INTRODUCTION

The revolt of 1857 forms one of the most important chapters in the history of the struggle of the Indian people for liberation from the British rule. It shook the foundations of the British Empire in India and at some points it seemed as though the British rule would end for all time to come. What started merely as a sepoy mutiny soon engulfed the peasantry and other civilian population over wide areas in northern India. The upsurge was so widespread that some of the contemporary observers called it a national revolt. The hatred of the people for the ferangis was so intense and bitter than one observer, W.H. Russell, was forced to write:

In no instance is a friendly glance directed to the white man’s carriage… Oh! That language of the eye! Who can doubt! Who can misinterpret it? It is by alone that I have learnt our race is not even feared at times by many and that by all it is disliked.

CAUSES

How did the Revolt break out? What were it causes? The main reason for this was the ruthless exploitation of the Indian people by the British. The British rule which was formally established of the Indian people by the British. The British rule which was formally established after the Battle of Plassey in, 1757 in Bengal, strove to fill the coffers of the East India Company at the expense of the Indians. The East India Company was governed by greedy merchants and traders who could go to any
was the product of the British system of education and they believed mistakenly that the British would lead the country towards modernisation.

**Disunity among the Leaders**

The main problem however, was lack of unity in the ranks of rebels themselves. Their leaders were suspicious and jealous of each other and often indulged in petty quarrels. The Begum of Awadh, for example, quarreled with Maulavi Ahmadullah, and the Mughal princes with the sepoy-generals. Azimullah, the political adviser of the Nana Saheb, asked him not to visit Delhi lest he be overshadowed by the Emperor Bahadur Shah. Thus, Selfishness and narrow perspective of the leaders sapped the strength of the revolt and prevented its consolidation.

**Military Superiority of the British**

Another major factor for the defeat of the rebels was the British superiority in arms. The British imperialism, at the height of its power the world over and supported by most of the Indian princes and chiefs, proved militarily too strong for the rebels. While the rebels were lacking in discipline and a central command, the British continued to have a constant supply of disciplined soldiers, war materials and money from British. Sheer courage supply of disciplined soldiers, war materials and money from British. Sheer courage could not win against a powerful and determined enemy who planned its strategy skillfully. Because of illdiscipline the rebels lost more men and material than the British in every encounter. Many sepoys, seeing that the British had an upper hand, left for their villages.

These were the main factors responsible for the failure of the revolt.
IMPACT

Despite the fact that the revolt of 1857 failed, it gave a severe jolt to the British administration in India. The structure and policies of the re-established British rule were, in many respects, drastically changed.

Transfer of Power

The First major change was that the power to govern India passed from the East India Company to the British Crown through an Act of 1858. Now a Secretary of State for India aided by a Council was to be responsible for the governance of India. Earlier this authority was wielded by the Directors of the Company.

Changes in Military Organisation

The second drastic change was effected in the army. Steps were taken to prevent any further revolt by the Indian soldiers. Firstly, the number of European soldiers was increased and fixed at one European to two Indian soldiers in Bengal Army and two to five in Bombay and Madras armies. Moreover, the European troops were kept in key geographical and military positions. The crucial branches of the army like artillery were put exclusively in European hands. Secondly, the organization of the Indian section of the army was now based on the policy of divide and rule. Regiments were created on the basis of caste, community and region to prevent the development of any nationalistic feeling among the soldiers.

Divide and Rule

This policy of “divide and rule” was also introduced in the civilian population, since the British thought that the revolt was a conspiracy hatched by the Muslims the latter were severely punished and