The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (GPCR) is a major upheaval launched by Mao Tse-tung during his last decade in power (1966-76). The GPCR was a phenomenon without precedent or an equivalent in the history of Chinese communism or, for that matter, in any other communist movement in the world. The GPCR was officially pronounced on August 8, 1966 when the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted the famous 16-point decision providing the basic guidelines for the revolution. The revolution reached its peak during the 1966-69 period.

Though it is commonly considered that the meeting of the Ninth CCP Congress in April 1969 marked the official termination of violent struggle and the beginning of moderation and consolidation of gains. Generally, the death of Mao in September 1976 marked the termination of the Cultural Revolution. This particular decade was called the 'decade-long turmoil' because it was responsible for setbacks and many grave losses suffered by the Chinese people.

In any case, what is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution? To understand this, one should first understand the words: 'Great', 'Proletarian', and 'Revolution'. The first word Great implies the enormity and all embrassiveness of the revolution, the second word proletarian denotes the working class, which is employed in any communist-led or inspired movement, and the third, 'Revolution' has the connotation of a violent crusade against the established order. Now we are left with the all important term 'Cultural' which is self-explanatory. It is the remoulding of China's culture into a new dynamic and Maoist one. It is the making of a new Chinese man and a new society. It was the creation of a human being, whether he be a party cadre, a peasant, a worker or an intellectual, who was devoid of selfishness and ambition, but was absolutely devoted to the achievement of the Maoist ideal of socialism.
The Cultural Revolution had its impact throughout China in socio-economic and political aspects. The present study, however, is strictly confined to Chinese Central Asia which broadly constitutes Ch'inghai, Kansu provinces, and Inner Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet Autonomous Regions. This five regions are important because it is in these regions that the national minorities are predominant. They are situated in the frontier areas which are of strategic and military importance such as borders along with Soviet Union and Mongolian Peoples Republic towards north, India towards its south.

Further, the popular discontent of various minority people in general and sporadic unrest, in particular, among Tibetans, Mongols and Uighur Muslims in Sinkiang were expressed right under the nose of the Chinese leadership exposing the party's inability to satisfy the minority aspirations. Moreover, in the wake of anti-leftist drive in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe, there arose a need to rethink about Beijing government’s stand on the policies towards the minorities and the existence of minorities in these strategically sensitive areas had made their loyalty a crucial component in maintaining the country’s territorial integrity.

When viewed from its background, Hsueh-wen says, that the GPCR was a continuous development of the “Literary and Art Rectification Campaign,” and the “Socialist Educational Movement.” In fact, during the course of Cultural Revolution Mao pointed out that it was a continuation of the prolonged struggle between the CCP and the Kuomintang. This complex background makes the GPCR itself diverse in essence.

There is no unanimity among political theorists regarding the nature and goals of the Cultural Revolution. There are as many political theorists about GPCR as the number of Sinologists. Philip Bridgham says it was a ‘political power struggle’ (between Mao and Liu Shao-ch’i within the party); Robert Jay Lifton says it was a ‘revolutionary immortality’, Roderick MacFarquhar says it was ‘doctrinal illness’ and the creation of ‘revolutionary successors’; Franz Schurmann says it was the birth of a new political system in the form of ‘revolutionary organisation.’ There are others who feel that
Cultural Revolution was Peng Te-huai incident; an ideological struggle over policy issues, an ideological struggle between revolutionaries and capitalist revisionists; it was a crisis of legitimacy; a confrontation between Mao and the bureaucracy.

In contrast to the above backdrop, Deutscher says it was a reaction on the part of China to her international position at that particular time because China was threatened by the United States military involvement in Vietnam and its expansionist designs. China was virtually abandoned by her one time communist neighbour -- the Soviet Union.

However, there are some aspects of the Cultural Revolution which are not adequately explained by this 'external pressure' theorists. Had the Chinese been preparing themselves for a long war the emphasis would have been on everything that was best in China's history and tradition as was the case during the war of resistance against Japan. On the contrary, throughout the length and breadth of China the four ancients: old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits were bitterly attacked. Hong Young Lee puts forward a political theory of Cultural Revolution. He argues that the Cultural Revolution was a complex phenomenon and may be understood in terms of social background of the Red Guards and the inter-elite conflict.

The argument of various theorists amounts to a thorough reading of what they perceived as the manifesto of the Cultural Revolution. The decision on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, makes it quite clear that it had mainly domestic goals. In the light of the document, it is difficult to see the Cultural Revolution as a reaction to the international situation. It has to be primarily be seen as one more phase in the development of the Chinese Revolution which was thought of as a long and continuous process.

Mao Tse-tung attempted to prevent the Chinese revolution from degenerating into the way he believed the Soviet one did. His findings, published in nine polemics in 1963-64, were that the Soviet Union had suffered a capitalist restoration, encouraged by the emergence of a privileged stratum and a revisionist ruling clique. To prevent China
too from taking the revisionist road to capitalist restoration, Mao argued that it was crucial to train a new generation of totally dedicated revolutionary successors whose world view would be genuinely Marxist-Leninist (and by implication, Maoist) -- hence the need for a Cultural Revolution.

