

CURSIVE

WRITING BOOK

THE 22
SCHEDULED LANGUAGES
OF INDIA



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INTRODUCTION

India is a land of myriad cultures, linguistic diversity and traditions. Each state of this country reflects the age-old elements of socio-cultural significance through its distinct languages. Besides being a medium of expression, language also plays a pivotal role in identity formation. The idea of forming the Indian states on the basis of linguistic prominence is unique and remarkable. Several dialects and scripts associated with these languages are considered instrumental in making India a land of linguistic diversity. A popular proverb represents India's linguistic diversity rather well: *Kos-kos par badle paani, chaar kos par baani*, meaning the language spoken in India changes every few kilometres, just like the taste of the water.

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India is celebrating the Festival of Libraries 2023 with the aim to promote conversations on the development and digitisation of libraries across India. As part of this initiative, the Ministry of Culture has introduced this 'Cursive Writing Book' to popularise Indian languages and scripts.

The idea behind this book is to nurture the enthusiasm of future generations, encouraging them to learn, read and identify scripts from different languages and literature of the country. This Cursive Writing Book focuses on introducing India through its rich heritage of 22 scheduled languages as per the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, its dialects and scripts to promote the idea of 'Ek Bharat Shresht Bharat'. The book contains practice pages for the alphabets of each of the 22 languages along with information on the origin and history of these languages.

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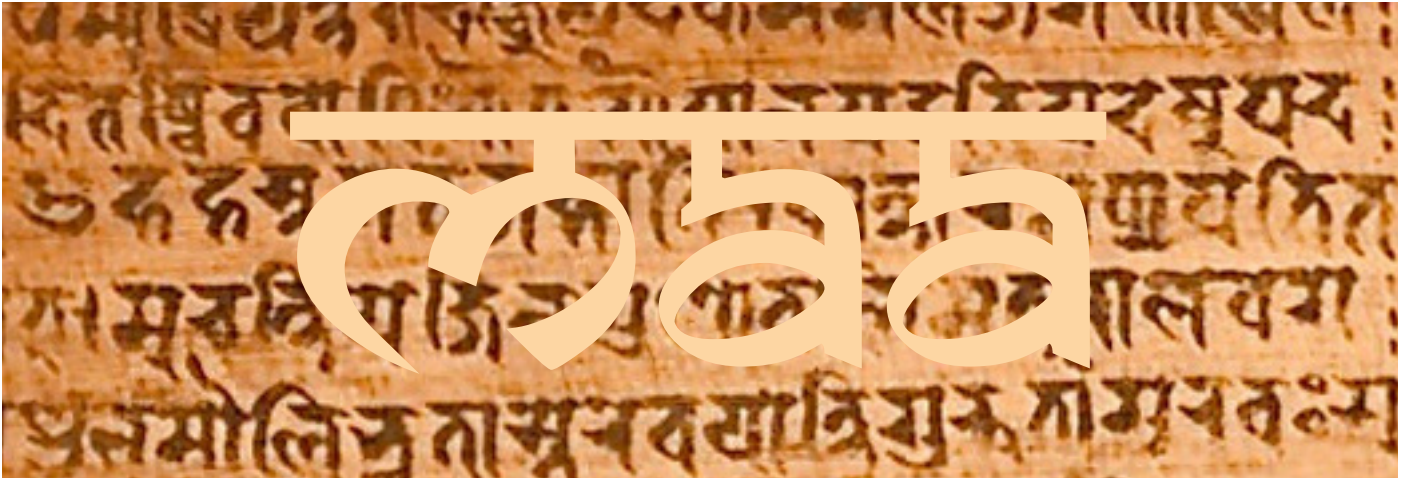
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Words, more than just communicating, often hold great significance in reflecting a society's deep emotions and cultural nuances. In languages, one such word that encompasses love and warmth is 'Maa' (Mother)

From the moment babies begin to explore their world, *Maa* often becomes their first utterance. It is a word of trust, safety, and the beginning of a lifelong connection. Yet, 'Maa' extends its meaning beyond the realm of individual mothers. In the broader context, it is also used to refer to the motherland, India. Just as a child seeks solace in their mother's embrace, Indians find a deep sense of belonging, identity, and protection in the motherland. The word 'Maa' encapsulates the profound emotions associated with one's homeland, evoking patriotism, pride, and an unbreakable bond with the country.


As languages shift across the geography of India, the word for 'Maa' transforms. From 'Mouj' in Kashmiri to 'Āmmā' in Malayalam, and *Walaḍā* in Sindhi to 'Bou' in Odia, each language brings its own unique set of words, grammar, and syntax. However, the power of this word lies in its ability to communicate beyond the confines of language itself. It is a testament to the universality of the mother-child relationship and the deep-rooted connection that transcends linguistic barriers.

Take a look at the adjoining page, with the regional terms for *Maa* in 22 scheduled languages listed in the Indian Constitution. This visual identification of *Maa* instills a deep sense of belonging and connection even with the diverse vocabulary found across the nation.

NOTE

1. For the purpose of basic identification of vernacular scripts, this book contains only the vowels and consonants from the 22 scheduled languages of the constitution of India.
2. Many of these languages are written in multiple scripts. However, the practice papers of this book include the most widely recognized script of each language. They are:

S.No.	Languages	Script
1.	Assamese	Assamese
2.	Bengali / Bangla	Bengali
3.	Bodo	Devanagari
4.	Dogri	Dogri
5.	Gujarati	Gujarati
6.	Hindi	Devanagari
7.	Kannada	Kannada
8.	Kashmiri	Sharada
9.	Konkani	Devanagari
10.	Maithili	Mithilakshara
11.	Malayalam	Malayalam
12.	Manipuri	Meitei
13.	Marathi	Modi
14.	Nepali	Newari
15.	Odia	Odia
16.	Punjabi	Gurmukhi
17.	Sanskrit	Devanagari
18.	Santhali	OI Chiki
19.	Sindhi	Khudawadi
20.	Tamil	Tamil
21.	Telugu	Telugu
22.	Urdu	Urdu



LANGUAGES INCLUDED IN THE
EIGHTH SCHEDULE OF THE
INDIAN CONSTITUTION



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|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Assamese | 12. Manipuri |
| 2. Bengali | 13. Marathi |
| 3. Bodo | 14. Nepali |
| 4. Dogri | 15. Odia |
| 5. Gujarati | 16. Punjabi |
| 6. Hindi | 17. Sanskrit |
| 7. Kannada | 18. Santhali |
| 8. Kashmiri | 19. Sindhi |
| 9. Konkani | 20. Tamil |
| 10. Maithili | 21. Telugu |
| 11. Malayalam | 22. Urdu |

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ASSAMESE

Background Image: **GAMOSA**
(Textile tradition of Assam)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Assamese or *Axomiya* is an Indo-Aryan language that reportedly evolved before the 7th century CE from the Magadhi Prakrit language. It is said to have been derived from the *Kamrupi* dialect of the Prakrit language. *Assamese* script has evolved from the ancient Indian script of '*Brahmi*'. *Brahmi* had various classes, and *Assamese* is believed to have originated from the *Gupta Brahmi* Script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Assamese is the official language of Assam. According to the 2011 census, Assamese speakers comprise 48% of the state population. However, it is also spoken variably across the northeast. Assamese is one of the 22 official languages of India and was made part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1950. The currently prevalent Assamese language has its roots in the Sivasagar dialect of Eastern Assam.

DIALECTS

The Assamese language mainly consists of four dialect groups used across the state of Assam. The Eastern Assamese dialects spoken in the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur. The Central Assamese group of dialects spoken primarily in the Nagaon and Morigaon districts. The Kamrupi group of dialects spoken in the districts of Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Darrang, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. The Goalparia group of dialects spoken primarily in the Dhubri and Goalpara districts.

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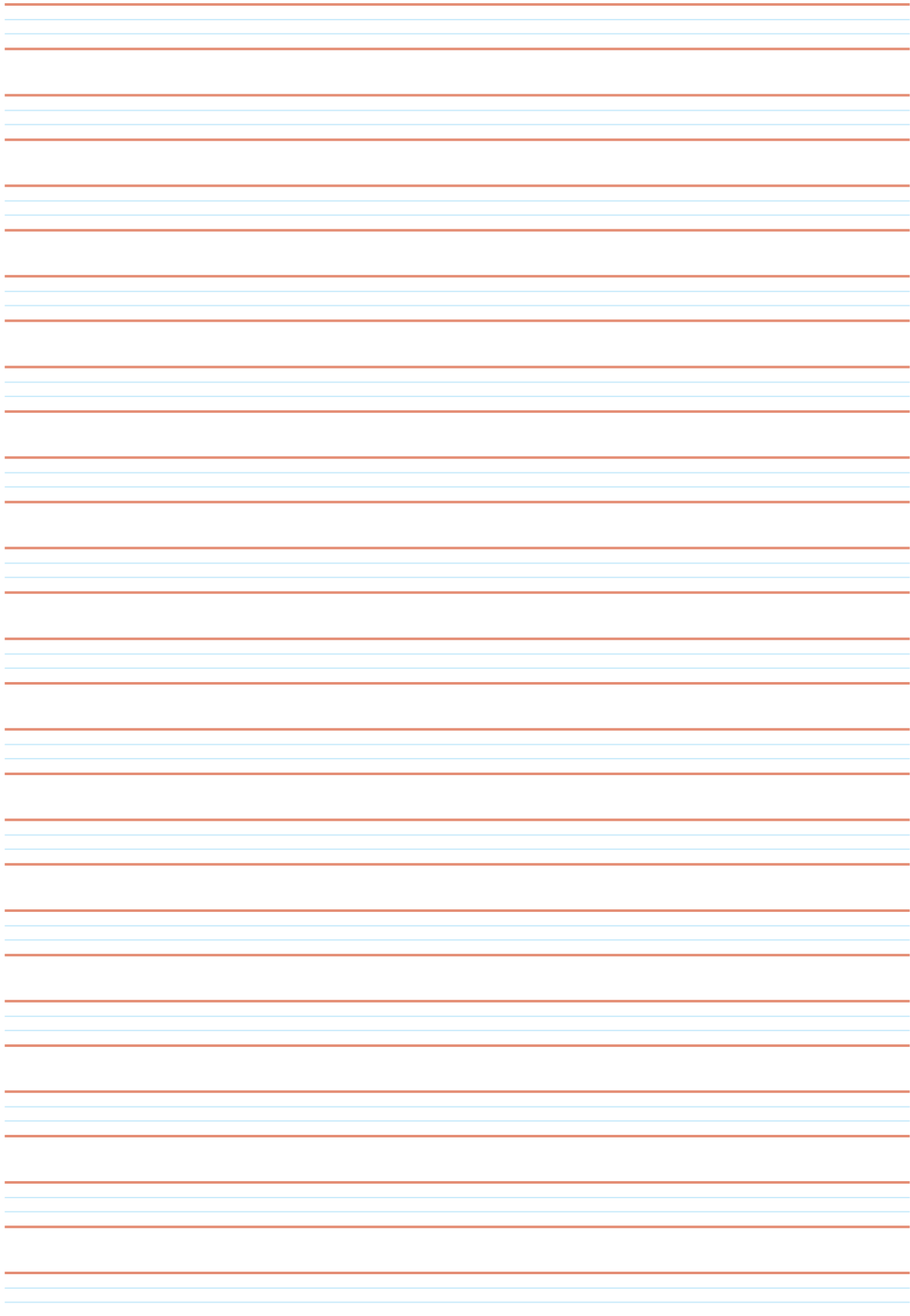
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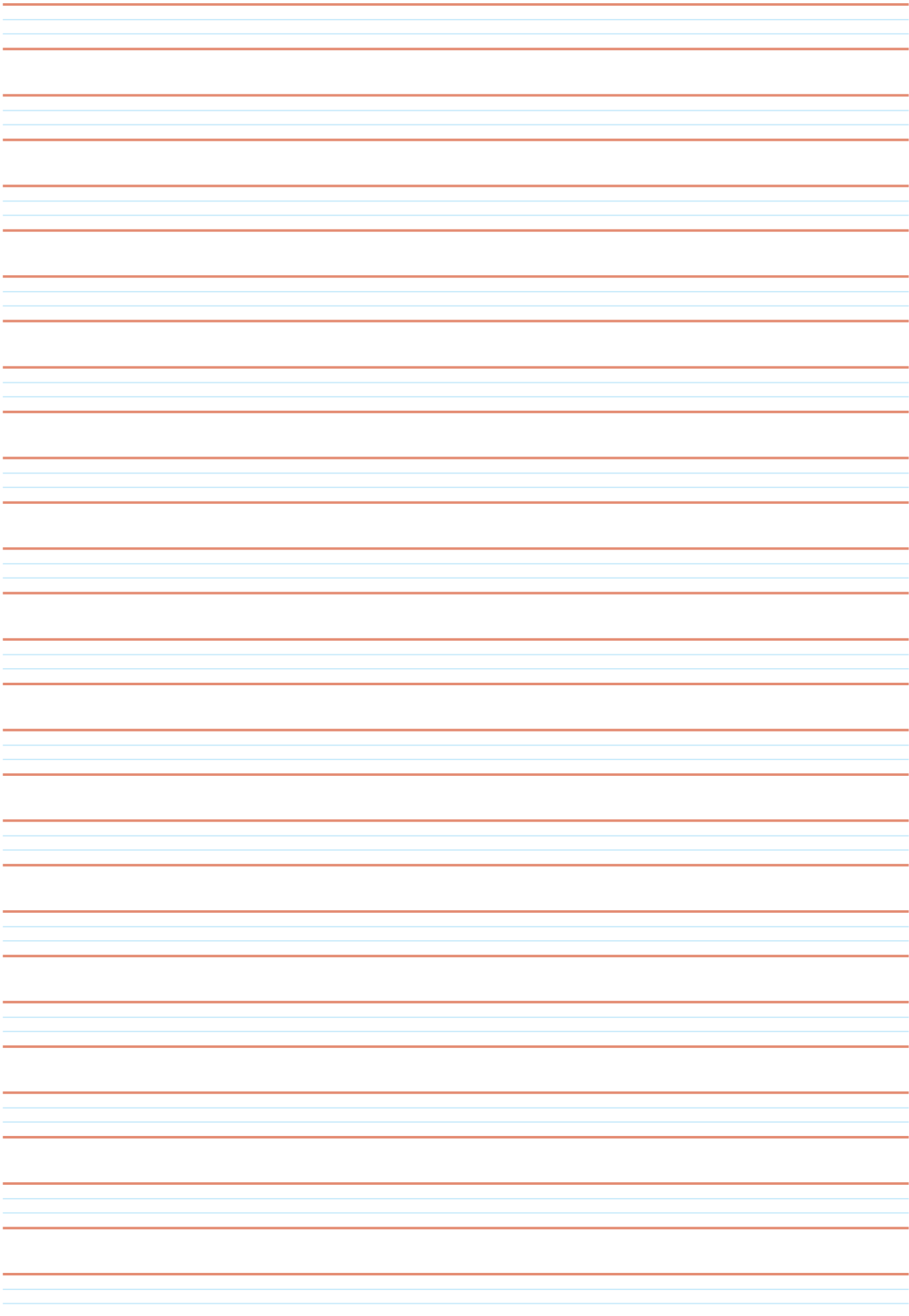
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BANGLA

