yo climate activist hits back after being called 'deeply disturbed' by Andrew Bolt
- Trump's White House is overrun with stink bugs, cockroaches and mice
- Australia's Emissions Reduction Fund fails to increase carbon abatement, data shows
- Murdered environment officer's partner 'gutted' by illegal land-clearing amnesty
- **SPORT** Opinion: Don't call it redemption. Steve Smith's Ashes heroics merely allow him to regain our trust
- Indian doctors find 526 teeth in mouth of seven-year-old boy
- Inmate who carved Islamic State message into cellmate's forehead jailed for 34 years
- ABC challenge to 'legally unreasonable' AFP raids hits court
- Tsunami-like wave crushes swimmers after waterpark malfunction
- **SPORT** Live: Top-four Raiders face Warriors in Auckland
- 'Very standard': Trump plays down apparent North Korea missile tests
- **SPORT** Opinion: No cricketer should have been able to do this. But Steve Smith is not a normal cricketer
- Outsourced welfare agencies paid \$600 per person to 'tick and flick'
- 'Her body was turning black': Samoan nurses jailed for infant

The tradition, linked to Hinduism, considers menstruating women and those who have just given birth to be unclean and bringers of bad luck.

They are not permitted to enter the home, touch anyone, or eat certain foods including fruit, vegetables and milk products during this time.

The practice also dictates that mothers should give birth without assistance, adding to the region's already high maternal mortality rate.

The isolated huts make women vulnerable to [extreme weather conditions](#), [animal attacks](#), [deadly environmental hazards](#) and sexual violence.

Mr Baral said an investigation had started and he was consulting with government lawyers on whether to press charges against the family, who live in Budhinanda, about 400 kilometres north-west of the capital, Kathmandu.

The fight to end menstrual stigma

In August 2017, the enforcement of chhaupadi practices became a criminal offence, punishable by a three-month jail sentence and a \$37 fine.

But a spokesperson for international rights group Restless Development, who work to empower youth in Nepal, said real change could only come from within the community.

"A law alone cannot end the practice of chhaupadi. Members of communities must lead the change in behaviours and attitudes that are needed to end the practice for good."

Clara Garcia Ortés, founder and chief executive of [Be Artsy — a group fighting to change menstrual stigma](#) — said around 90 per cent of women in the hill districts of western Nepal still practiced chhaupadi.

"The law is not enforced," she said. "Nobody is doing anything because women are not really forced to stay outside. A lot of women feel — because they have been educated on this way — that they are really impure."

Through the [Rato Baltin project](#), Be Artsy gave [free menstrual cups](#) and sought to educate hundreds of women and girls throughout Nepal.

But while the project has found success in some areas, with village leaders striving to end the tradition, there is still resistance.

"In some villages the huts have been destroyed, but that has not finish the practice," Ms Ortés said.

"Only the girls and women are now worse than before. Now they sleep without a hut."



A Bollywood flick about sanitary napkins causes a stir in South Asia, with one country banning the movie without even watching it.

vaccination deaths

- Killer jailed for 23 years for murdering, decapitating housemate
- July may set global record as hottest in recorded history, UN says

Get the headlines to your mobile.
NEWS on Messenger



CONNECT WITH ABC NEWS



YouTube



News Podcasts
Catch up with ABC News programs.



GOT A NEWS TIP? >

If you have inside knowledge of a topic in the news, [contact the ABC](#).

NEWS IN YOUR INBOX

Top headlines, analysis, breaking alerts

Email address

Sign up

[More info](#)

ABC BACKSTORY >

ABC teams share the story behind the story and insights into the making of digital, TV and radio content.

EDITORIAL POLICIES >

Read about our editorial guiding principles and the enforceable standard our journalists follow.



PHOTO: Menstrual cups are helping Nepal's girls avoid the chhaupadi ritual. (Supplied: Clara Garcia Ortés)



PHOTO: Women face many hazards during their banishment to these huts. (Supplied: Clara Garcia Ortés)

ABC/wires

Topics: [women-religious](#), [womens-status](#), [womens-health](#), [nepal](#)

First posted 10 Jan 2019, 7:59pm

[Print](#) [Email](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [More](#)

FEATURES



ABC News quiz

You won't win as much as the 16-year-old Fortnite World Cup winner (or anything for that matter) but hey, there's no use crying over spilt yoghurt.



Life in a city with the world's filthiest air

When Indonesia correspondent David Lipson descended into Jakarta Airport, he thought something was burning, but it was the city's toxic smog filling up the plane.



Your best photos for the week ending August 2, 2019

Your best photos for the week ending August 2, 2019



Anthony Albanese searches for a win in a lose-lose situation

Anthony Albanese gives his Caucus a sharp lecture about the harsh realities of this Parliament.

