Romen Basu's seventh novel, *Sands of Time* (1985), is different from his previous novel, *Portrait on the Roof*. It deals with internationalism but less at the level of human emotions than at the level of 'collective vision of mankind' represented by the United Nations Organisation. Through the fictional story about the United Nations, Romen Basu wants "to preserve a memory of the early days of the U.N. so that they will not be forgotten along with their dedication and commitment." ¹ Being a former international civil servant, the author gives an authentic presentation of the hopes, goals, frustrations and realities of the U.N. The author gives a two-pronged presentation of the U.N., namely, the internal or structural organisation of the U.N. and, secondly, its handling of political and other issues of the world. He is, on the whole, optimistic about the positive role of the U.N. in making the world a better place to live in.

Romen Basu weaves the structural and historic account of the U.N. with the story of some young interns who joined the U.N. in 1950 and involved themselves in the activities inside and outside

the Organization, over the ensuing quarter of a century. Naturally, the novel encompasses many dramatic events, issues and conflicts with which the U.N. has been involved during the tenure of four Secretary-Generals, namely, Trygve Lie, Dag Hammarskjold, U Thant and McCarthy. The three months spent by the interns at Lake Success is a "high point in their lives" in "learning about the Organization before returning to their careers." Among such interns is the central character, Tamara Olinski, a law graduate from Poland. Having lost her parents under Hitler's bloody hand, the Jewish girl joined the U.N. Ustum, an intern from Turkey and a staff accountant at U.N., falls in love with her. They get married but the marriage breaks down because of Ustum's 'in-built brutality.' Later, an idealist American, Bill Roper, falls in love with Tamara. Bill's mother refuses to accept Tamara as daughter-in-law on racial grounds. Bill persists and ultimately heals the scars on her spirit.

From the point of view of plot construction, Tamara's account forms only the subplot of the novel. It is woven into the main plot of the novel consisting of the exposition of the internal and external aspects of the U.N. Organization, its strength and weaknesses, its failures and victories, its role in shaping the destiny of mankind and the measures to strengthen it. The internal

2. Romen Basu, Sands of Time (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985), p. 2. All references are to this edition and the page numbers will be given parenthetically at the end of the quotations.
issues are discussed in chapters 2,3,6,8,9,17 and 18 while the international issues are discussed in chapters 1,7,10,12,13 and 16. Bill Roper's three-month trip to West Asia as a U.N. observer forms an important episode which is an integral part of the novel.

However, the author's 'obsession with his primary conception' results in his failure as a craftsman. This drawback has adversely affected the characterization also. As the author has made a 'cerebral' approach to the story in the novel, he has not taken enough care to allow his characters to grow by themselves. They look like "mechanical entities, working merely as his mouthpieces." None the less, the author succeeds in bringing to life the characters of Tamara, Bill, Uma, Goutam and a few others like Jaques, Zaraski and Al Stewart. They affect the reader deeply and endear themselves to him.

Among these characters, the fictional focus is on Tamara Olinski. As a sufferer of war, she wants "to work for peace more than anything else." (p. 10). She shares the ideals of the interns. She suffers from Jewish persecution complex as a result of her past experiences in Poland. She is shy and withdrawn and speaks only to those who go out of their way to draw her out.

It is in this context that Ustum gets close to her. He makes her "believe that life was beautiful and that no one should

remains behind a painful past." (p. 6). Tamara tells him that "she wanted only a few simple things out of life, such as the love of a man, which she could keep locked in her heart forever, and to bear his children who would grow up without fear." (p. 14). They are married soon but their marital life is threatened by temperamental differences. While Ustum is irritated to listen to "any more stories about Warsaw ghettos," Tamara finds him self-centred and that "Ustum's hidden feelings of antisemitism were surfacing now." (p. 31). Secondly, he expects sex almost every night and it is too much for her fragile body and mind. He even indulges in beating her. Apart from this, she is unhappy with the way Jews are treated as 'untouchables' in the U.N. Secretariat. She says: "In any office where there are more than two Jewish staff members the immediate insinuation is that there's a clique. No one speaks that way about other religious or ethnic minorities." (p. 31). She decides to leave the U.N. Uma promises her to arrange for study-leave to go to Yale for a degree so that she can get a lot of opportunities. From Yale, she decides to go back to U.N. but not to submit to the bully, Ustum. But Ustum has already resigned and moved to Texas to join an oil company. Tamara's return to U.N. speaks of her affirmation of faith in the U.N. Charter.