During the Cultural Revolution, it was a double operation -- the purging of the older generation of Chinese leaders and their replacement by a new generation whose revolutionary zeal would be enhanced by the very act of toppling the power holders. As Mao put it “you learn to swim by swimming, you learn to make revolution by making revolution.” On the whole, it can be said that the Cultural Revolution was basically a rectification campaign which had been brewing up for some time. Though Mao wanted to shake-up the bureaucracy, purge those deviating from class struggle and holding wrong ideas, the long term goals were the training of a successor generation in revolution by encouraging youth to wage ‘revolution from below’.

The first salvo of the Cultural Revolution was fired in November 1965, the major victims were revealed in May 1966. The most turbulent phase of Red Guards’ activity continued until December 1967. Prominent figures as Peng Chen, Lo Jui-ching, Lu Ting-Yi, Wu Han and Chou Yang were under intense criticism on the grounds that they followed an ‘anti-party’ ‘anti-socialist’ black-line. By the end of 1966, public criticism went against party secretary Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shao-ch'i. These leaders were criticised for upholding erroneous ideas like putting work, technique and specialists first without any regard for class struggle.

At the same time, in the Central Asia, the four olds were bitterly attacked and Maoism was imposed. The Cultural Revolution in Ch’inghai province started with the initial attacks of Red Guards on four olds. The minority customs and practices were bitterly attacked. The traditional products for minorities were no longer produced or grown and cultural traditions were denied through such pronouncements as they should live in houses instead of tents, wear normal cloths instead of their costumes, pigtails instead of turbans and they should eat and drink in mess halls. Their languages and scripts, customs and manners were condemned as backward.
The Cultural Revolution started late when compared to other regions of Central Asia and was confined to urban areas. And despite factional fighting among various factions, order was established and revolutionary committee was formed in which the Han army men dominated and contained no minority representation but later Ta Lo, a minority, was included as a ranking Vice-Chairman.

The revolution in Kansu Province experienced similar fate that of Ch’inghai with respect to minorities. The cultural relics in Kansu were destroyed and Maoist ideology was forcefully imposed. Wang Feng, the first Secretary of the Kansu provincial committee, was repudiated by the mass for his venture to sabotage the movement to study the works of Mao. Finally, he was branded as China’s Khrushev’s agent in Kansu. When reasonable degree of order was established the revolutionary committee was formed in which the Han segments in the army dominated.

In Inner Mongolia, the Cultural Revolution made an initial dent leading to the purge of the municipal party committee of the capital city Huhehot ostensibly its members were branded as national splittist and capitalist activists. The Red Guards attacked old habits and customs. The United Rebels and Huhehot Third Headquarters factional groups coalesced out of the many. Various persons were purged frequently accusing them for inciting discord between the Mongol and the Han people and for emphasising the national minority affairs and hampering nationalities’ solidarity.

Radio Huhehot stopped broadcasting local news and from early 1966 to mid early 1967 Inner Mongolia virtually disappeared from the Chinese media. Ulanfu, a high ranking member of minority nationality, was accused of backing anti-Maoists and Liu Ch’ang, a deputy political commissar of the military district, was accused of establishing a fascist dictatorship. On the other hand the means of transportation were effected. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous region’s revolutionary committee was formed after the formation of the preparatory committee in which the Han army men dominated and established order. Later a mass campaign was initiated to denounce Ulanfu. However there was no Mongol participation in the events of Cultural Revolution. Their resistance
was limited to sporadic attempts to defend their property, persons and customs from the attacks of revolutionary zealots. Throughout this period, the revolutionary activity was confined to urban areas. In sum the protected position given to the Mongolian language and culture by previous party policy constituted one of the principal bases of radical attacks during the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia.

In Sinkiang the Cultural Revolution started a bit late and the Red Guards attacked the four olds. Wang En-mao, the first party secretary, initially failed to limit the disorder within bonds and remained a favourite target for leftist groups. The Sinkiang Red Second Headquarters emerged as the leading radical organisation with the help of one army unit. On the other hand, the Red First Headquarters was supported by the August First Field Army resulting in major clashes between the two groups which in turn resulted in loss of men and material. Though Wang made efforts to limit the clashes, he failed despite regular mediation with Beijing.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union tried to capitalise on the problems of China. But, Beijing vehemently criticised these moves. Further, the Uighur governor, Saifudin, was attacked along with other anti Maoists. Finally, the revolutionary committee was formed and the army brought the region under its control. In retrospect the nationalities' affairs formed an important focus of criticism during the course of Cultural Revolution in Sinkiang -- radicals were regarded to have been more concerned with attitudes of the top persons in power towards the conduct of nationalities' policy rather than being concerned with the nationalities' themselves.

