A Brief History of India from the Neolithic Revolution to the Mauryan Empire

Timeline of Indian History through the Classical Age

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The Indus Valley Civilization (3300-1700 BCE)
The first confirmed permanent settlements of humans in India appeared 9000 years ago and by 5100 B.C.E., people in the Indus Valley were farming and establishing permanent settlements.

The Indus River Valley Civilization was the first civilization in India. It developed along the Indus River on the Indo-Gangetic Plain. The civilization was well-known for sophisticated cities like Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro that included a grid street pattern and drainage systems. The Indus Civilization may have had a population of over five million. Over 2500 cities and settlements have been found. Around the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., the Indus River basin dried up, and the sites were abandoned.

Vedic Civilization and Hinduism (1500 BCE- 320 BCE)
After the fall of the Indus River Valley civilization, new settlements called the Vedic Civilization took root in India. Some scholars believe that the people who founded these civilizations migrated into India from the northwest. Several small kingdoms and tribes, which were often at war with each other, merged to form a few large ones.

The belief system that dominates India today, Hinduism, developed at this time. The most important texts of Hinduism including the Vedas and the Mahabharata (a part of which is called the Bhagavad Gita) were written down during the Vedic Period after being passed down orally through generations.

The Mahajanapadas
The Mahajanapadas were the sixteen most powerful kingdoms and republics of the era, located mainly across the fertile Ganges River plains, however there were a number of smaller kingdoms stretching the length and breadth of India that also existed during the late Vedic period. These kingdoms existed until the Maurya Empire unified much of India in 320 BCE.

Buddhism
In 537 B.C.E., another major belief system, named Buddhism, was founded by a prince named Siddhartha Gautama (later known as “Buddha”) in India. Buddhism is related to Hinduism but rejects many of Hinduism’s most important beliefs. Buddhism was embraced by the Maurya Empire and spread throughout Asia.
Directions: Answer the questions below using both the document on the back and your knowledge of global history. Use complete sentences where indicated.

1. Humans starting to farm and establish permanent settlements in India around 5100 BCE was part of the ______________________ Revolution.

2. Evidence of sophisticated cities in the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations include there use of ______________________ and ______________________.

3. Why would sites in the Indus River basin be abandoned once they dried up?

4. Why would the Vedic civilizations be considered good examples of cultural diffusion?

5. What did the Maurya Empire accomplish during the 4th century BCE?

6. According to the document Buddhism is related to Hinduism but rejected many of Hinduism’s most important beliefs.
   a. Give one example of how Buddhism is similar to Hinduism.

   b. Give one example of a Hindu belief that was rejected by Buddhism.