Like Monique in Candles and Roses who keeps away men from her way after her first love-affair, Tamara ceases to pay attention to men after the failure of her marital life with Ustum. Max introduces Bill Roper to her on Staff Day which also marks his
first anniversary at the United Nations. He takes his friendship with her seriously and tries to get closer to her while she is reluctant. Uma says, "she is not interested in marrying again and never to someone who is not Jewish." (p. 110). Tamara's sensitivity of her Jewish origin receives a severe jolt once again with the racial attitude of Bill's mother. Afterwards, she avoids Bill as far as possible though she is very fond of him. She tells him:

"I am happy in your company, can't we keep it that way, instead of complicating our lives?"

Bill replies:

It's not in my hands any more. Destiny has taken over. (p. 122).

Tamara confides to Uma her fears and dilemma in her affair with Bill. Uma tells her that "Bill is a dedicated man and he deserves better treatment" from her. (p. 126). Later she says: "He is the most decent human being I have come across. You don't appreciate him because he's so much in love with you." (p. 175). Tamara confesses:

I love him very much .... I'm so torn .... Bill is adorable and I know he will do everything to make me happy, but will it be fair to him? Shouldn't we wait until I can overcome my hang ups? (p. 176).

Uma replies:

You can give him the self-confidence he lacks
and his inner resources and he will give you the strength you need to come out of the Warsaw experience and one bad marriage. (p. 176)

Bill Roper understands Tamara's problem and tries to erase her Jewish persecution phobia by gentle persuasion. He assures her:

I know it is too much to ask you to have faith in me, but I want to make up for your painful past. I promise to try with all my heart and soul. (p. 143)

Tamara expresses her fears to him:

That's not the point, Bill. I trust you more than any other man. I worry as much for you as for myself. It will not work between you and your family, you and your society." (p. 143)

She is afraid that the "lack of common background is hard on a marriage." (p. 143). Bill is prepared to do away with his family to marry her. He tells her: "you will find on second thought that your logic does not fit." (p. 143). Tamara is still not convinced. She asks him:

What is it about me that fascinates you, Bill? I don't quite understand. I was married once, my heart is deeply bruised, my childhood reminiscences give me pain most of the time, war has left its legacy of nightmares, and now I find Jews are outcasts, even in America. I have thought it over very seriously, Bill. I am afraid I won't be able to make you happy. (p.144)

She wonders why he wants to bring her out 'from the dungeon of
Bill leaves it to herself to get out of her 'prejudices.' Tamara reconciles to herself during the absence of Bill Roper when he goes to the Middle East for three months to work for U.N. Troop Supervision Organization. When he returns, Tamara is at peace with herself. She tells Bill:

If only we Jews could behave normally and ignore the attitudes of others, we would be so much more at peace with ourselves ... you have been a wonderful teacher, Bill. I could not have learned from anyone but you that the one who tries to hurt is an unhappy person. We have to show compassion. How you make it real for me, not to be threatened by bigotry. No one really loving God would condemn another person. Since God forgives, humans are left with no choice. (p. 195).

Bill feels that she is 'just a few steps away from liberation.' He tells her: "I am proud of your transformation." (p. 195). Bill's mother tells Tamara that they 'can start a new relationship.'

The careers of Tamara and Bill in the U.N. are more important to the theme of the novel than their love story. They help reveal some important aspects of the internal and external aspects of the U.N. In this sense also the two characters can be studied together. Both of them share optimism about the U.N. Among the three categories that Bill divides the U.N. staff, Tamara belongs to the category of 'cautiously optimistic.' He is sure that

..... the whole world realizes that the United
Nations is not a useless ivory tower or a football to be kicked around. That it is, in fact, the most realistic place on earth for man's survival not only to prevent war, but to solve every kind of human suffering. (p. 107)

While Tamara shares Bill's view, she hits hard at the bureaucracy and discrimination in the U.N. in outspoken terms. First, she is critical of the racial segregation. There is a prejudice that the Jewish assistant director of personnel recruits only Jews over better qualified candidates. As the Second Vice-Chairman of the Staff Committee, she notices how much prejudice there is against blacks and women in the Organization. Though Lucille was the first black woman to graduate from Harvard Law School, it took seven years for her to rise just one grade. It is shocking that many black men and women with Ph.Ds are working as coders, library assistants or accounting clerks. Tamara protests to Bill:

How can we go on with a Secretary-General who does not believe in a strong, impartial Secretariat? The Office of Personnel is the most unprofessional set-up in the system, thanks to this Secretary-General. (p. 196).