Background Image: **JAMDANI**
(Textile tradition of West Bengal)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Bangla is an Indo-Aryan language that developed as a successor to *Magadhi Apabhramsa*. The *Bangla* script has been derived from *Brahmi*, an ancient Indian script, which was written from left to right. It is believed that a dialect of the language, colloquially referred to as ‘Old Bangla’ was spoken around 1000 CE. Around 1300 CE, a variation of the language was spoken in the region of Bengal, which was heavily influenced by Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. It is in the 17th and 18th centuries that the modern form of the language prevalent today, emerged.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

There exist a large number of speakers of the language across the world. In India alone, it is widely spoken in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha, Delhi and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Bangla is one of the 22 official languages of India and was made a part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1950. Apart from West Bengal, it has also been declared as one of the official languages of Jharkhand. Moreover, it is the national language of Bangladesh and also an official language in the African country of Sierra Leone. It is the seventh most spoken language in the entire world.

DIALECTS

Bangla is commonly divided into two dialects, denoting geographical regions. They are *ghoti* (predominantly spoken in West Bengal) and *bangal* (predominantly spoken in Bangladesh). There is a strong sense of diglossia in the language - the *shuddha bhasa* is the formal language, which is heavily derived from Sanskrit, while the *chalit bhasa* is the standardized colloquial tongue.

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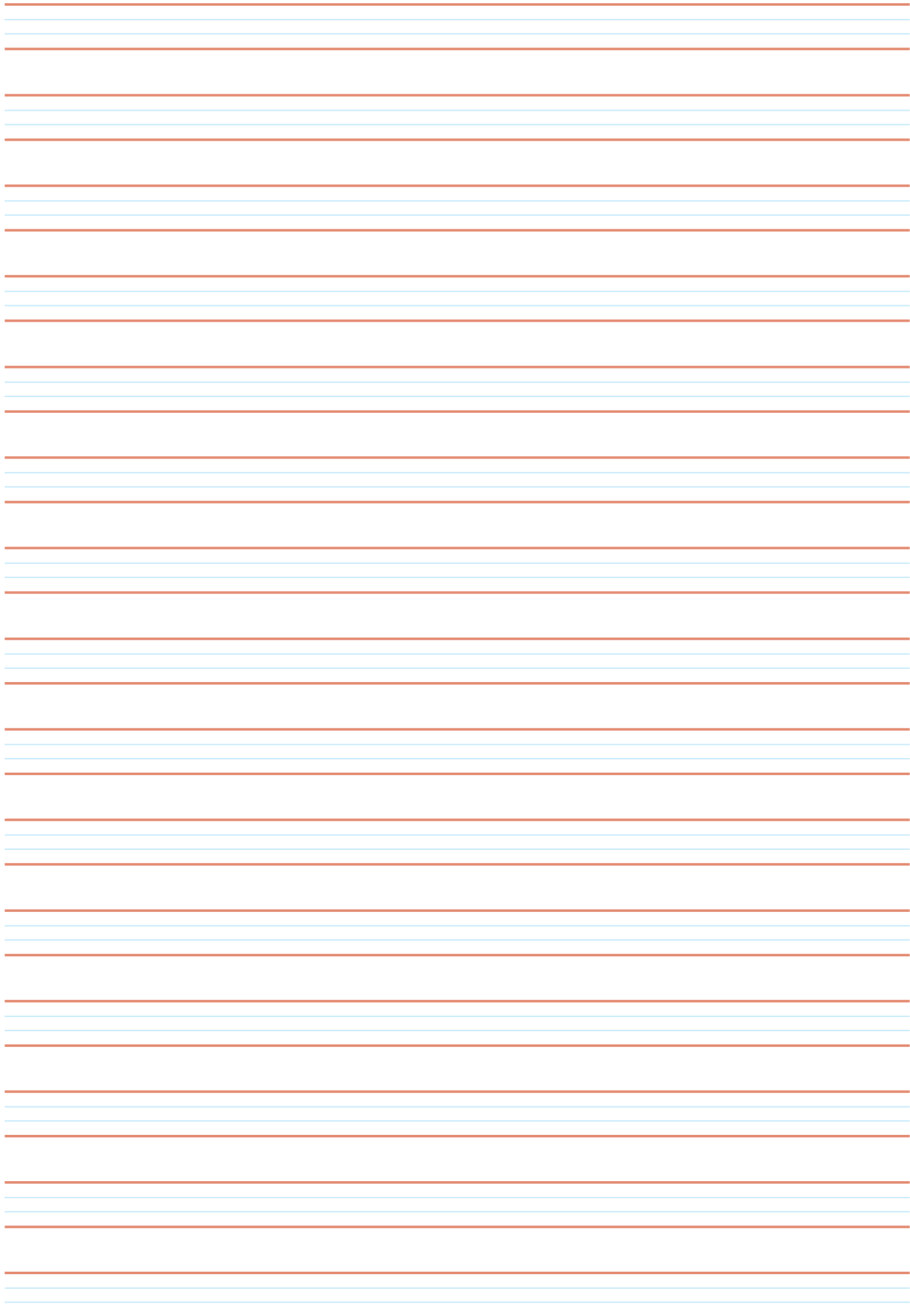
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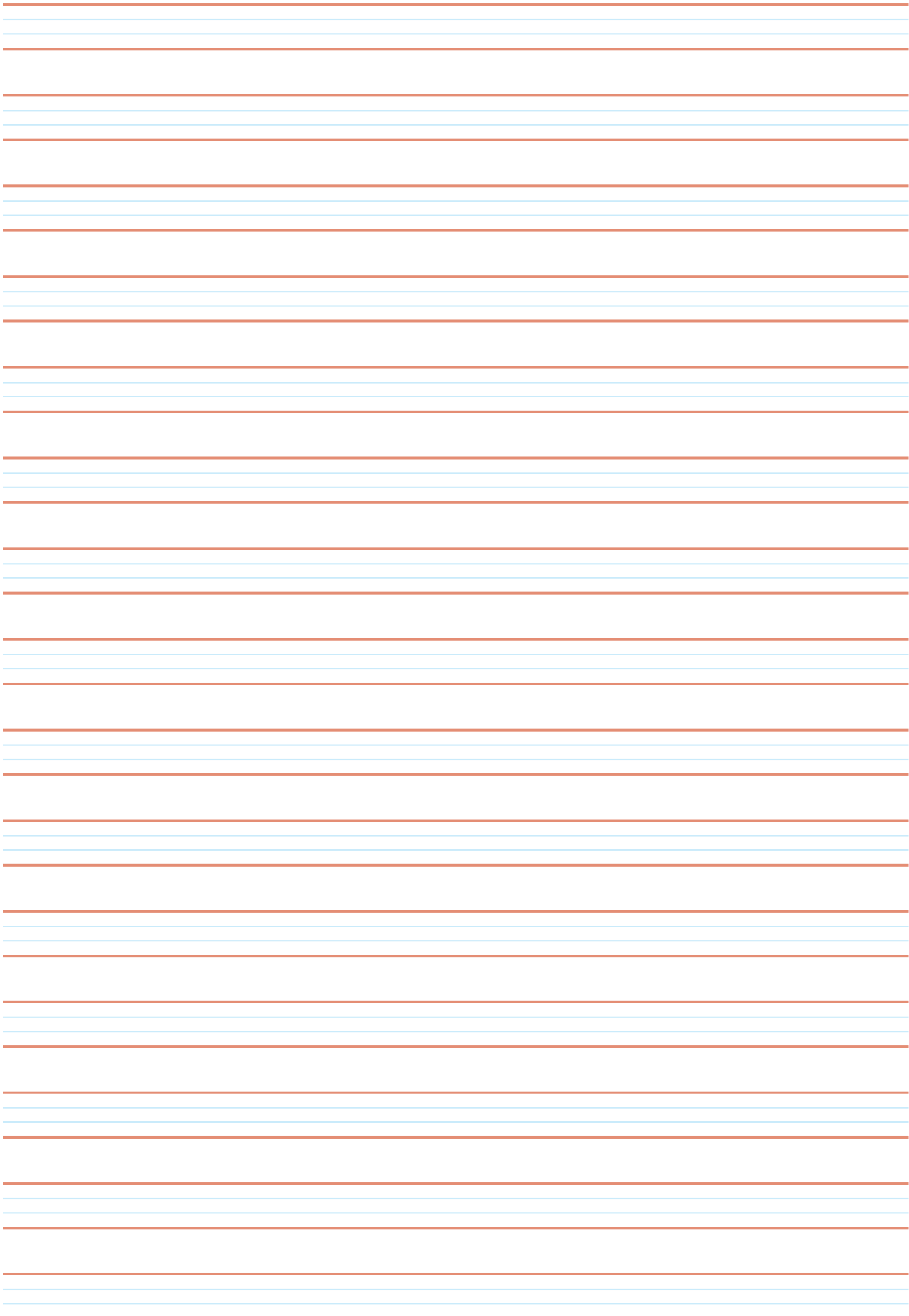
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BODO

Background Image: **TRADITIONAL BODO SCARF**
(Textile tradition of Assam)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Bodo language is a part of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Initially, it was written using the *Latin (Roman)* script. However, in recent years it has changed to the *Devanagari* script. The language resembles other dialects such as *Garo, Tiwa, Dimasa, Rabha, Kokoborok, and Bru (Reang)*.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Bodo language is mostly spoken by the Bodo tribe residing in parts of Assam. But there are Bodo speakers residing in West Bengal, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. A small section of the population in neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan also speak the language. It attained the status of an official language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 2003. Further in 2021, the Bodo language became the Associate Official Language of Assam.

