Early life of Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama was born in Sines Portugal one of the few seaports on the Alenjento coast located on the southwest Portugal coast. It consisted of nothing more than a few whitewashed, red tiled cottages and was inhabited by, chiefly, fishermen.

Vasco’s father was Estevao da Gama who was a 1460s knight of the household of infante Ferdinand, duke of viseu. He married Isabel Sodre.

Isabel was the daughter of João Sodré who was a scion of a well-connected family of English origin.

Vasco was the third of five children that Estevao and Isabel. The five, in order, are:

João Sodré, Vasco da Gama, Pedro da Gama and Aires da Gama.

Little is known of his early life. Teixeira de Aragao, a Portuguese historian, suggests that he studied at the inland town of Evora which is where he might have learnt mathematics and navigation.

Around 1480 Vasco followed his father and joined the order of Santiago. The master of Santiago was Prince John, who became king john II of Portugal. He doted on the order, and the da gamas’ prospects rose accordingly. One of the tasks Da Gama performed quickly and effectively performed was when John II dispatched him on a mission to the port of Setubal and the Algarve to capture French ships in retaliation to peacetime depredations against Portuguese shipping in 1492.