In Tibet the Cultural Revolution started off with the Red Guards' attacks on the four olds. The Guards invaded the Jokhang, Ramoche and other major temples. The Tibetan customs and cultures were bitterly denounced. Unique pieces of Tibetan cultural heritage were destroyed. In every home the Guards tore down the images of Buddha and ransacked the shrines. In place of the images of Buddha, thousands of photographs of Mao were zealously handed out. The prayer flags that formerly flew from Tibetan roofs had all been replaced by five star national flag and that walls and household shrines
now contained images of Mao in lieu of ‘superstitious’ pictures. Street names were replaced with new revolutionary names.

The ethnic composition of the Red Guards was predominantly Han. The differences between the party leadership in Tibet and the more radical members of Cultural Revolution Small Group in Peking were translated into further differences among Red Guards’ organisations. Factionalism centered around clashes between the Rebel Headquarters and Great Alliance. The First party secretary, Chang Kuo-hua, was being attacked but before he could bring about order he was transferred to Szechwan. Later, it was under Jen Jung, the deputy commissar of the Tibet Military Region under Chang, established order with the help of army and appeals. Finally, the revolutionary committee was inaugurated without the formality of a preparatory committee in which the Han army men dominated. In sum, the Cultural Revolution in Tibet was confined to urban centers and Tibetan’s participation was limited.

The main emphasis of this study is based on the following aims and objectives:

- First, to review the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with special reference to Chinese Central Asia.
- Second, to analyse the two-line power struggle in the Chinese Communist Party up to the Cultural Revolution.
- Third, the role of Red Guards and their factional conflicts during the Cultural Revolution.
- Fourth, to examine the minority cultures, enforcement of Mao’s ideology and survival of minority cultures in Chinese Central Asia.
- Fifth, to analyse the role of Peoples Liberation Army during the Cultural Revolution as the sole organisation responsible for order and security with special reference to Chinese Central Asia.

Chapter-I presents a brief introduction to the study.

Chapter-II gives an overview of China’s national minorities, their chief characteristics, their geographical distribution, language, culture and religious beliefs with contextual
emphasis on that of Chinese Central Asia. Later, the Chapter discusses the emergence of China’s national minority policy and the Chinese policy towards minority nationalities before and after communist revolution till the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter-III deals with the theoretical foundations of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and two-line power struggle in the Chinese Communist Party. An attempt is made to define Cultural Revolution. Later, the views of Lenin, Proletkul’t Lunacharsky and Trotsky on the Soviet Cultural Revolution are discussed followed by the Cultural Revolution in the period of transition from socialism to communism. The chapter also focuses on Mao’s actual theoretical premises of the Cultural Revolution and the two lines of thought in the CCP and also how Mao and his close comrade in arms, Liu Shao-ch’i, differ. And finally, the chapter concludes by giving a brief description about the Cultural Revolution, for the subsequent chapters deal with Cultural Revolution with reference to Chinese Central Asian Regions.

Chapter-IV deals extensively with the role of Peoples’ Liberation Army and People’s Militia starting from the pre-liberation days with reference to Chinese Central Asia and from communist take over to till the Cultural Revolution. Later, the role of the Peoples’ Liberation Army as well as Peoples’ Militia is dealt during Cultural Revolution 1966-69 with a contextual brief interception of the formation of revolutionary committees with necessary tables and special reference to Chinese Central Asian Regions. Equal attention is also paid to the role of PLA in the post Cultural Revolution from 1970-76. In addition, the role of PLA and People’s Militia is analysed with particular reference to Chinese Central Asia because the army, having its national character, one should deal with it in retrospect.

Chapter-V deals with the Chinese Central Asian Regions individually. A special care is taken to deal with each region, its geographical location, the respective major national minorities living in that region with necessary tables, their cultural life and governments in alphabetical order. Each region is also dealt with individually during and after the Cultural Revolution, i.e., from 1966-69 and 1970-76.
Chapter-VI contains major findings of the research and an analysis on what kind of action-reaction process was evident during the most turbulent phase of China’s history in the twentieth century. However, the main emphasis remains to be on Chinese Central Asia -- in particular the five minority regions under study. And how the Cultural Revolution affected the political, social and cultural life of the minorities living there.

Though a sincere attempt has been made to make the study as comprehensive as possible, certain aspects could not be covered largely due to the unavailability of data and the assumption that the absence of these aspects would not render the study incomplete. The present work confines to political and social aspects of the Cultural Revolution. Economic impact of the Cultural Revolution has not been given due importance as it was overshadowed by political and social impact.

Finally, with regard to the technical question of romanisation, there are several accepted systems at present. The most often used in English speaking countries is the standard postal romanisation for place names, and *Wade-Giles* transcription for other technical terms or proper names. The system has almost been followed throughout the present work. Both in the bibliography and the foot notes Chinese authors’ names have been cited in full, in all citations, but for non-Chinese names the last name alone is cited when referring recurrently to the same citation. Proper names occurring in the title of a book or an article has been cited as in the original.