While Tamara is for a strong labour-management dialogue, including the forceful demand for justice and fair play, Bill Roper feels that gentle persuasion will bring a change of heart. Tamara looks for a vigilant secretariat:

If the Secretary-General is not willing to convince member governments that the Secretariat
is not to be used for narrow national interests, the staff will have to fight to set things right, to build a disciplined civil service with proper recognition of merit and reward. (pp. 197-198)

Second, she believes that the international civil servants should be objective and maintain the spirit of comradeship. When she attends the Security Council meeting on Korea and listens to a heated discussion among colleagues, she "realizes that Cold War battles in the United Nations were polarizing the Secretariat." (p. 67). Tamara speaks of this faulty thinking: "The moment anyone knows you are with the United Nations, they come charging in, wanting to find out which side you are on in the war of nerves between the big powers. Whether the subject is Korea, or anything else." (p. 73).

Third, the heated discussion on Korea makes Tamara realize, for the first time, how seriously the staff are affected by world events. She feels that

The men and women in the "glass house" were not just nine-to-fivers collecting a monthly pay cheque. Their peace and happiness depended on peace and happiness for all mankind. (p. 69).

She ponders:

Would the staff have to adjust themselves to the realities of the time, or could they in some way influence events? That question, she thought, would continue to haunt everyone who worked for the Organization. (p. 69).
Though the character of Bill Roper could be studied by juxtaposing him with Tamara, he stands out distinct in some respects. Being graduated as one of Yale Law School's most distinguished scholars, Bill joined the United Nations with the spirit of "each person giving just a little more than he received to make this a better world." (p. 104). The United Nations became for him a symbol of that spirit and also a symbol of Bill's hope for mankind.

Bill Roper is not only an idealist but also a true internationalist. He joins like-minded people who reacted against displays of selfish national interest by the big or small powers." (p. 104). He makes it a point to attend all meetings of Staff Council. "In a year he had identified himself with the spirit of the Charter in a way few could match." (p. 104).

Bill's trip to Middle East affirms his faith in the U.N. and his idealism is tested in the field. He tells the General in the Middle East that his purpose is

...... to get some field experience away from the policymakers .... I want to judge for myself how ordinary men and women feel--the kind we meet everyday. It's my belief that if the politicians were to respect the will of the people, we wouldn't drag on with this mess. (p. 159).

He expresses similar views later:

So the problem is not with the people. But their leaders are something else. The heads of
Egypt, Syria, Israel and Jordan can never agree to any formula for peace. But if peace comes, people will welcome Jews into their homes.

(p. 164).

The next set of important characters in the novel are Uma and Goutam. They are "the Indian couple who seem to hold the 'interns' together by their warm understanding of the emotional and intellectual problems of each of them." Uma is a round and mature character. All her utterances and actions only show her independent thinking. As has been pointed out earlier, Uma plays the role of a mentor in Tamara's life at the U.N. Like Tamara, Uma's association with the U.N. as an intern helps bring out some of the internal and external aspects of the Organization. Mr. Hodge asks her to work on a special project to examine recruiting records to see if there are discriminatory practices in various departments and to offer suggestions to improve the system. Watching of the Appointment Boards in action reveals to her that all appointments are 'politically motivated.' The Russians are kept out of the Political Affairs Department. On the other hand, unqualified American candidates have made their way into the Department. She finds that the power structure is divided among the permanent members of the Security Council. Before every appointment and promotion made, each case is secretly reviewed by the 'three major powers' -- America, France and Britain. Uma frames charges against top officials of the Organization though "she knew that it was out of the question to get Hodge's approval for her to put in writing her views that the United Nations Secretariat was run by a

handful of policy makers, assisted by like-minded informers at all grade levels." (p. 23). Mr. Hodge is irritated by her report and tells her that she has only wasted her time in bringing outrageous charges. He tells her that the composition of the Secretariat is not important right now and advises her: "You keep your faith, young lady, that anything wrong in this Organization right now will change in the course of time." (p. 24).