DIALECTS

While there exist different dialects of Bodo, it can largely be divided into three categories of dialects - Western Bodo dialect, Eastern Bodo dialect and Southern Bodo dialect.

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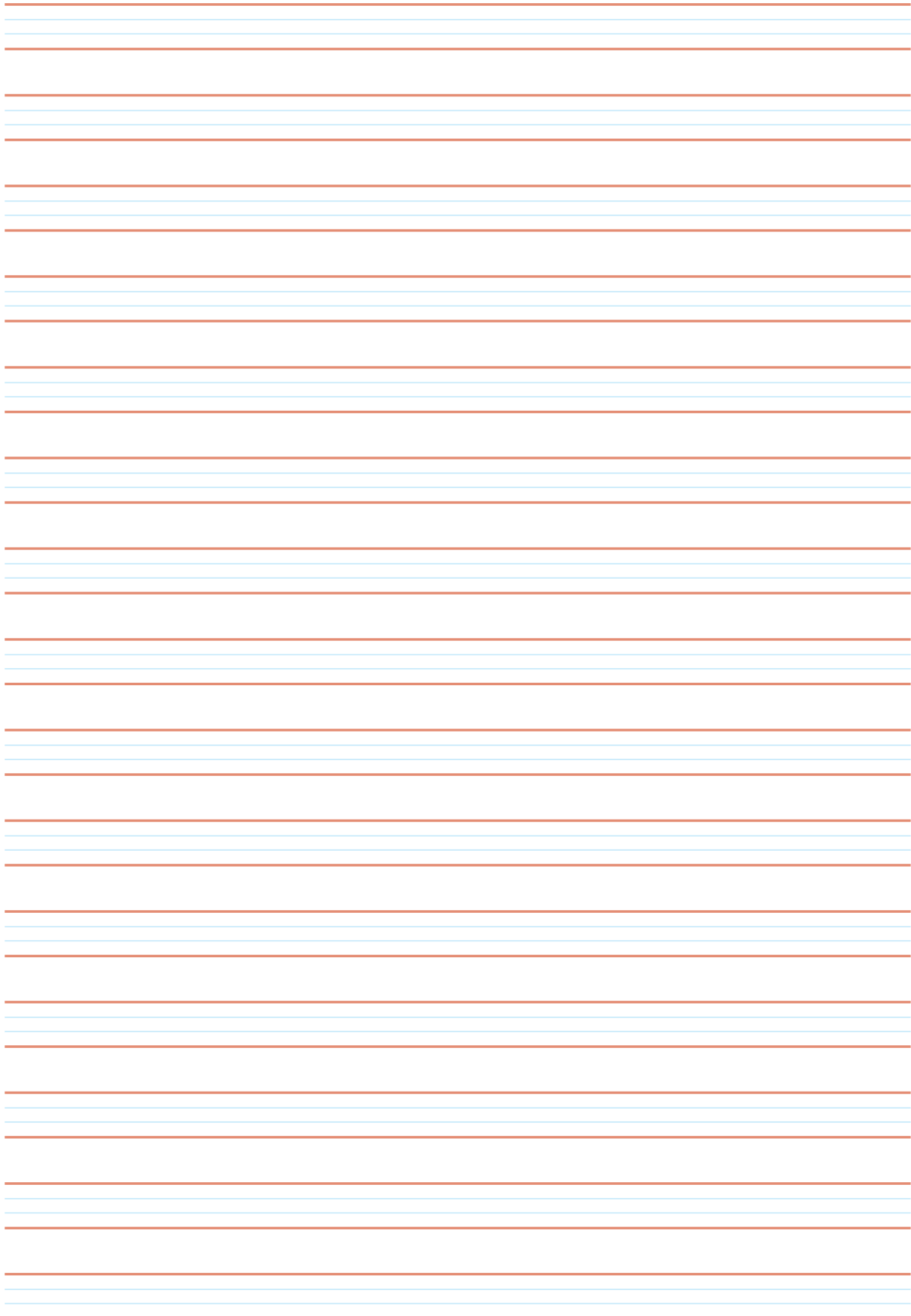
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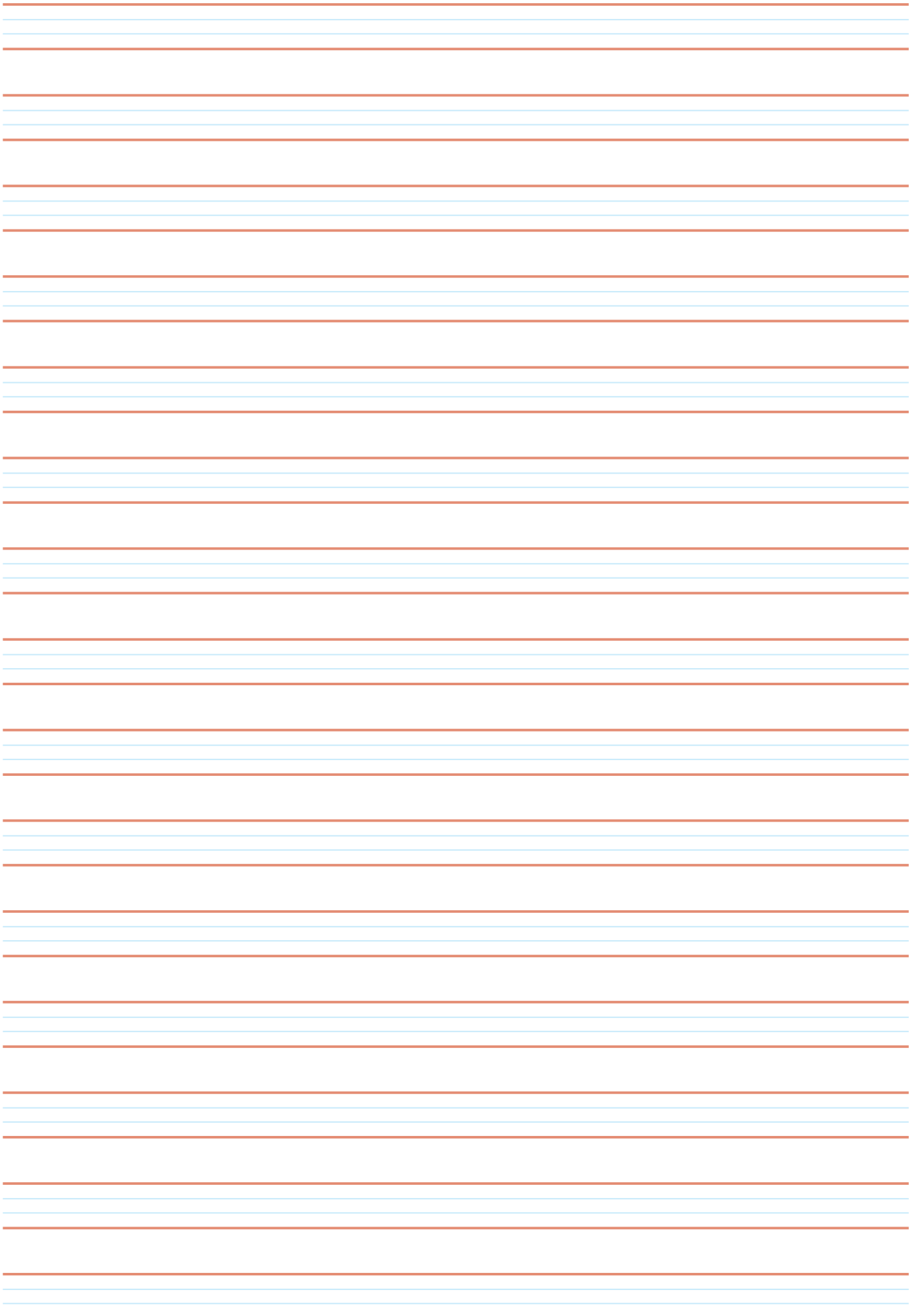
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DOGRI

Background Image: **CHAMBA RUMAL**
(Textile tradition of Himachal Pradesh)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Dogri, recognized as an independent modern literary language of India is of Indo-Aryan origin with a vocabulary influenced by languages such as English and Persian. Dogri is a member of the Western Pahari Language group and has its own grammar. The *Dogri* script referred to as *Dogra* or *Dogra Akkhar* based on the *Takri* script is made up of 10 vowels and 28 consonants and is written from left to right. In addition, it has the presence of five supra-segmental phonemes (distinct sounds that distinguish one word from the other) such as length, stress, nasalization, tone and juncture. The earliest written reference is found in poetry belonging to the 14th century.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Dogri is spoken in the mountainous and sub-mountainous regions as well as the adjoining plains between the Pirpanjal and Dhauladhar ranges in Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh as well as Punjab, Manawar Tawi and the Sutlej River. It is widely spoken in Jammu, regions of North Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in India and in some areas of Pakistan. The belt where Dogri is spoken is often referred to as the Duggar belt.

Dogri is recognized as one of the 22 official languages of India. Through the Ninety-Second Amendment of the Constitution of India in 2003, Dogri was made a part of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The language is spoken by approximately 2.6 million people.

DIALECTS

Dogri dialects vary on the basis of pronunciation in the plains, the ravine areas and in the mountains. The inhabitants of the *Pahari* or mountainous regions use syncopated forms of the language while the inhabitants of the *Kandi* or plains and ravines do not. *Pahari*, *Gojari*, *Bhadrawahi* belong to the Pahari belt while *Kandyali*, *Kangri*, *Kulhuri* and *Basohali Dogri* belong to the plain areas. *Mandyali*, *Chambeali*, *Rampuri*, *Pongali*, *Hoshiarpuri* are some variations specific to the regions they are spoken in.

