

# Communications to the Editor

Vasant Kumar Bawa has written as follows about a review of his *The Nizam Between Mughals and British: Hyderabad Under Salar Jang I* in *JAS* 47, no. 1 (February 1988): 163–64, by Karen Leonard:

There was a time when a civil servant in India who undertook research was referred to as a “scholar-administrator.” Those days are past. In the concluding sentence of her review Professor Leonard labels me simply as “not a professional historian.” She also finds that most of my work provides “descriptive material” on topics many of which are “familiar ones,” like the Berar issue. Familiar to whom? To a Hyderabad specialist who has read my dissertation, or to the general historian and reader?

She also implies that I have neglected significant Urdu or Persian sources in the State Archives of Andhra Pradesh, although she does not specify which sources. For the purposes of my analysis most of the crucial material happened to be in English. My intention was to place the entire period in perspective. Had I endeavored to reconstruct the economic history of the period by examining the vast masses of revenue records, I would have missed the wood for the trees.

I should have welcomed critical comments on the approach and findings of the book. For instance, did my political-science and administrative background result in a different kind of book from that which might have been produced by a “professional historian”? Unfortunately this kind of analysis is absent from the review.

Professor Leonard replies:

I am dismayed by Dr. Bawa’s reading of my review of his book. My use of the phrase “not a professional historian” was intended not as a put-down but as a compliment—the sentence goes on to praise Dr. Bawa’s contribution to Hyderabad history. And it follows that, by observing that most of Hyderabad State’s archival materials are in Urdu and Persian and await full utilization by a professional historian, I clearly did not imply that Dr. Bawa should have used those materials. I meant to stimulate more historical work using these rich and abundant records.

I described the book and remarked on the descriptive material and familiar topics (topics treated by others in English-language histories of Hyderabad available to general historians and readers) in order to point up Dr. Bawa’s unique contribution, his assessment of Sir Salar Jang’s intentions and achievements. My discussion of that contribution takes up more than half of the review, for which a word limit was set. I refer readers back to the review.