But, as time passes on, she finds that U.N. administration is not living up to the standards of the Charter. She tells Goutam:

Mismanagement, abuse of power and position, favouritism, arbitrariness, discrimination, double standard, you name it, top management is corroded by all these. I began my career supervising everybody in policy-making positions. Compared with today's leaders, they were saints. (p. 220).

On the subject of how to make the Organization better, Uma feels that the Secretariat must acquire strength of unity and cease to depend on the Secretary-General:

Even though we think it's so important, the personality of the Secretary-General is not very crucial.... We have to stop expecting our Secretary-Generals to be superhuman. If the next one is not up to our standards, the Secretariat must be prepared to make up for it with our own collective strength. (p. 216).
This view emerges as the collective opinion of all the interns. Goutam analyzes her perception:

He envied Uma, her simplistic way of looking at things. If a line was not absolutely straight, it was crooked. She really believed that with a high-minded staff, the world could be brought closer. For her belief she fought without compromise. That was her satisfaction. It was the same with others -- Al, Jaques, Zaraski, his batch of interns. (p. 220).

Comparing himself with them, Goutam feels that Uma, Al, Zaraski had given their devotion and relentless effort for a better world, outside their jobs. In a way, they were the real heroes and heroines. Perhaps any one of them would have more satisfaction on retirement.

(p. 220)

Goutam is one of the Directors of Political Affairs Department. He is involved in almost all important discussions about the U.N. When the discussion in chapter 7 turns to U.S. war against North Korea with U.N. approval, Goutam says that the U.S. used the U.N. to serve American foreign policy and that the U.S. had gone beyond its limited purpose of stopping the aggression of North Korea on South Korea and tried to unify North and South Korea by force.

Goutam hopes for "an opportunity to provide a more rational and just international economic order. He believes that the
United Nations is the logical place where "the major challenges faced by third world countries can only be met through multilateral action." (p. 189). One of his convictions is "to make the Economic and Social Council as important as the Security Council." (p. 189).

Goutam feels that working for the United Nations is a unique experience. "No other experience could compare with working together with people from all over the world." (p. 190). He has had his moments of encouragement and discouragement. He explains his mixed feelings:

If the superpowers are determined on global war the United Nations could not prevent it. That is discouraging. But the United Nations has been effective in localizing wars within reasonable boundaries and bringing them to a halt in most instances. That is encouraging. (p. 190).

Like Uma, Goutam feels that the Secretary-General should not be made a scapegoat for the failures of the U.N.

It is not just the Secretary-General who has let us down. It is our members and ourselves who made it so difficult for the U.N. to function effectively .... We are always criticizing the West. Isn't it also time to ask if part of the problem is disunity among the group of seventy-seven? (p. 207).

At one stage, Goutam appears to be serious about taking early retirement. But later he finds himself in second thoughts:

For thirty years he had given everything he was
capable of to the Organization, so that one day he could look back and feel proud that mankind was getting along better with one another. If he left the United Nations in a few months he would not have that satisfaction. (p. 220).

He finally decides not to seek retirement but to join the Staff Union 'to revitalize staff morale'. In a moment of retrospection, Goutam modestly assesses his own career in the U.N.O.

To judge the Organization by a checklist of successes or failures could only bring disappointment. He lived with one crisis after another, do what was expected of him and that was about it. Nothing spectacular. If his superiors had credited him with a brilliant mind and outstanding performance he did not see that as anything unique. No one does less than his best in any situation. (p. 220).

Jaques, Zaraski, Lucia and Al Stewart are the other notable characters in the novel. But they are not intended to evolve in the course of the novel like the characters who have been discussed so far. Their purpose is to be active participants of discussions to throw light on the internal and external aspects of the U.N. and offer suggestions for its improvement.

Romen Basu employs chiefly third-person point of view for the purpose of narrating the novel. At times, it is used to the extent of authorial intrusion as in introducing T.K. Pao of the U.N. in Chapter 7. The author also makes use of the equally traditional device of memory digression. Tamara's Jewish persecution complex
gives rise to many such digressions. For instance, Tamara remembers her childhood and the events that followed her father's arrest in Warsaw. In chapter 14, she remembers the day of her arrival in the U.S. In another instance, in chapter 13, Tamara remembers how her family was excluded from social get-together in Warsaw.

Romen Basu also makes use of another traditional device of narration through letters. For instance in chapter 5, when Tamara is in Yale studying law, she is kept informed of the latest events in the U.N. through letters from Uma. Another significant use of this device is seen in chapter 14 where Bill Roper writes to Tamara about the events in the Middle East and his impressions on them in the form of weekly reports.

