A major preoccupation of contemporary writers has been the problem of man’s survival in the face of the complex conditions of the present times. Man’s personal quest for self-esteem and self-affirmation, for self-sustaining dignity and for a sense of psychological stability in an inconstant world comprises the basic pattern of contemporary writers. Human survival being the core of contemporary experiences, these works portray the individual self, searching for and attaining higher levels of emotional and intellectual awareness of both the inner self and the outside world. The manner in which the self achieves such fulfillment offers insight into the range of survival strategies available to man in his exploration of the self - the self in relation to the family, the community and the world. Survival strategies refer to the external adjustments and internal adaptations that people utilize to overcome economic, racial and gender exploitation. When the self makes internal adaptations he emerges as an intellectual survivor. Unlike a rebel, the intellectual survivor has exalted notions of identity which inspires him to counter the dehumanizing mechanisms of life. The intellectual survivor has an inborn faith in human life, human dignity and values and is able to fall back on his own mental resources to tackle his problem. Saul Bellow’s protagonists transcend the obstacles in their path and emerge as intellectual survivors.

When I proposed to pursue doctoral research in American Fiction the one writer who appealed to me was Saul Bellow. Initially, it was only with a fiction lover’s curiosity about a Nobel Prize winner that I approached Saul Bellow’s novels. However, a deep study of his novels, the critical opinions of writers, various interviews and reviews have led me to the conclusion that Saul Bellow is a writer with a commitment towards man and society. His writing has universal and multidimensional character and he is one who confirms affirmation of life in an era of despair and pessimism.
The present thesis entitled “The Emergence of the Protagonists as Intellectual Survivors in Saul Bellow’s Novels” is a close study of the multi-layered consciousness of Saul Bellow’s intellectual protagonists and of the subtle transformation they undergo in the course of their lives to emerge as intellectual survivors. This study emphasizes Bellow’s wide reaching social concern shown in his novels and his rejection of the apocalyptic and nihilistic view of man and society. The novels that I have selected for the present thesis are Dangling Man, The Victim, The Adventures of Augie March, Seize the Day, Henderson the Rain King, Herzog and Mr. Sammler’s Planet, but for purpose of comparison and better understanding I have also referred to the entire canon of Bellow’s works. It has been noticed that the true subject of Bellow’s novels has been the plight of man and not society in general. How to survive fully in a tangled world seems to be the central question in his novels and Bellow himself being an intellectual, expresses his belief in the possibility of bringing order in life by thinking well which itself is a virtue. The thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter I is entitled Introduction and is divided into three segments - Growth of the American Novel, Jewish Culture and Heritage, and Life and Works of Saul Bellow. A brief history of the American novel has been presented in the first part of the chapter. The second segment deals with Jewish culture and Jewish heritage, the Holocaust and Jewish Diaspora. As a result of the Holocaust and the Diaspora, the Jew was perpetually haunted by a feeling of rootlessness and a sense of alienation. The most gifted of Jewish American novelists, Saul Bellow took up Jewish life, identity and survival as the major theme in his novels. The chapter further deals with the life and works of Saul Bellow. Bellow’s works reflect his appreciation of literature and his diverse interests.
Chapter II entitled **Individualism: The Desire for Self Discovery to Attain Identity**, traces the protagonists’ desire for self discovery in order to attain identity. The concept of individualism which paved the path for the individual as an independent entity has been dealt with in this chapter. A sincere attempt is made in this chapter to bring out Bellow’s assertion that the human spirit has the ability to deny the whole range of false values and reaffirm the priceless freedom, independence and integrity of the self.

Chapter III bearing the title **Intellectual Survival through Spiritual Enlightenment** is designed to supply the necessary information on the emergence of the protagonists as intellectual survivors through spirituality. The chapter attempts to establish the fact that it is his faith in God that redeems Bellow’s hero of his misery and directs him towards a life of joy and hope. Bellow’s heroes struggle to destroy ego so as to achieve high conduct - to have compassion, to reach others with love and seek peace which is the essence of all religions-Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Judaism. The point highlighted in this chapter is that Bellow firmly believes that man has divine qualities and he is created in the image of God and therefore he is able to return to society with his full knowledge that it lies in man either to create a heaven out of hell or hell out of heaven. This chapter also speaks of another aspect of Bellow’s writings - the influence of Indian philosophy and religious thought on Bellow’s mind.

Chapter IV is entitled **Intellectual Survival through Ethical Beliefs**. The content highlighted in this chapter is the fact that Bellow’s men are individualistic heroes who look at society to give a healing touch to their wounds by which society also gains. The chapter records Bellow’s opinion that man with all his imperfections is basically good and that the best part of man is found in not what he is but in what he would be and wishes to be. Bellow’s protagonists attempt to recreate the bond of
humanitarianism found in words such as ‘good’, ‘humanity,’ ‘dignity,’ ‘responsibility’ etc. The chapter ends with the assessment that Bellow’s fiction in general is moral fiction and it is always concerned with the question of goodness.

Chapter V is **Vision of a Genius** and it projects Bellow’s intellectual survivors with a distant vision of a genius. The protagonists’ journey through the mind as well as life makes them balanced. They are all explorers of their inner universe and they are determined to understand their human predicament. This chapter enumerates Bellow’s deep probing into the hidden corners of the human psyche in order explore the mysterious truths about human existence. Their high vision is their concept of humanity as a large body or a single soul. The protagonists of Bellow want to embody true nobility and they head towards intellectual survival.

Chapter VI is the **Summing Up** and it offers an estimate of Bellow’s protagonists as heroes, sufferers, strugglers, intellectual survivors and believers. The Bellow hero survives by discarding his false ego and affirms love, life, humility and brotherhood. This chapter confirms Bellow’s affirmation of life and his belief that we live in an organic universe where justice governs human actions. Bellow’s heroes personify this optimism and they are some of the most memorable characters in contemporary fiction.

This thesis is a humble attempt to express Bellow’s undying faith in the human genius even in the most unlikely of situations. The study further emphasizes Bellow’s wide reaching social concern and traces the fact that his novels are filled with a wealth of social observations. What impresses us most and what I have tried to bring out through this study is Bellow’s originality and consistency of vision.

This thesis follows all the parameters of the seventh edition of the MLA handbook for Writers of Research Papers.