

# **Metamorphosis of Faith: A Genealogical Study of Religion in the Chakma Tribe of North-East India**

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## **Abstract**

The Chakma community is among the prominent tribes inhabiting the North-Eastern region of India. Descendants of the mongoloid ethnicity, a considerable section of the indigenous group reside in the Indian states of Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. While the present-day Chakmas are practising Buddhism, their indigenous religiocultural heritage may be traced back to polytheistic tribal paganism drawing influences from Hinduism. Chakma's assimilation with the Hindus can be substantiated by the fact that even to date, most individuals of the ethnic group claim Hindu names. Originally, worshippers of natural forces, contemporary descendants of the Chakma community have come to embrace Buddhism. The aim of this paper is to offer a genealogical review of the Chakma tribe from polytheistic nature worshippers to Buddhist practitioners. It seeks to analyse the metamorphosis of religious affiliations of the indigenous community over time. By doing so, the present study aims to identify the distinctive cultural and religious practices of the Chakma community. The paper further argues in favour of an individualist religious expression illimited by typical rituals associated with either Hinduism or Buddhism.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Religion, Hinduism, Chakma Community, Buddhism & Tribal Culture