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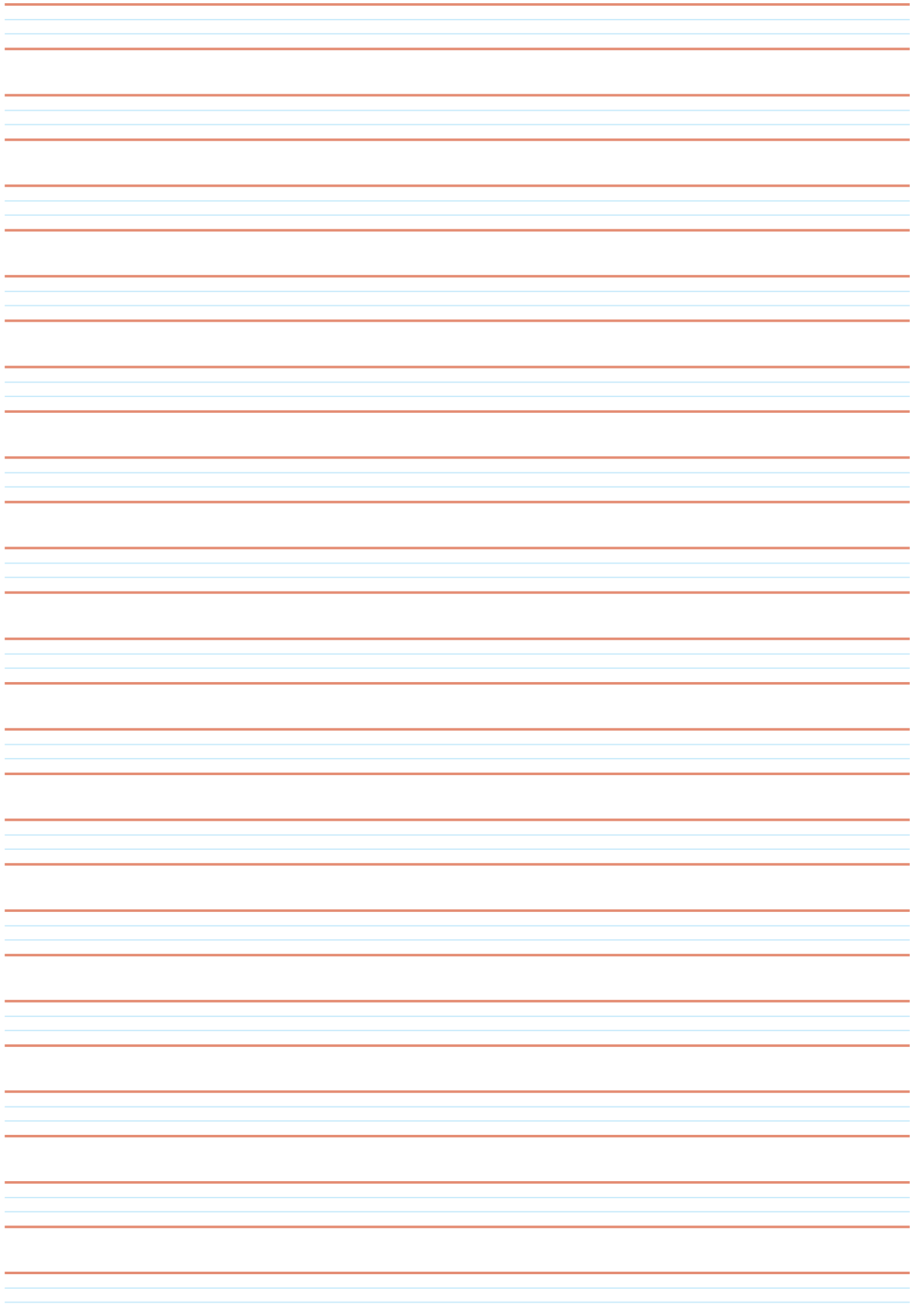
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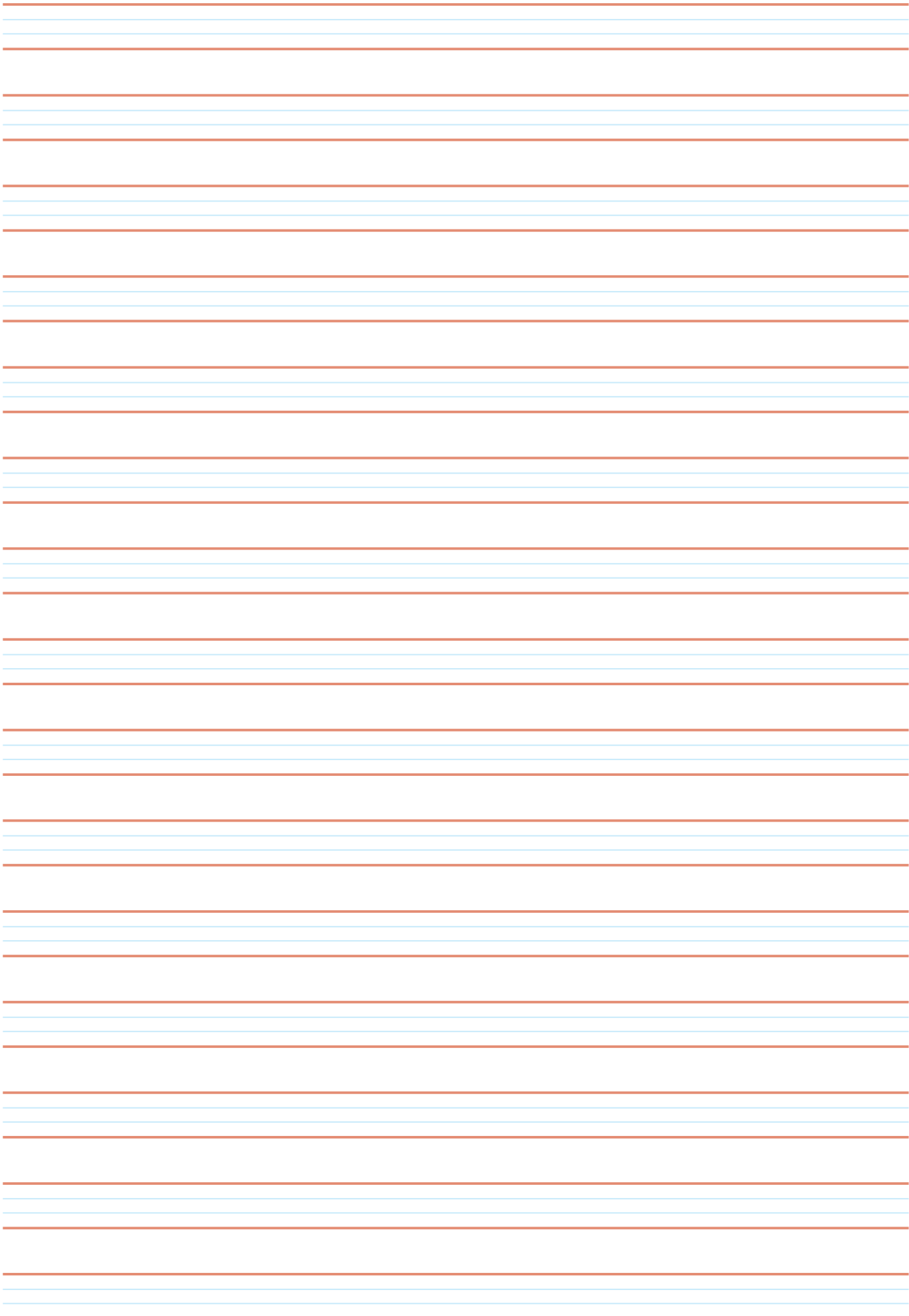
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GUJARATI

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Known for its rich literary tradition with a diverse range of poetry, prose and plays, Gujarati is an Indo-Aryan language that finds its roots in the ancient Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. The language has been greatly shaped by Persian, Arabic and European languages over the centuries.

The language is written in the *Gujarati* script or *Lipi*, derived from the *Devanagari* script written from left to right. The script has distinguishing features, such as the lack of distinct upper and lower case letters and the horizontal lines that connect the letters within words.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution enlists Gujarati as one of the 22 Scheduled Languages of India. It is the official language of the western Indian state of Gujarat and along with its dialects, is spoken by more than 55 million people in the country. The Gujarati-speaking population constitutes a significant share in the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal and Delhi.

Across borders, the Gujarati-speaking population has a presence in Pakistan, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. With their trade and business ventures, Gujaratis traveled far and wide across the globe, settling in parts of Bangladesh, East Africa, Fiji, Kenya, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

DIALECTS

The language has many dialects spoken across various regions and territories of India. These include *Kathiyawadi* (spoken in Northern Gujarat or Saurashtra), *Uttar Gujarati/ Patni* (spoken in North Gujarat), *Charotari* (spoken in middle Gujarat in cities like Nadiad, Aiianda and Baroda), *Surati* (spoken in South Gujarat), *Gamadia*, *Kharwa*, *Khakari*, *Tarimukhi* and East African Gujarati. The northern Gujarati dialects borrow significantly from Arabic and Persian, while the southern ones have more of Hindi, English, and Portuguese influences.

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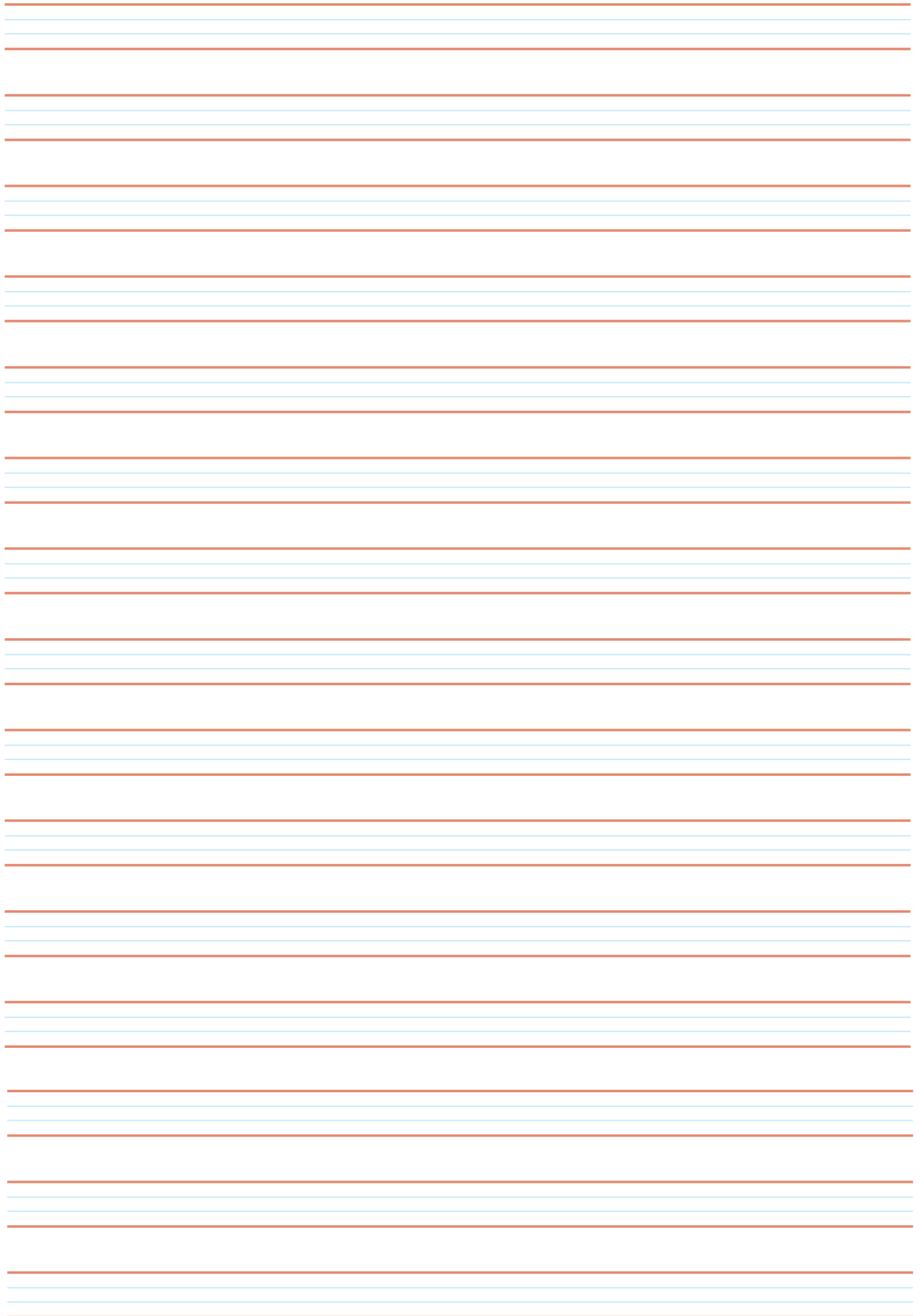
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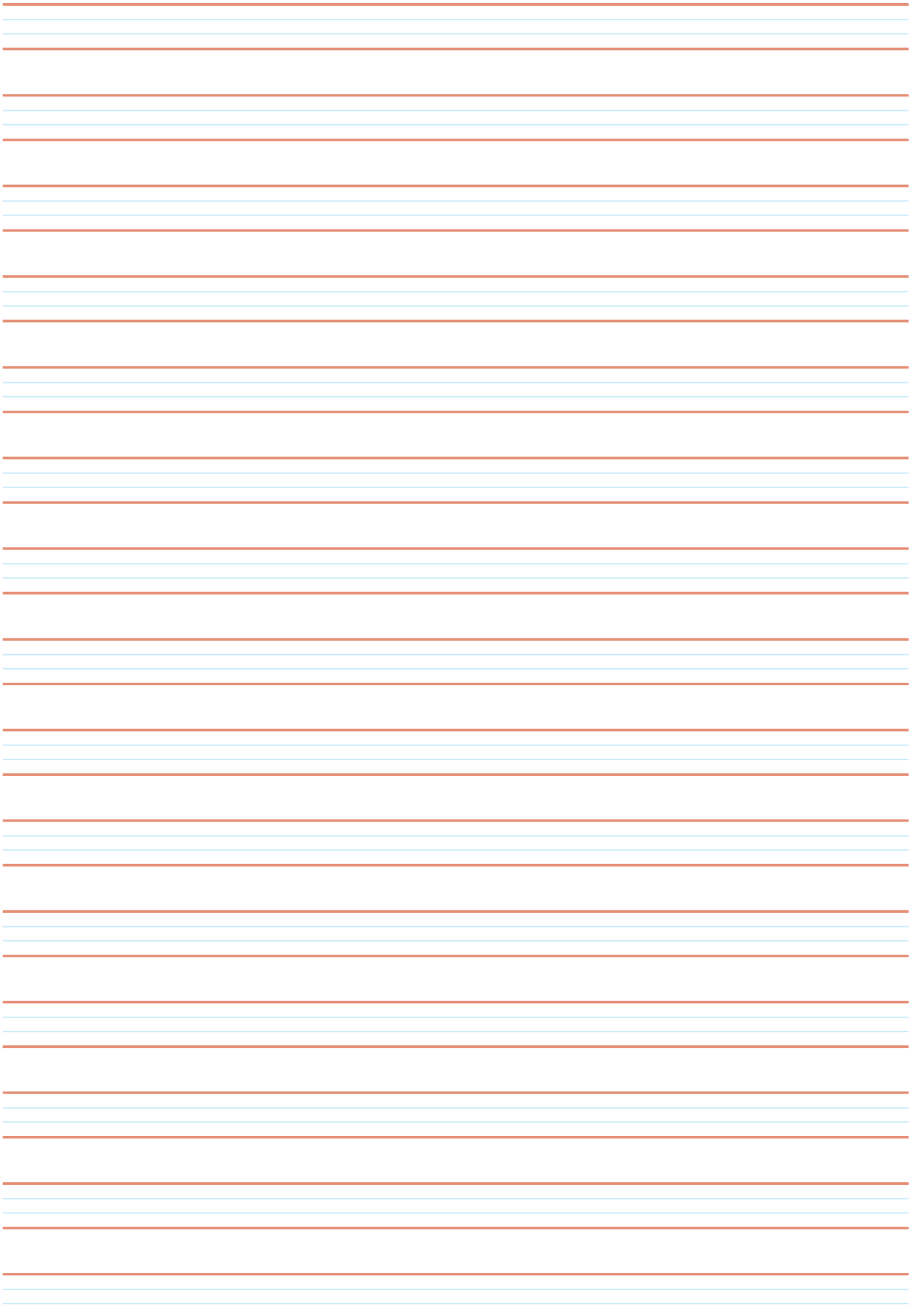
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HINDI

