This study has attempted to bring out the originality stamped on every aspect of the novel of the eighties. Originality is seen in the reformulation of old ideas and the discovery of new ones. The five major novels discussed in the thesis bears this out. The connection between the individual and his relation to history and political circumstances that frame his life is not new to Indian English Novel. However the originality of perception which the authors bring to this theme gives it an entirely new and relevant form. In a country riddled with communal tensions and vested political interests the individual can no longer afford to be a mere bearer or sufferer of history. It requires of him a determined even if unsuccessful, effort to combat the dehumanising forces of such circumstances. The novel of the eighties by interrogating history gives fiction the relevance for the contemporary times. It perhaps suggests the consciousness required in creating a new and more humane order.

The theme of the search for identity has been shown to be reformulated in the novel of the eighties, again in keeping with the demands of the changed times. The extension of cultural frontiers, internationalism and cosmopolitanism are undeniable parts of the new reality. The novel of the eighties is embedded in the new trans-cultural, trans-continental consciousness. Hence the former spiritual quest and East-West cultural encounters are rendered obsolete and is replaced by the search for a cosmopolitan identity. Consequently the new protagonists have been shown
to be cultural travellers in a search for emotional bondage rather than a geographical one. The protagonists of Midnight's Children, Shame, The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines and English, August are all on the move. While Saleem wanders through the subcontinent, Alu's movement is trans-continental. The unnamed narrator of The Shadow Lines moves between India and London. Their constant endeavour is to forge links with people belonging to different cultures irrespective of place. The new protagonist is a prominent departure from the traditional image of the fictional hero-unromantic, occasionally grotesque but still retaining a warm humanity in spite of the pressures of contemporary existence.

A similar combination of traditional devices reformulated and startlingly new ones discovered functions on the level of technique. As in theme it is this reformulation which has given the novel of the eighties its relevance to contemporary times. The oral narrative with its use of myth, episodicity and story within story is interfaced with Magic Realism, movie techniques and a new vibrant use of the English language. It is only such a technique that can expound the complex consciousness of a world functioning on radically different paradigms. This transformation of theme and technique has transported the hitherto insular Indian English Novel to the broader frontiers of the new literatures of the world. The works of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Upamanyu Chatterjee have taken the Indian English novel to the highest echelons of world literature.
The most valuable insight that has been gained through this study is the redeeming power of the human touch. Protagonist after Protagonist has been shown to impose a degree of control over circumstances which threaten to swamp his spirit through this fundamental human instinct. All the novels studied bear testimony to this aspect. Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* bemoans the absence of compassion and holds it responsible for his predicament. Omar Khayyam Shakil in *Shame* breaks free from his shackles of shamelessness when he shows compassion towards Sufiya Zenobia. Alu in *The Circle of Reason* is witness to the human touch and compassion shown by Mrs. Verma. The unnamed narrator in *The Shadow Lines* sees compassion in May Price and the lack of it in the subcontinent which results in the death of Tridib. Agastya Sens life in *English, August* takes a new turn when in a decisive action he shows his human warmth by alleviating the suffering of the hapless tribals. It is this aspect that significantly changes the lives of all the protagonists. The demands of contemporary existence do not call for any sophisticated intellectual solutions. The solution propounded in the novel of the eighties is startling in its simplicity particularly when contrasted with the complexity of its technique. Underlying the virtuoso performance and pyrotechnics is a moving emphasis on the necessity of supporting human relationships and a mutual human concern and caring. It is this factor that can act as a stabilising and binding force in an increasingly fragmented world. What emerges from this study is this insight that has not been sufficiently
recognised. In the surrounding gloom it is these novels that hold out a ray of hope through their positive vision. The emergence of this perception gives the novel of the eighties a unique relevance. Another valuable insight that has been gained is that the new protagonists in the search for identity are constantly on the move compared to the static world of the past in the earlier novels. Identity is established through interaction and association with other human beings. The new protagonists look ahead and move forward to come to terms with the complex realities of modern life rather than taking recourse to withdrawal or retreat as it happens in the earlier novels. The novel of the nineties continues this new tradition. This line of study bears further investigation. And it is hoped that this present thesis will have suggested the challenge of such a study to potential researchers.