Perhaps minority studies outnumber those on poverty so that it is not surprising to see ethnic studies given the full-fledged status of an independent discipline in many universities. However, it is strongly felt that the need for a clarification of the term has arisen because it has outlasted its original meanings. At least in the Indian context, the Western models of minority studies have been uncritically accepted. This thesis attempts to revamp academic thinking on 'minority' by shifting its focus from collectivity to the individual minority being, his perceptions and awareness. Spawned by recent developments in the field of phenomenology, it is believed that the study of minority identity at the level of individual man is central to the understanding and delineation of 'minority' as a sociological category.

Part I starts with a brief and critical review of existing approaches to study of minorities and advocates a synthesis of phenomenology and Marxism for study of personal identity as a structure and process of social systems. Part II seeks to apply the theoretical perspective outlined in Part I by undertaking a field study of the two most salient national minorities of India, namely, Muslims and Christians in the city of Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh. Part III deals with analysis and interpretation
of minority identity of Lucknow and the process of 'being' to 'becoming' involved therein. The Conclusion raises the question of relevance of the term 'minority' as it prevails and its far-reaching implications for administrative purposes. With a limited purpose of defusing the minority situation some measures have been suggested keeping the Lucknow study as the point of reference.

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