Background Image: **BANARASI BROCADE**
(Textile tradition of **Varanasi**)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Hindi or *Manak Hindi* is an Indo-Aryan language, which is the modern standardized and formalized version of the composite '*Hindustani*' languages. It developed during the early modern and modern periods in North India. Modern standard Hindi is written in the *Devanagari* or *Nagari* script, based on an ancient Indian script called *Brahmi*, written from left to right. Hindi is believed to have its origins in Sanskrit. The multilingual tradition of writing in North India during the 18th century is believed to have shaped modern Hindi.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

In 1950, Hindi became the official language of the new Republic or Union of India. As per Article 343 of the Constitution of India, Hindi in the *Devanagari* script is the official language of the Union. While more than half of the population of India knows Hindi according to the 2001 Census of India, it is the mother tongue of around 26% of the population. In India, it is widely spoken in Delhi and the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan. Variants of Hindi are also spoken in countries like Fiji, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Mauritius, French Guiana, and New Zealand as a mother tongue or a first language.

DIALECTS

The languages of the part of North India commonly referred to as the Hindi belt, are sometimes considered as the regional or colloquial dialects or forms of the common *Hindustani* lingua franca. These forms include *Brajbhasha*, *Awadhi*, *Bhojpuri*, *Haryanvi*, *Garhwali*, *Kumauni*, *Khadi Boli*, *Bagheli*, *Marwari*, *Bundeli*, etc. According to the 2001 Census of India, Hindi has 48 officially recognized dialects.

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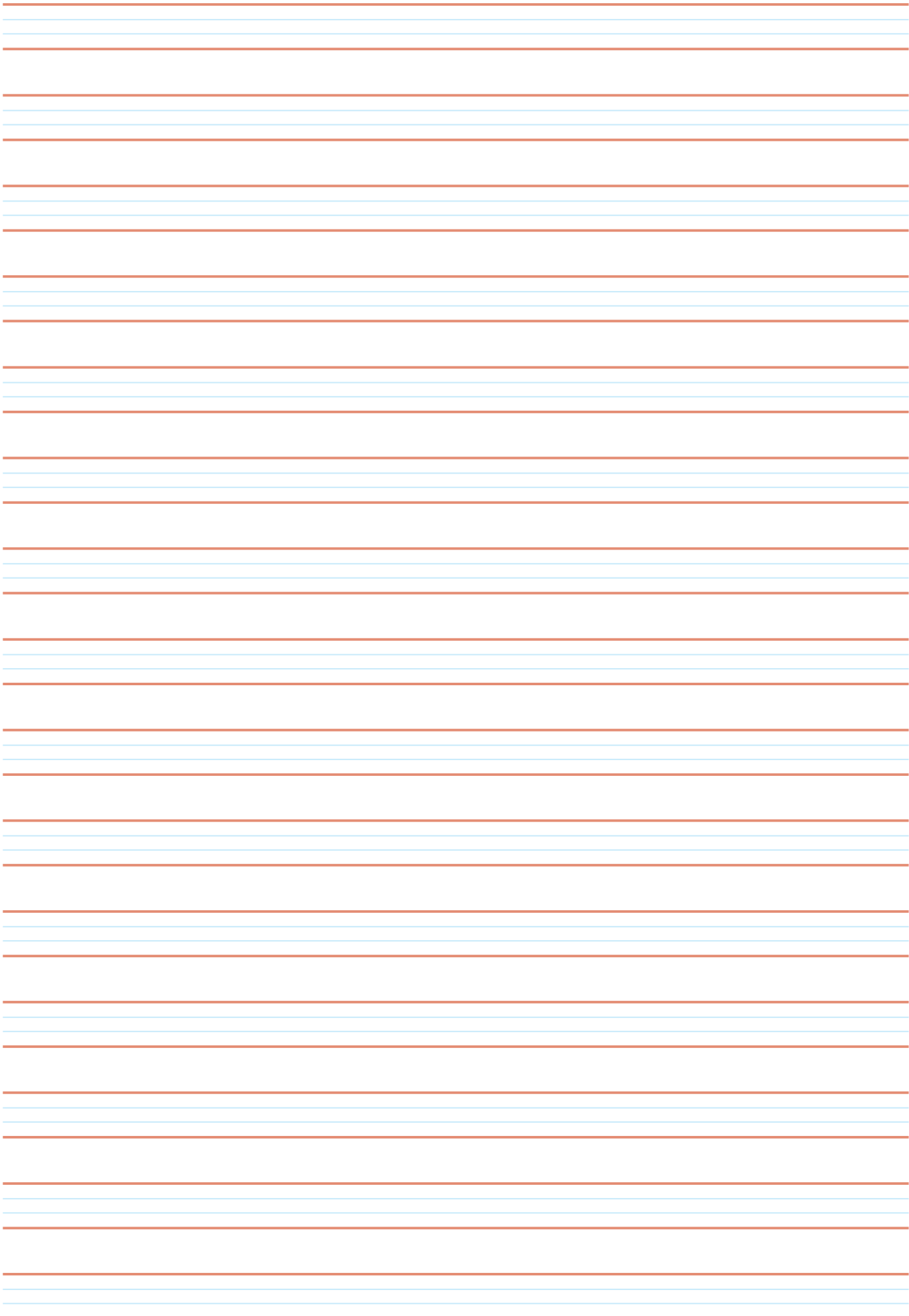
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KANNADA

Background Image: **KASUTI SAREE**
(Textile tradition of Karnataka)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Kannada is a Dravidian language with a long and fascinating history. Some scholars suggest that Kannada evolved from a language which may be called Proto-South Dravidian. Kannada words have been discovered in Prakrit inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE. Western scholars like Pliny the Elder (1st century CE) and Ptolemy (2nd century CE) have also referred to places with Kannada names. However, the earliest full-length Kannada inscription currently known is dated to 370 CE.

Conventionally, three stages are recognised in the evolution of Kannada - *Haḷegannaḍa* or Old Kannada (450 CE - 1200 CE), *Nadugannaḍa* or Middle Kannada (1200 CE - 1700 CE), and *Hosagannaḍa* or Modern Kannada (1700 CE onwards). Both Sanskrit and Prakrit have played a significant part in the development of the language. The *Kannada* script is closely related to the *Telugu* script as both evolved from southern variants of the ancient *Brahmi* script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Kannada is mainly spoken in the state of Karnataka located in southwestern India. It is the official language of the state and is spoken by about two-thirds of the population (2011 Census). Kannada is spoken in the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Goa. It became one of the 22 official languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India in 1950. Further, it was designated as one of the six classical languages of India in 2008.

DIALECTS

The written and spoken forms of Kannada differ considerably. While the written form remains more or less consistent throughout Karnataka, the spoken language varies between places and communities. Around 20 different dialects of Kannada have been identified. The four major regional dialects include Mangalore/Udupi Kannada, Mysore/Bangalore Kannada, Kota/Kundapur Kannada and Hubli/Dharwad Kannada.