Romen Basu makes an extensive use of dialogue and discussion to present the U.N. in all its aspects. Mulk Raj Anand says:

Throughout the novel, the young and the old discuss the Organization's pros and cons. In fact, this is a novel of conversations, almost like a series of platonic dialogues.5

It has led to the author's failure as a craftsman:

Too many times he indulges freely in

pontificating. So, some of the passages sound like sermons. More than often, a sensitive reader will feel as if going through a document on the United Nations. Basu would have done much better if he had shown less obsession with his primary conception. Not only this but also it makes his style ponderous frequently. Many descriptions and situations seem de trop in the structure.

A sense of unnaturality sets in when "even lovers' banter and the billings and cooings are almost invariably interrupted by high-minded observations on the state, the world and the Organization presumed to be keeping it safe."  

In a sense, *Sands of Time* may be termed as a realistic novel as the author seeks to depict the U.N. with faithfulness and objectivity. He claims to report, to give facts, to conduct an inquest into the eventful history of the U.N. In their discussions the characters allude to real events and real personages of current history. Thus, the discussions have documentary value. George Watson speaks of three variations of the historical novel:

The historical novel is a kind of novel first, a kind of history only second. At its most historical it can tell of protagonists, events and settings that are all recorded in history, as in


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Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* (1934) -- a fairly recent phenomenon. Or it can set imaginary events in real settings, and with allusions, or something more, to real historical personages -- the classic mode from Mme de La Fayette to Scott and Thackeray .... Or it can, at its novelistic extreme, use history only as a backdrop and exclude historical characters, as Georgette Heyer does in her novels about a romantic eighteenth century.  

*Sands of Time* may be termed as historical-documentary novel as it seeks to discuss, besides presenting the internal realities of the U.N., issues like Kashmir, Arab-Israeli conflict, the Korean issue, Congo affair, decolonization, global war, human rights, apartheid and dictatorship. These issues are a part of current history.

What is the picture the U.N. that emerges in the novel? First of all, the U.N. symbolizes the highest value of preservation of life:

Using the natural resources of the world to sustain a better life for all people is what the United Nations is trying to do daily. (p. 112)

The critical role of the U.N. is to translate constructive human thought into action. The U.N.'s achievements are significant but it 

is realized that much remains to be done. It is imperative that the U.N. should continue to exist to carry out the unfinished task. As Goutam says:

Progress in decolonization, stopping global war, preventing massive death from famine, checking dictators in all parts of the globe would not be possible without a world forum or debate.

(p. 208)

As Jacques says: "Nothing in the universe has given more hope to mankind than the United Nations." (p. 215). In order to make it more effective, certain reforms are suggested by the first batch of interns at the end of the novel. The U.N. has seen many ups and downs. Now it is facing a different kind of crisis. Its moral leadership is bankrupt. The U.N. should set the highest standards in every way. Al Stewart proposes to form the Association of Former Interns "to mobilize opinion against wrongdoing and to arouse the conscience of the staff to take a stand." (p. 217).

Romen Basu employs contrast, conflict and imagery as part of his technique. First, the two Secretary-Generals, namely, Trygve Lie and Hammarskjold are presented in contrast. Uma remembers "Trygve Lie as a complete autocrat. Dag Hammarskjold was quite the reverse, of course. You couldn't have found a greater contrast in character." (p. 216). Trygve Lie had treated the staff as 'voiceless, meek subordinates.' His one-sided role on Korea had risked the very existence of the Organization. His resignation brought joy to the staff. Dag Hammarskjold was widely
welcomed by the staff, the Russians and the developing countries. He showed keen interest not only in political matters but also in the economic and social side of the Organization's work. He believed that the future wars and conflicts could be prevented only by the removal of poverty and hunger. His success lies in recognizing that productive and loyal staff was necessary to provide effective leadership. His intellectual curiosity, combined with his moral stand on all issues had an electrifying effect on the staff. He declared one day in the year as Staff Day. He said: "As Secretary-General he is the Custodian of the Charter and he won't take any nonsense from the member governments." (p. 102). No wonder that he was 'so loved and revered.' Thus, Hammarskjold is projected as the ideal Secretary-General of the U.N.

