

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Europeans in India

Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama circumnavigated Africa to reach India in 1498. His journey paved the way for other European nations, including the Dutch, French and British. The Europeans came to India to trade for sugar, tea, cotton, ginger, pepper, and other spices, a blue dye called indigo, and jute. Jute is a tropical plant used for making rope. Eventually, India's Mughal rulers became puppets of the British. In 1857, British troops exiled the last of the Mughul emperors after an uprising by the Indian people. Nineteen years later, the British proclaimed Queen Victoria Empress of India.



Vasco da Gama

The British at first had no interest in changing the Indian way of life, but they eventually made many reforms. They outlawed suttee in 1829. Suttee was an Indian custom of a widow burning herself, either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, or soon after his death. Sometimes, wives were sacrificed before their husband's expected death in battle. Some historians argue

that the British exaggerated the frequency of suttee in India, but the question of its abolition became important to the Indian people. They argued that colonial rulers had no right to change Indian customs. The British believed that in making moral decisions, rulers must consult their own consciences, not those of their subjects.

The British modernized India, but many Indian people believed the British did not respect the Indian way of life. The British built the largest railway system in Asia, constructed roads and irrigated large areas of land. They improved health care and prevented many famines. Despite the improvements, many Indian people were not happy with British rule. They resented outsiders controlling their affairs and the harsh taxes of their colonial rulers. The British forbade the Indian people from trading with other nations. After years of often bloody fighting, India's many ethnic groups united to evict the British in 1947, bringing self-rule to the subcontinent.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. The first paragraph states that "Vasco da Gama circumnavigated Africa to reach India in 1498." What do you think circumnavigate means?

2. Why were the Europeans interested in India?

*3. In your opinion, did the British have the right to outlaw suttee?

*4. Why do you think the British built roads and railways in India?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.