

THE CHAKMA OF BANGLADESH

The loud chanting of the monks echoed in the main worship hall of the Buddhist temple. Dozens of devotees were already thronging the temple to observe the Buddha Purnima which commemorates the birth, the enlightenment and the death of the Lord Buddha. Jishnu and his wife Rakhi approached the altar to light candles and to offer fresh flowers. The young **Chakma** couple bowed in prayer before the solemn image of the Buddha, praying for the wellbeing and the safety of their personal selves and their people. Bitter memories of the 2012 riots, where Muslim mobs attacked Buddhist villages and temples, remained fresh in their minds. As Jishnu and Rakhi gazed upward to the benevolent gaze of the large Buddha, both were reminded once again of Buddhism's key role as a source of security and in upholding the ethnic identity of their people.

The **Chakma** (population: 438,000) farm the hills that form the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar. An influx of Muslim Bengali settlers into their ancestral lands had led to tensions that escalated to an armed **Chakma** uprising in the 1970s. Despite a ceasefire between **Chakma** rebels and the Bangladeshi Army in 1997, tensions continue to simmer. The conflict has seen thousands of **Chakma** killed and countless more were displaced. Many women and girls were also raped. Recent anti-Buddhist riots in 2012 have rekindled insecurities among the **Chakma**.

While mainly Theravada Buddhist, a few (15.1%) **Chakma** have come to know Christ as their Saviour, the fruit of persevering prayer and outreach by Christian groups. The majority however, are still in spiritual darkness, not knowing Jesus Christ and the true path to salvation.

- Pray against the spiritual forces of darkness over the **Chakma**.
- Pray for God's intervention in the injustices suffered by the **Chakma**.
- Pray for an expansion of outreaches to the **Chakma** people.
- Pray that the entire Bible, as well as Christian media resources and literature may be translated into the **Chakma** language.
- Pray for the empowerment of the few **Chakma** believers to take the message of salvation to their own communities.

This is a series of useful prayer profile compilations to pray for people groups collated from various online sources. Please click on the links below for more info:

<https://joshuaproject.net/>, <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/>,
<http://asiaharvest.org/people-group-profiles/>