Ustum and Bill Roper present a contrast in their relation to Tamara. While Ustum is intolerant towards Tamara's Jewish persecution complex, Bill shows sympathy and understanding. Again, Ustum displays male chauvinism in beating her and demanding sex every night. On the other hand, Bill patiently waits for transformation in Tamara's attitude to herself and never imposes his will on her. Further, "Tamara's intense sensitivity and Bill's stoic patience produce a subtle contrast." 9

Throughout the novel, the author presents conflict between the ideals of the interns and the conditions in the U.N.O.  

While they are committed to the U.N. charter, they are unable to reconcile themselves to the various irregularities and discrimination in the Organization. On the external side too, they are concerned over the mounting armaments. They are aware that the U.N. is "an institution formed on hope but continuing in despair." "The members of the Secretariat look on at the gathering storm, helpless because they are civil servants and can't shape policies but can only carry out the decisions of the General Assembly." 10

There is a very sparing use of imagery in the novel. Yet, Jaques's use of organic, plant imagery to represent the U.N.O. is striking. He means that the U.N. should be looked after carefully in its early stage like a plant.

The United Nations machinery is not weak and the collective will is not threatened by self-seeking forces. True, there has to be a constant battle against narrow national interests. But if you plant a tree in a forest, do you just sit back until it is fully grown or do you nurture it, protect it, against the elements and use pesticides to fight insects. I'll accept it needs improvement, but I won't believe the United Nations is going under. A few ants cannot kill a tree. (p. 215).

The vast expanse of the novel proves to be a handicap for the author to make Sands of Time viable in terms of structural

unity. In the words of a reviewer,

Basu's is an ambitious scope, covering life in the U.N. from the days of Trygve Lie and McCarthy to those of Dag Hammarskjold, and U Thant, a period packed with events of world-shaping significance. And, obviously he has things to say about the way the world body has been run as the preserve of super-powers, especially the U.S., and the way it should be. But, the promise of the story is lost in the telling.

The reviewer goes a step further and says: "Basu's turns out, in the end, to be neither a treatise nor a novel." While it is true that Sands of Time betrays some drawbacks regarding craftsmanship, it is debatable to dismiss it as 'neither a treatise nor a novel.' A discerning reader could find out many things in favour of the author's creativity. To appreciate the novel, one has to look at it from the point of view of the author's intention in writing it, namely, to give an authentic presentation of the hopes, goals and frustrations of the U.N.O. Besides, Basu's intimate knowledge about the personnel involved in the running of the mighty bureaucracy and keen awareness of the human relations in the set-up stands him in good stead in giving an equally authentic presentation of the internal realities of the U.N.O.

12. Ibid.
Second, *Sands of Time* has immense relevance to modern times. V.K. Joshi rightly comments:

> Although Basu has not explored the human dimensions properly, he has been singularly successful in focussing our attention on issues that are important for the survival of mankind and should not be overlooked. Even this makes the book immensely readable.  

Third, as the fictional focus is on the U.N.O., it is challenging for the author to make a convincing portrayal of characters. As a result, discussion on various issues relating to the U.N.O. takes the better of character delineation. However, the characters are refreshingly human and realistic and take on elemental grace. As Mulk Raj Anand rightly says,

*Sands of Time* was a difficult novel to write because Romen Basu had to keep his characters human and not merely the mouthpieces of intellectual arguments. He has learnt, however, to inform dialogue with feeling. Uma, Gautam, Tamara, Ustum, Zaraski, Jacques, Lucia, Bill Roper, the officers in the field, even a wayside acquaintance like Cockrane and his daughter, Emily, are reflected in the mirror of the novel with the glow of radiance of concrete people living, breathing, hoping or in despair.

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Though this is 'a novel of conversations,' "the talk is natural, realistic and convincing." Fourth, though *Sands of Time* portrays the grim realities that the U.N. is facing inside and outside the organization, the novel is replete with optimism expressed in the voices of the interns. Optimism constitutes the strength of Basu's vision. The same reviewer, S. Indira, elsewhere in her review, concedes that "Basu, in fairness to him, anticipates the cynicism and tries to allay it." As a visionary, Romen Basu exhorts the mankind 'to eliminate hunger and outlaw the atomic bomb.' As an optimist, he dreams of a Utopia and predicts:

> When mankind realizes that human resources will outrun nature's gifts and technology will ultimately threaten humans, people will come to terms with one another. (p. 114).

It is these features that impart an enduring value to the novel. It stands out more enlightening than entertaining and more purposive than aesthetic.