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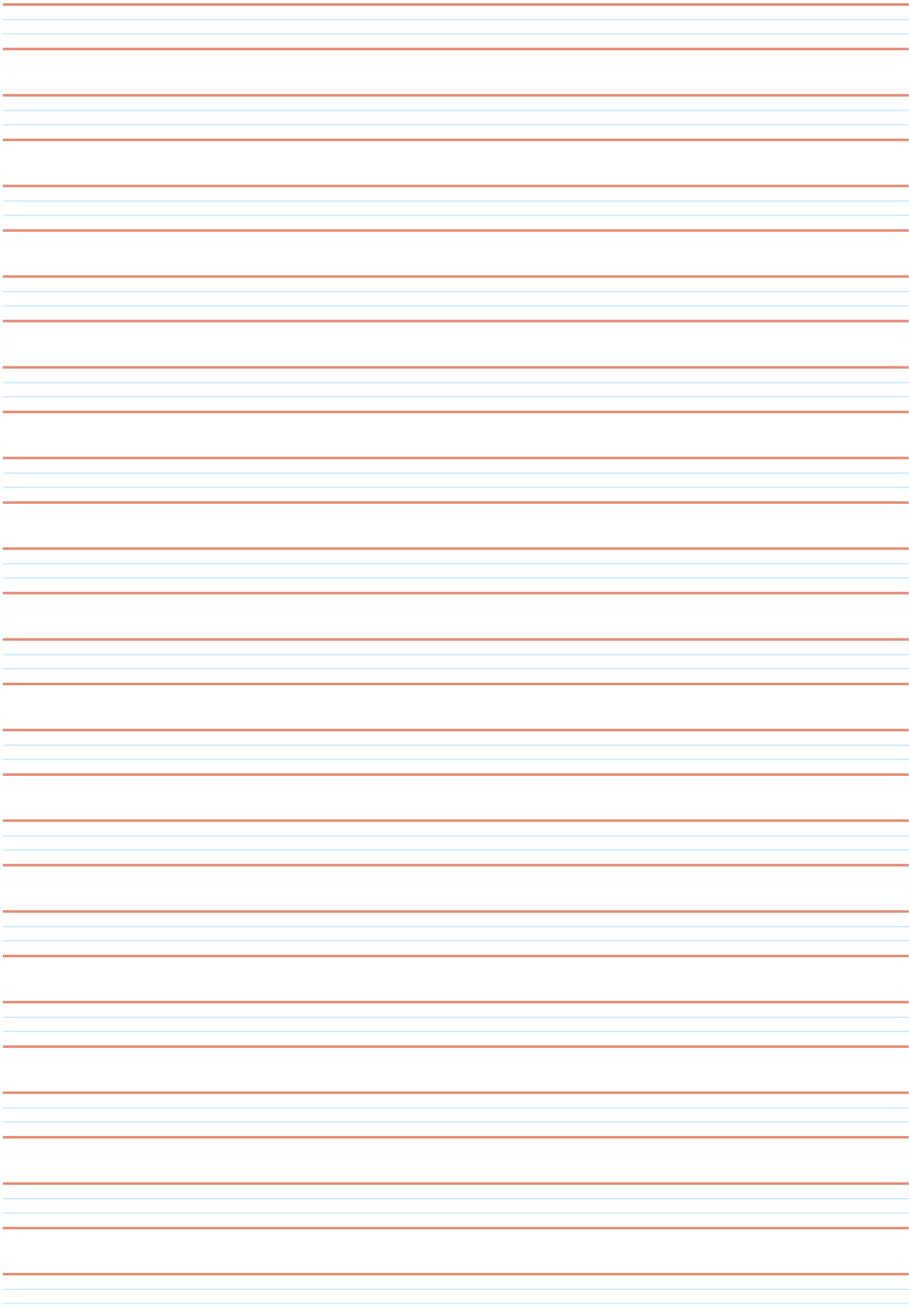
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KASHMIRI

Background Image: **KANI SHAWL**
(Textile tradition of Jammu & Kashmir)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Kashmiri language is also known as *Koshur* and it belongs to a sub-category of Indo-Aryan languages called the Dardic or Hindu Kush Indo-Aryan. Kashmiri contains elements from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Punjabi, and Persian. According to some scholars the roots of the Kashmiri language can be traced back to the Vedic Sanskrit, spoken in ancient India. During the Medieval period, around the 14th century, this region came into contact with different cultures which affected the trajectory of the Kashmiri language. Its writing system can be divided into three categories: a. The *Sharada* script, which is believed to have evolved from the western branch of *Brahmi* nearly 1200 years ago, b. The Perso-Arabic script, and c. The *Devanagari* script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

In India, Kashmiri is primarily spoken in Jammu and Kashmir. It is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. Kashmiri became the official language of Jammu and Kashmir under the Jammu and Kashmir Official Language Bill-2020.

DIALECTS

There are several dialects of Kashmiri across Jammu and Kashmir which vary in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. The speech within the valley is divided into three broad categories: *mara:z* spoken in the southern and southeastern region, *kamra:z* spoken in the northern and northwestern region, and *yamra:z* spoken in Srinagar and some of its surrounding areas. *Kashtawari/Kishtwari*, *Poguli*, *Sarazi* and *Rambani* are other dialects spoken outside the valley.

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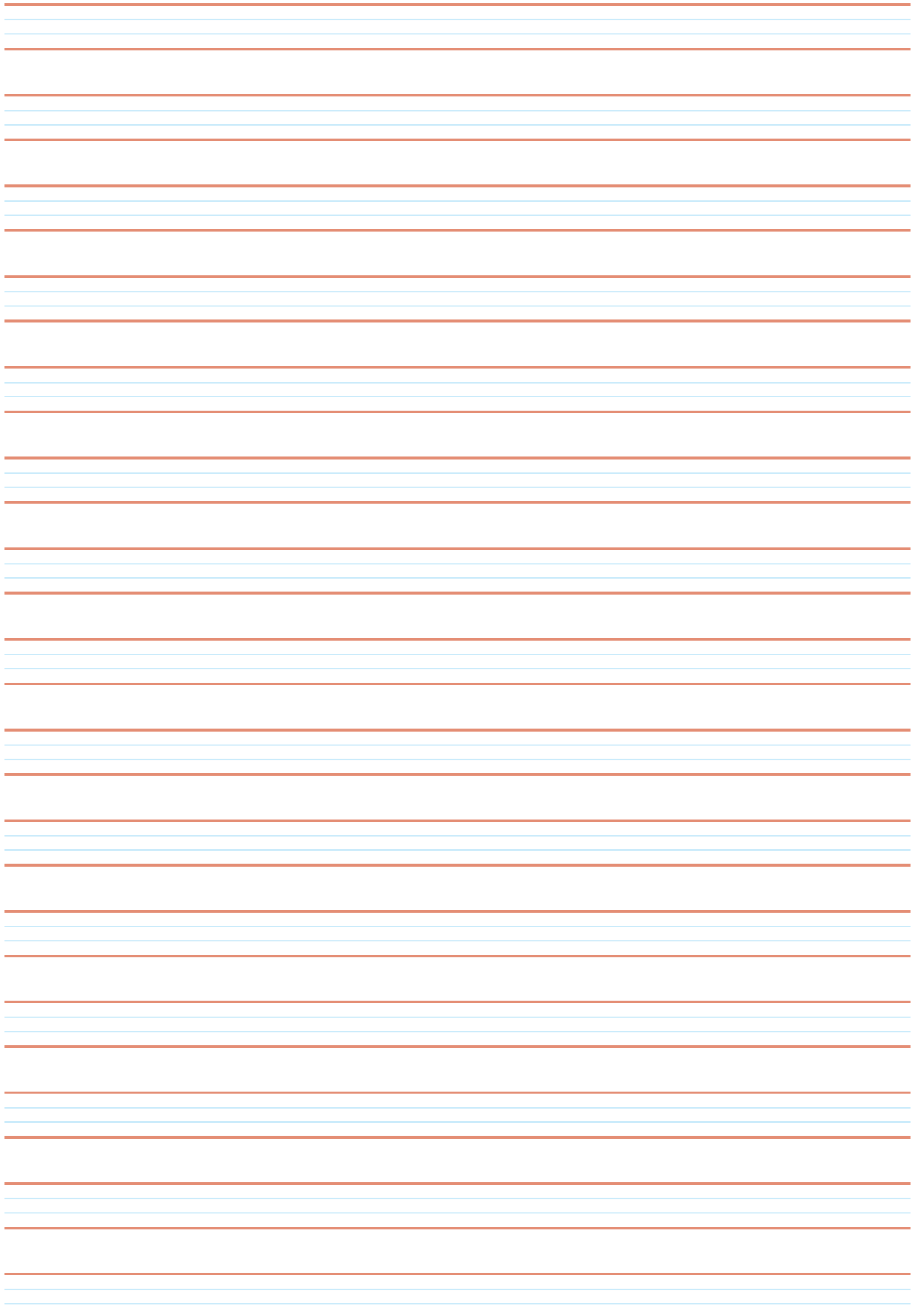
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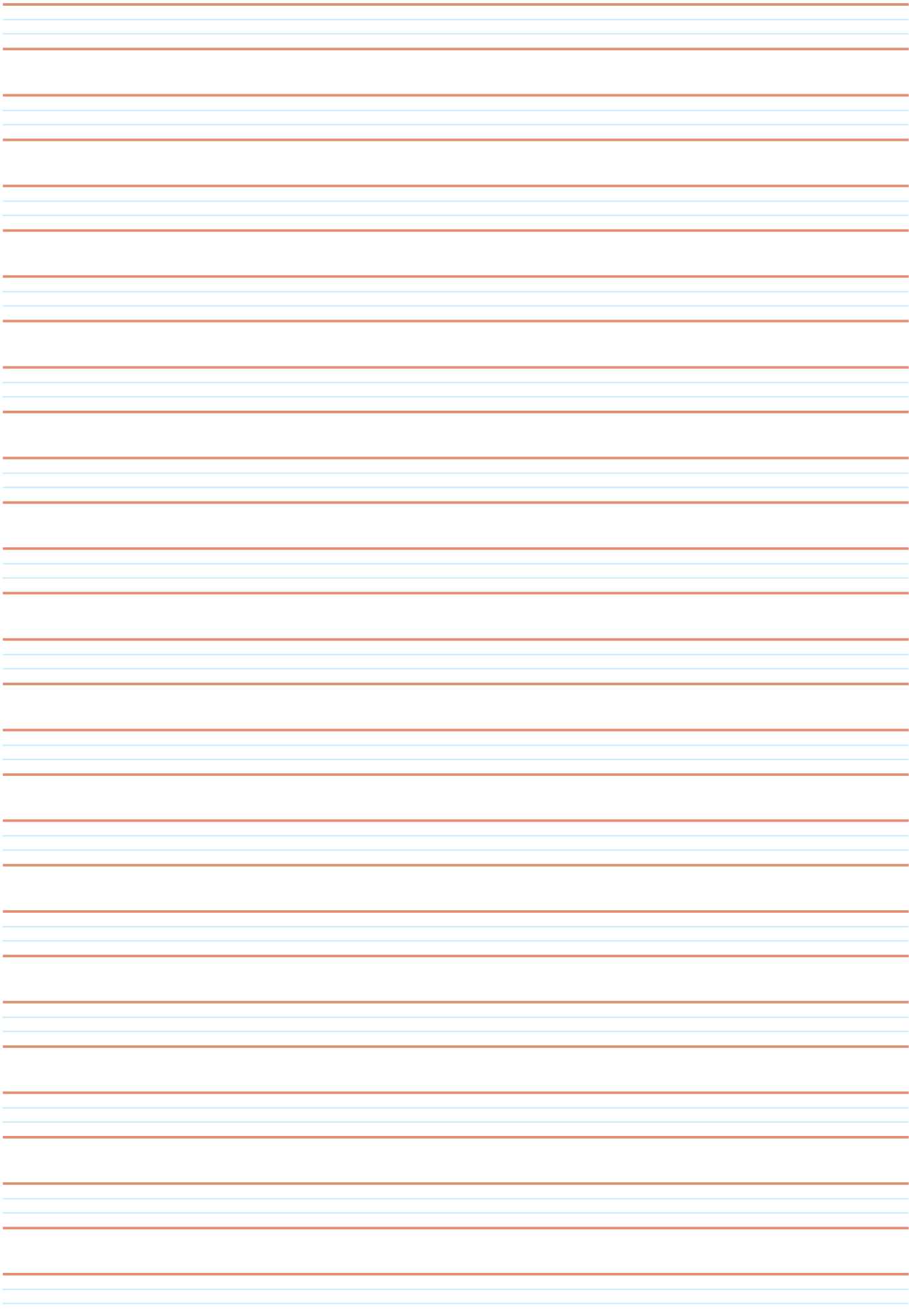
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KONKANI

Background Image: **KUNBI SAREE**
(Textile tradition of Goa)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Konkani is an Indo-Aryan language that belongs to the Indo-European language family. While Konkani is said to have been a spoken language for most of its history, some scholars believe that the earliest inscription dates to 1187 CE. Konkani is written in different scripts. In Goa, some used the *Nagari* script, while others used the Roman script. In Karnataka, two scripts have been in use - *Nagari* and *Kannada*. Konkani is said to be the only language currently written in five scripts - Devanagari, Kannada, Malayalam, Roman and Perso-Arabic.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Konkani, predominantly spoken along the Konkan Coast of India, is the official language of Goa. However, Konkani-speaking communities migrated to the neighbouring areas of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. It is one of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

DIALECTS

The maximum concentration of the Konkani-speaking community has been in Goa and over centuries, the various foreign settlers who came to Goa have had an influence on the language. Hence, Konkani shares words with Persian, Arabic and also Portuguese. People who migrated to the coastal parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala have developed their own dialects, highly influenced by the predominant languages of the regions - Marathi, Kannada and Malayalam respectively.