TOP STORIES

- ['Fight to get myself back in the pool': Shayna Jack vows to clear her name](#)
- [Judge jails teacher who 'manipulated and corrupted' young girls for her own gratification](#)
- [Mass killer asks public to fund challenge against historic indefinite jail sentence](#)
- [Controversial former far-right senator Fraser Anning facing bankruptcy](#)
- [Worried about your memory? Try these ancient indigenous techniques](#)
- [Jury takes just 10 minutes to clear Perth charity founder of stealing \\$120,000 from dying mother](#)

JUST IN

- [Tours of Victoria's first hospital for mentally ill cancelled due to contamination](#)
- [Tsunami-like wave crushes swimmers after waterpark malfunction](#)
- [Jury takes just 10 minutes to clear Perth charity founder of stealing \\$120,000 from dying mother](#)
- [Neill-Fraser murder appeal launched with 'fresh, compelling' new evidence](#)
- [Live: Top-four Raiders face Warriors in Auckland](#)
- [Australia's Emissions Reduction Fund fails to increase carbon abatement, data shows](#)
- [Lloyd Rayney faces being struck off as a lawyer over secret recordings](#)

MOST POPULAR

- [Smith saves Australia's innings on Test return with brilliant ton in Ashes opener](#)
- [No cricketer should have been able to do this. But Steve Smith is not a normal cricketer](#)
- ['Are you a working girl?': Doctor says she was racially profiled at regional motel](#)
- [Mechanic tells Toyota owners to 'give them hell' over potential faulty part](#)
- [Outsourced welfare agencies paid \\$600 per person to 'tick and flick'](#)
- [How a series of encrypted messages brought down a senior Rebels bike](#)
- [Controversial former far-right senator Fraser Anning facing](#)

ANALYSIS & OPINION

- [Don't call it redemption. Steve Smith's Ashes heroics merely allow him to regain our trust](#)
- [A hostile Parliament and a demoralised team: this is how Anthony Albanese will move Labor forward](#)
- [No cricketer should have been able to do this. But Steve Smith is not a normal cricketer](#)
- [Pregnant, homeless and 17: Karen's story shows how complicated families can be](#)
- [Parliament's most public display of love revealed alongside hints of its many secrets](#)
- [This is what life is like in a city where the air can kill you](#)

- Lloyd Rayney faces being struck off as a lawyer over secret recordings of murdered wife Corryn
- 16yo climate activist hits back after being called 'deeply disturbed' by Andrew Bolt
- Trump's White House is overrun with stink bugs, cockroaches and mice
- Australia's Emissions Reduction Fund fails to increase carbon abatement, data shows
- of murdered wife Corryn
- 'Fight to get myself back in the pool': Shayna Jack vows to clear her name
- When your family tragedy becomes a true crime book
- Judge jails teacher who 'manipulated and corrupted' young girls for her own gratification
- bankruptcy
- 16yo climate activist hits back after being called 'deeply disturbed' by Andrew Bolt
- Orthopaedic plate found inside 'MJ' the croc used to stabilise broken bones in humans
- English town evacuated after partially collapsed dam threatens to burst
- Five key takeaways from the Democrats' second presidential primary debates
- Fast and Furious spin-off is both improbable and improbably boring
- Construction industry cracks showing as major developer collapses
- I trialled the '100 per cent feminist' dating app and it taught me a lot about anthropology

SITE MAP

Sections

[ABC News](#)
[Just In](#)
[World](#)
[Business](#)
[Health](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Sport](#)
[Analysis & Opinion](#)
[Weather](#)
[Topics](#)
[Archive](#)
[Corrections & Clarifications](#)

Local Weather

[Sydney Weather](#)
[Melbourne Weather](#)
[Adelaide Weather](#)
[Brisbane Weather](#)
[Perth Weather](#)
[Hobart Weather](#)
[Darwin Weather](#)
[Canberra Weather](#)

Local News

[Sydney News](#)
[Melbourne News](#)
[Adelaide News](#)
[Brisbane News](#)
[Perth News](#)
[Hobart News](#)
[Darwin News](#)
[Canberra News](#)

Media


[Video](#)
[Audio](#)
[Photos](#)

Subscribe

[Podcasts](#)
[Newsletters](#)

Connect

[Contact Us](#)

 [Change to mobile view](#)

This service may include material from Agence France-Presse (AFP), APTN, Reuters, AAP, CNN and the BBC World Service which is copyright and cannot be reproduced.

AEST = Australian Eastern Standard Time which is 10 hours ahead of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time)