

Name: _____

India: Colonization and Natural Resources

Britain wanted control over India's fertile lands and forests. It also wanted markets for its own products. British imperialism changed India's natural systems in order to mine its resources and transport raw goods and to more easily access the Indian consumer market.

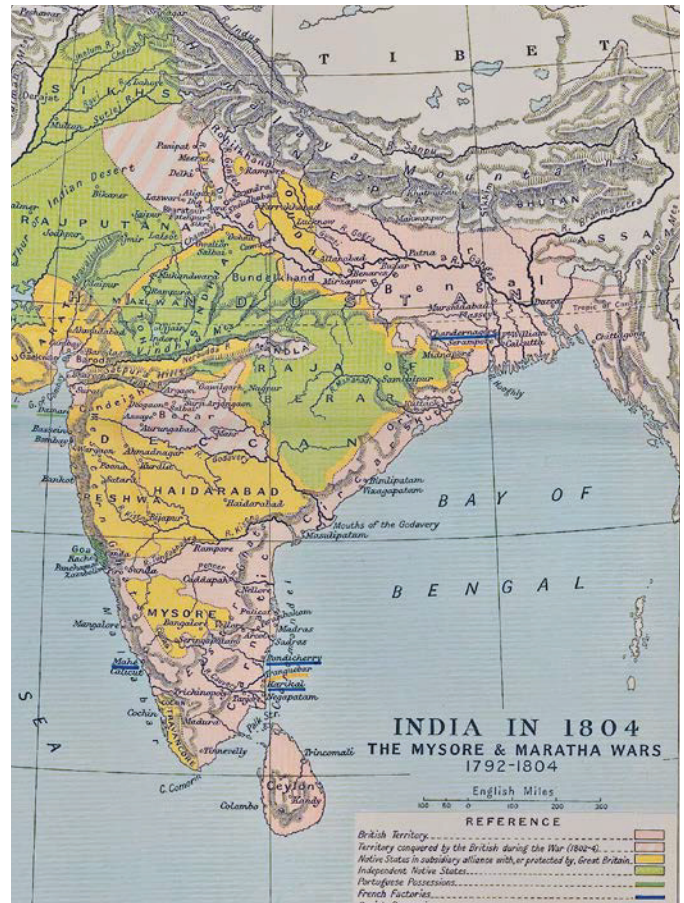
In pre-colonial India there was a non-market or subsistence economy. The people survived from forests and traditional methods of agriculture. But India's location in southern Asia bordered by the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal made it an ideal location for trade with Britain. Its mountains, rivers, forests, and agricultural lands provided resources needed by the the British Empire.

The amount of land used for farming increased greatly under British colonization. Almost one-fifth of the cultivated land grew cash crops. As farmers grew more cash crops, they grew less food crops. To irrigate the millions of acres of land used for growing cash crops, the imperial government began constructing canals. In addition, discoveries of coal and iron ore reserves helped fuel continued industrial development in both Britain and India.

Prior to the steamship and steam engine trains, British merchants found it difficult to trade in India's interior. After 1850, the British began to build many miles of railroads in order to reach inland resources. By 1921, Great Britain had laid over 37,000 miles of railroad track on the subcontinent. These railways linked trading ports with agricultural and urban centers.

Because railroads allowed easier access to India's forests, imperial officials began to encourage the growth of those species of trees they could export. They replaced the native trees

Indians had used for fuel, animal feed, and timber with trees for which Indian people had little use (for example, pine, cedar, and teak). Similarly, foresters began to expand cultivation of native bamboo to make paper, at the same time restricting Indians' access to it. Indians had traditionally used the bamboo for housing, baskets, furniture, musical instruments, and even food. The construction of railroads required large amounts of lumber from India's forest, causing rapid deforestation.



Pre-colonial map of India

Answers must be written in 2-3 sentences, or they will receive no credit.

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1. What changes occurred to India's natural resources and natural systems?

2. How did these changes influence the way people lived?

3. Describe the changes that occurred in the economy, society, and culture.