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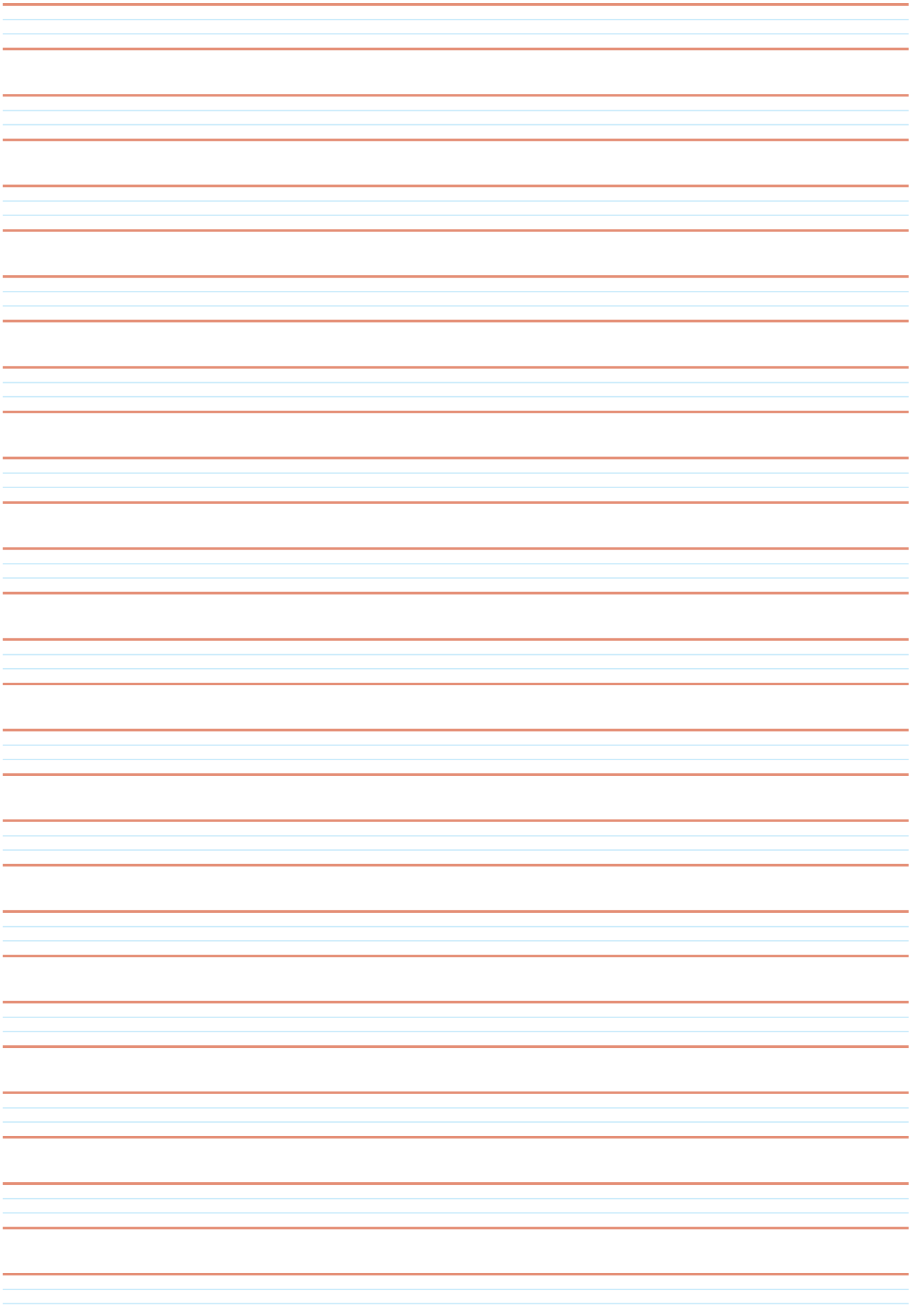
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The background is a traditional Madhubani textile pattern. It features a central figure of a woman in a red sari with a blue border, adorned with gold jewelry and a tall, ornate headdress. She is surrounded by lush green trees with red fruit. Below her, two other figures are visible, one in a red sari and another in a blue sari, both in a prayerful or reverent pose. The entire scene is set against a gold background with intricate line work and a repeating border at the top and bottom.

सिथनी

MAITHILI

Background Image: **MADHUBANI**
(Textile tradition of Bihar)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Maithili is an Indo-Aryan language. One of the earliest mention of the language was in the *Alphabetum Brahmanicum* (1771), where it was mentioned as *Taurutiana (Tirhutiya)*. It was earlier written in the *Mithilakshara* or *Tirhut* script and in *Kaithi*. The script is believed to be a derivative of the Gupta script. Now, it is written in *Devanagari*. During the medieval period, it was used as the primary script for maintaining genealogical records. Several inscriptions written in Maithili have been discovered in Bihar and Nepal.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Maithili is predominantly spoken in the Mithila region (covering the modern day region of Tirhut) in Bihar. It is also spoken by a small population in Nepal. As a matter of fact, it is one of five most spoken languages in Nepal. It became one of the 22 official languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 2003.

DIALECTS

Geography has played a key role in determining the dialects of Maithili. Based on regional differentiation, Maithili can be classified into the following dialects: Standard Maithili (spoken in North Bihar), *Chhika Chhiki*, Western Maithili and *Siripuria* dialect.

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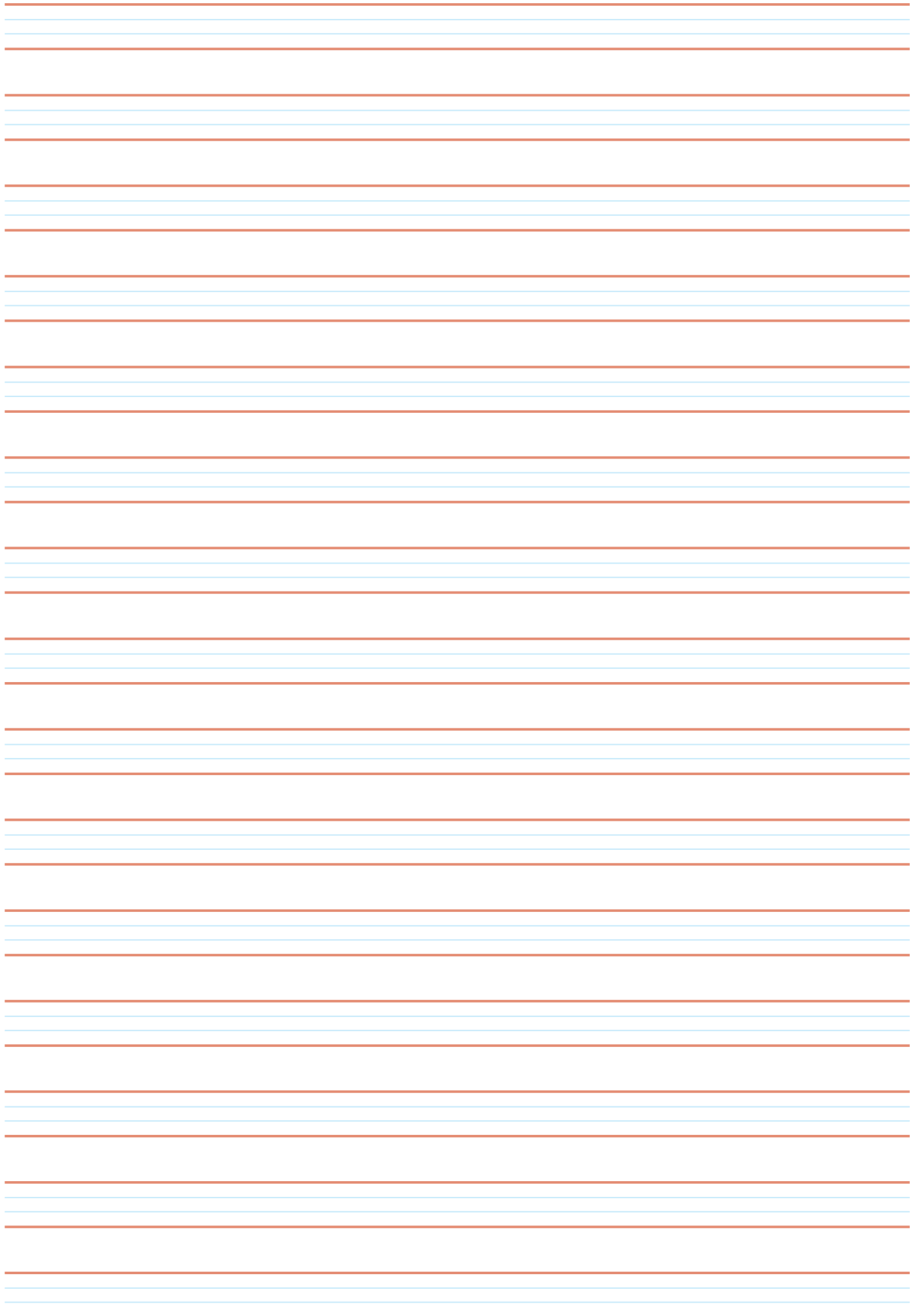
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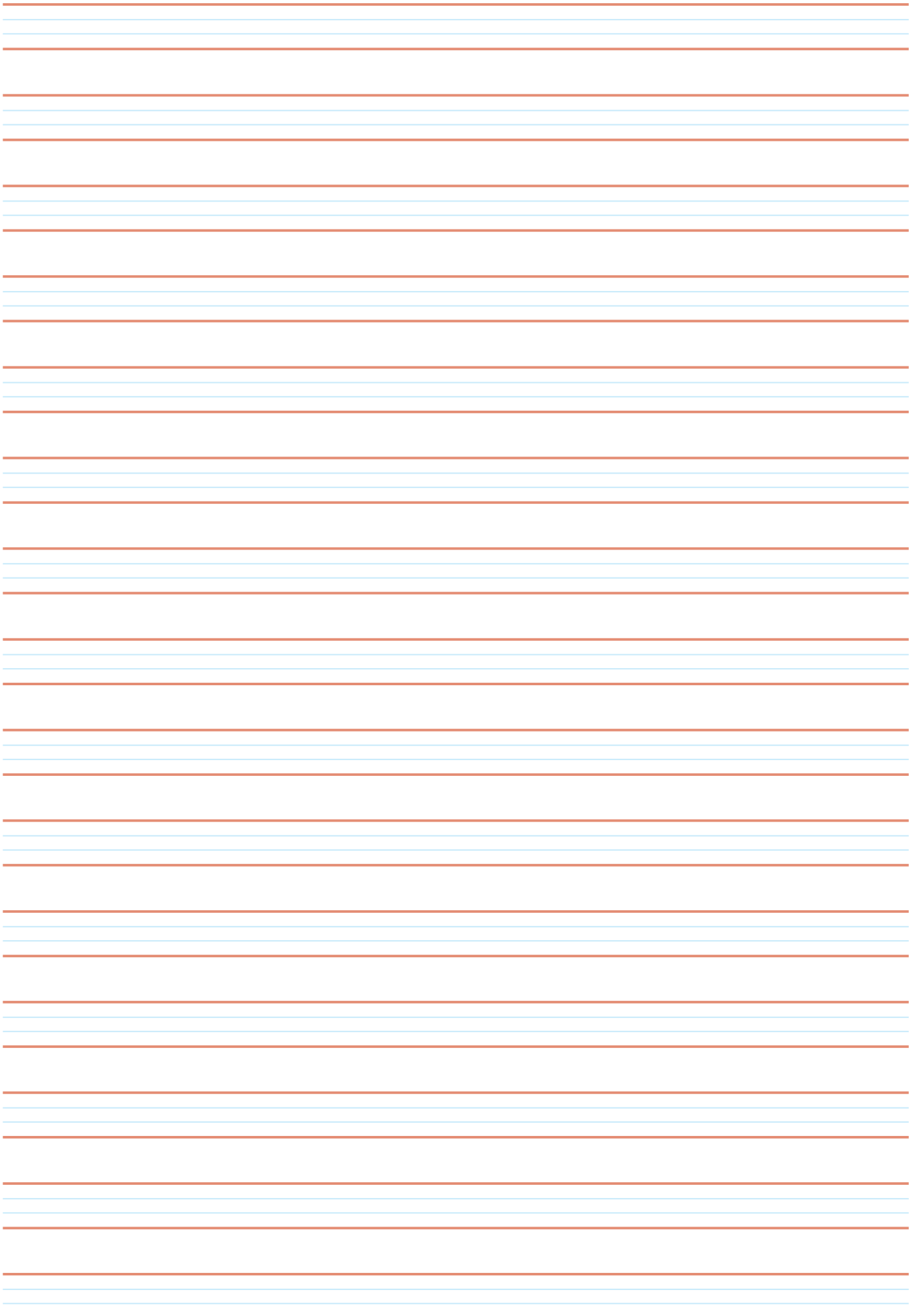
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MALAYALAM

