

## 255 Parbati

Parbati (Parvati) is the Hindu goddess of mountains, mountain streams, purity, nourishment, harmony, devotion, and motherhood. She represents the Nepalese women who practice *chhaupadi*, the tradition of exile to “menstruation huts” during their periods. Though the government has banned and severely criminalized the practice, the law has had little impact so far.

In cultures that consider menstruation unclean, females are often ostracized and forbidden to touch male family members, cook, or even enter kitchens while menstruating. Banished to cramped, windowless, primitive caves and structures with limited ventilation and no sanitation, many suffer from severe stressors, such as isolation, asphyxiation, extreme cold, animal attacks, snake bites, and sexual predation.

In 2019, a 21-year-old Nepalese woman named Parbati Bogati sequestered herself in an abandoned shack used as a menstruation hut. Temperatures dropped below freezing that night. Parbati was found the next morning, legs charred by fire in her attempt to keep warm, dead from smoke inhalation. That same month, another Nepalese woman, along with her two young sons, died from suffocation in a similar hut.

Each year, at least one or two women die while practicing *chhaupadi*. Deeply-ingrained traditional practices that endanger women must be exposed.