

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION

Europe Discovers the Riches of India

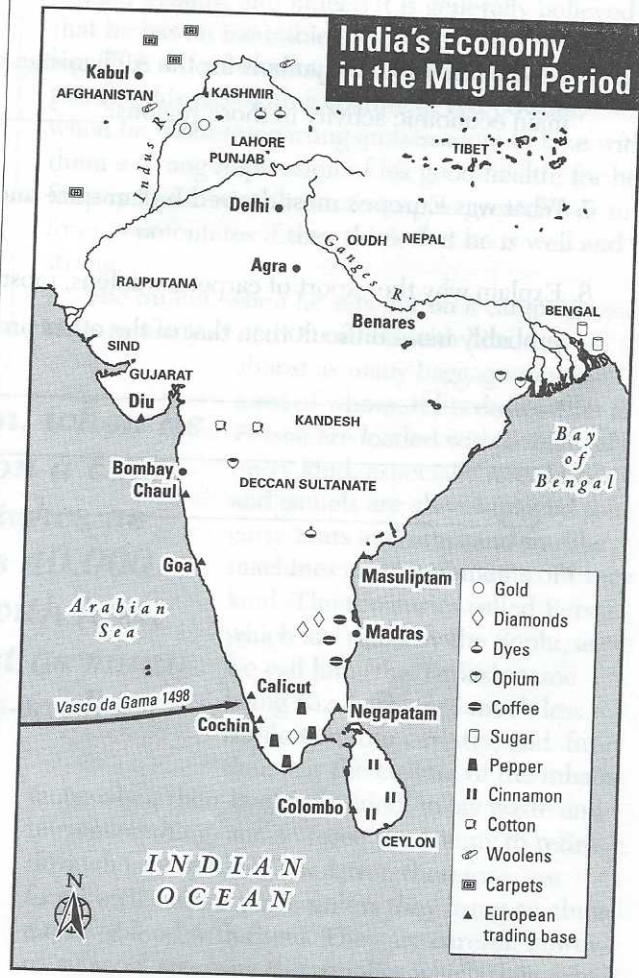
Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

In 1498 the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama was the first European to reach India by sea. In contrast to most outsiders reaching India, he was interested only in the country's natural resources, not in conquering territory. Da Gama landed at Calicut, the richest of several Indian port cities. He was totally unprepared, however, to encounter shops and warehouses stocked with such items as cotton textiles and diamonds. Europeans had underestimated India's sophistication. Da Gama had brought as gifts to his Indian hosts only striped cloths, hats, strips of coral, sugar, oil, and honey. These items had impressed the African kings he had met but now were considered an insult to the lord of Calicut. The gifts were refused. Da Gama was told that his presents should have been made of gold.

The failure of the Portuguese to offer the proper respect angered the Mughals, and so da Gama returned home only with stories of what he'd seen—and some spices he had bought himself. The spices, however, were sold in Europe at 27 times their cost, and the scramble for Indian products was under way. Pepper became the most desired of India's spices. Indian dyes were sought everywhere. Most popular of all were textiles—especially rugs—as weaving had been done in India for centuries.

During the 1500s Portuguese traders controlled sea routes to India and seized several trading forts along the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal. However, the Portuguese traders eventually lost their Indian strongholds to the Dutch, who took over trading posts in Colombo in 1641, Negapatam in 1658, and Cochin in 1663. Soon thereafter French and English traders took over Dutch trading claims. Mughal

rulers were still relatively strong during these years, and they never permitted Europeans to capture anything more than an economic foothold on the subcontinent. That power ended when Aurangzeb's death broke up the Mughals' central state.



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. On which coast of India were most of the European trading posts located? _____
2. What were the main products of the Bengal region of India at this time? _____
3. What is the only product found in both the northern and southern regions? _____
4. What was the sole major product of Ceylon, which is modern Sri Lanka? _____
5. From which country did Vasco da Gama come and where in India did he land? _____
6. Look at the product symbols for the Afghanistan and Kashmir regions of India. What was the main economic activity in those regions? _____
7. What was Europe's most desired Indian spice and where did it come from? _____
8. Explain why the export of carpets, woolens, most dyes, and gold from India to Europe was probably more difficult than that of the other products found on the map. _____

