The lively interest and critical attention with which readers all over the world have received the works of Saul Bellow, and the extensive research already being carried out on various aspects of his writings are proof enough that this twentieth century American novelist has carved out for himself a secure niche in the sphere of contemporary American fiction.

This dissertation entitled, "Saul Bellow's Concept of the Ideal Human Pair: A Study of His Novels," attempts to investigate a theme of topical interest, namely the male-female relationship from the conjugal point of view. The Introductory Chapter outlines Bellow's approach to life, and conjugality and explores the importance Bellow attaches to androgyny and spirituality in the altered social context--cultural, psychological, and economic--of our times. A classification of Bellow's novels is attempted on the basis of how the delicate conjugal relationship is jeopardised owing to the absence of those factors hypothetically considered necessary for compatibility, and one novel is identified as an approximation to the ideal. The First Chapter traces further the psychological and social aspects of marital disharmony and their implications and attempts a summation of Bellow's achievement in this respect including a correlation between the author and his fictive characters.
Chapter Two defines Saul Bellow's Concept of the Ideal Human Pair with special reference to *The Dean's December*. The importance of adjustability, accommodation and a flexible attitude towards achieving a harmonious married life is given due emphasis. Chapter Three identifies male ego and its corollaries as detrimental to marital harmony in Bellow's novels and examines their implications in the earlier novels. The assertion of male ego in the patriarchal set-up often leads to the women characters being treated as home-bound, subservient and inferior to men. Chapter Four traces the significance of female emancipation in wedlock in the subsequent novels where liberated women struggle for parity with men in all spheres of life. To free themselves from the shackles of matrimony and to be self-dependent are the dreams of most of these disillusioned wives. Chapter Five discusses the psychological and social aspects of marital disharmony. The development of one's personality is dependent on several factors including heredity. The fusion of two different individuals differently brought up in varying surroundings develops imperfections which call for tolerance and understanding. The Conclusion attempts an evaluation of Bellow's idea of conjugality in relation to his total achievement as a novelist.
As I preferred to put together the picaro-type adventure novels, I have not gone by the chronology of their publication in grouping the novels in Chapter Three. All textual quotations are from the editions cited in the Bibliography, the pagination being given in the body of the dissertation. A fairly comprehensive bibliography is given not only to draw attention to the fact that the topic under consideration has not been examined earlier but also to benefit future researchers. Since my dissertation has social and psychological ramifications, I have also listed books on sociology and psychology.

I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors. Dr T. V. Thomas, St Thomas College, Pala, and Dr Razeena Padmam, Reader, School of Behavioural Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University for their constant encouragement and valuable guidance. I can hardly express in words my deep indebtedness to Dr Mathew Joseph, Head of the Department of English, St Thomas College, Pala, who has been a constant guiding spirit behind this endeavour.

I thank the Principal, Baselius College, Kottayam for granting me permission to pursue this course. I should also thank my colleagues in the Department of English for their encouragement and solicitous cooperation.
I also gratefully acknowledge the services of my research centre, St Thomas College, Pala.

I wish to put on record my sincere gratitude to the Director, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad; the Director, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad; the Library Director, United States Information Services, Madras; and the librarian of Women's Christian College, Madras. I am equally grateful to the following institutions for their services: School of Behavioural Sciences, Kottayam; School of Social Sciences, Kottayam; Mahatma Gandhi University Library, Athirampuzha; and Kerala University Library, Trivandrum.

Personal debts are the most difficult to acknowledge in formal terms. Yet special and grateful mention must be made of my parents and husband for their constant encouragement for my research.

My special thanks are due to M/s. Laser Write, Ettumanoor for the word-processing and photocopying of this dissertation.

Kottayam
August 16, 1994. Verghese Leena