Background Image: **KASAVU SAARE**
(Textile tradition of Kerala)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Malayalam is a classical language that belongs to the Dravidian family of languages. Many scholars believe that Malayalam and Tamil were once the same language and trace their origin to Proto-Tamil Malayalam. Many believe that Malayalam was only a spoken language and not a written language until the 9th century CE. The history of Malayalam as a written language can be traced to the *Vazhapalli* inscription of 830 CE. However, the literary journey of the language, with prose and poetry, is said to have begun in the 12th century CE. The earliest inscriptions and documents were written in *Vattezhuthu* script. The *Vattezhuthu* script was later replaced by *Kolezhuthu* and *Malayanma* scripts. However, modern-day Malayalam is written in *Grantha* script, which traces its roots to the ancient *Brahmi* script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Spoken predominantly by the people of Kerala - the southernmost state of India - Malayalam was declared a Classical Language in 2013. Malayalam is the official language of Kerala and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. It is also widely used in the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and the Union Territory of Puducherry. On account of the migrations that have taken place from Kerala to foreign countries, Malayalam has had a presence on the world map. The majority of Indians settled in the United Arab Emirates belong to the Malayalam-speaking community. According to a survey conducted in the United States of America in 2019, Malayalam was one of the fastest-growing South Asian languages. In 1992, it became one of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

DIALECTS

Malayalam is highly influenced by the society of Kerala, hence, the dialects and sub-dialects differ in number. While different communities dominate the various regions of the state and have influenced the spoken language, dialects of Malayalam can be colloquially categorised based on the geography of the region. The dialects differ as one moves from North to Central Kerala and then to Southern Kerala. As a whole, the Malayalam vocabulary was influenced by both Tamil and Sanskrit. Given the state's trade relations and the foreign settlers of the region, Malayalam was also influenced by Dutch, Arabic and English to a great extent.

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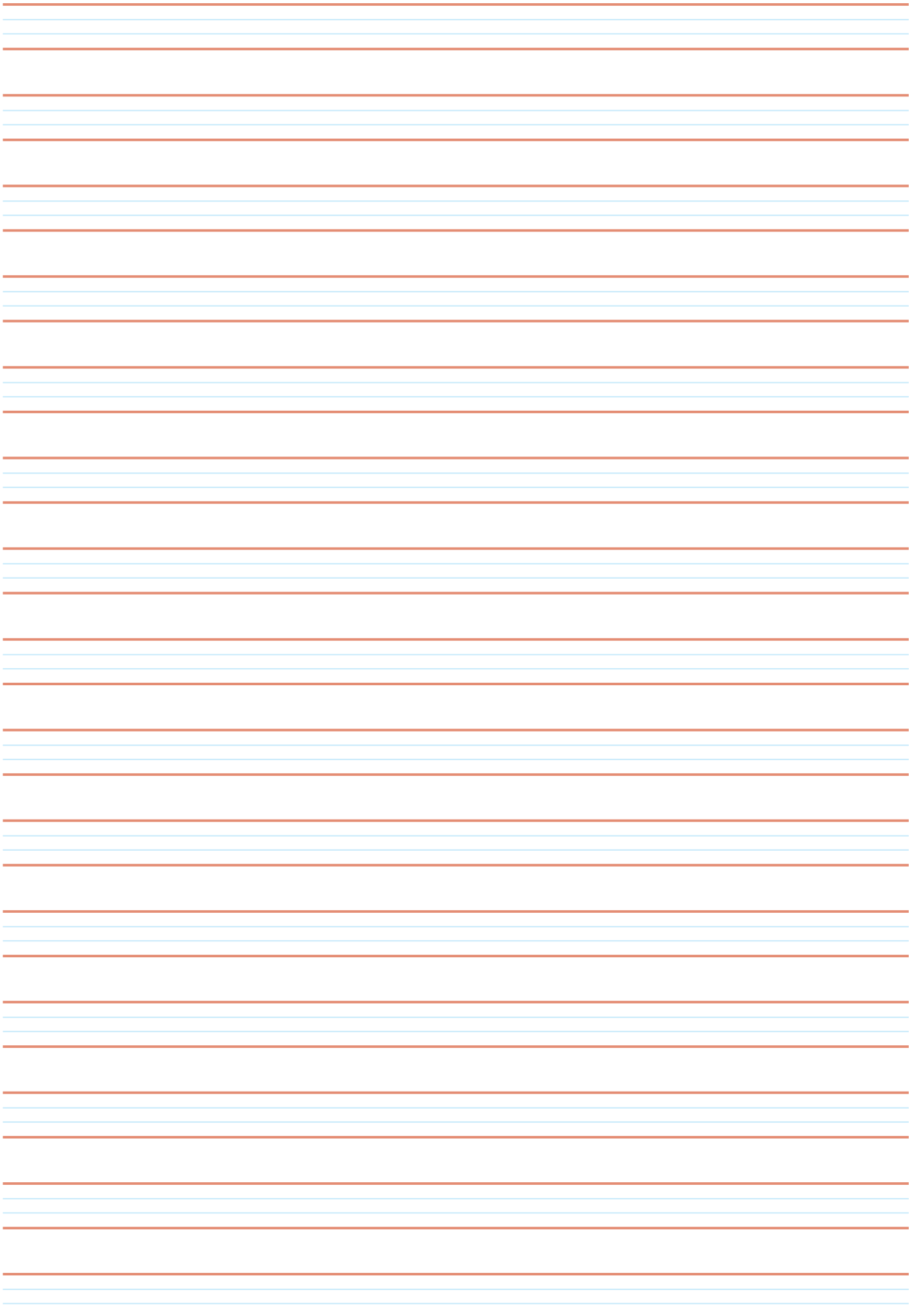
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MANIPURI

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Manipuri language, also known as *Meitei*, *Meeteilon*, *Meiteilon*, or *Meiteiron*, is a language of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan Language family. It is the official language of Manipur and is also spoken in parts of Myanmar and Bangladesh. Manipuri is the only language that has its own script among the Tibeto-Burman group of languages in northeast India. The *Manipuri* Script is locally called *Meitei-Mayek*. The coins of the Meitei rulers Wura Konthouba (568-658A.D.) and Lairenba (1394-99 A.D.) containing archaic *Manipuri* Script give valuable information about the introduction of the Manipuri alphabet before the 6th century CE.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

The Manipuri or Meitei language is the most widely spoken Sino-Tibetan language of India and the most spoken indigenous language of northeast India after Assamese and Bengali. According to the 2011 census, there are 1.76 million Manipuri speakers in India. The majority of these speakers are found in Manipur, where they represent just over half of its population. It is however spoken by some smaller groups in the neighbouring states like Assam, Tripura and Nagaland. Manipuri is one of the 22 official languages of India and was made part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1992.

DIALECTS

There are three main dialects of the Manipuri or Meitei language based on the extensions of new sounds and tonal shifts. These three dialects include *Meitei* proper, *Loi* and *Pangal*. *Meitei* proper is considered more dynamic than the other two dialects.

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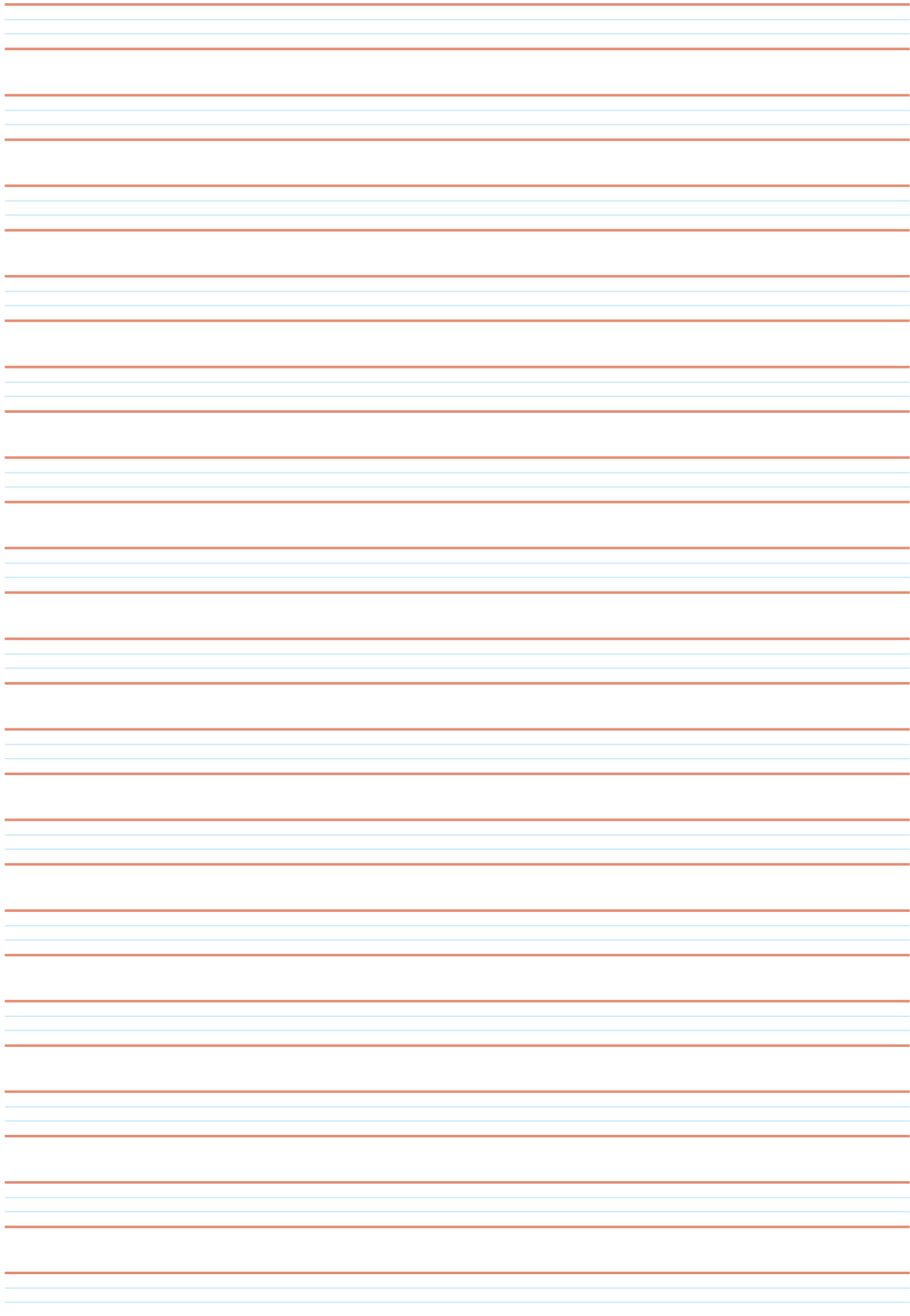
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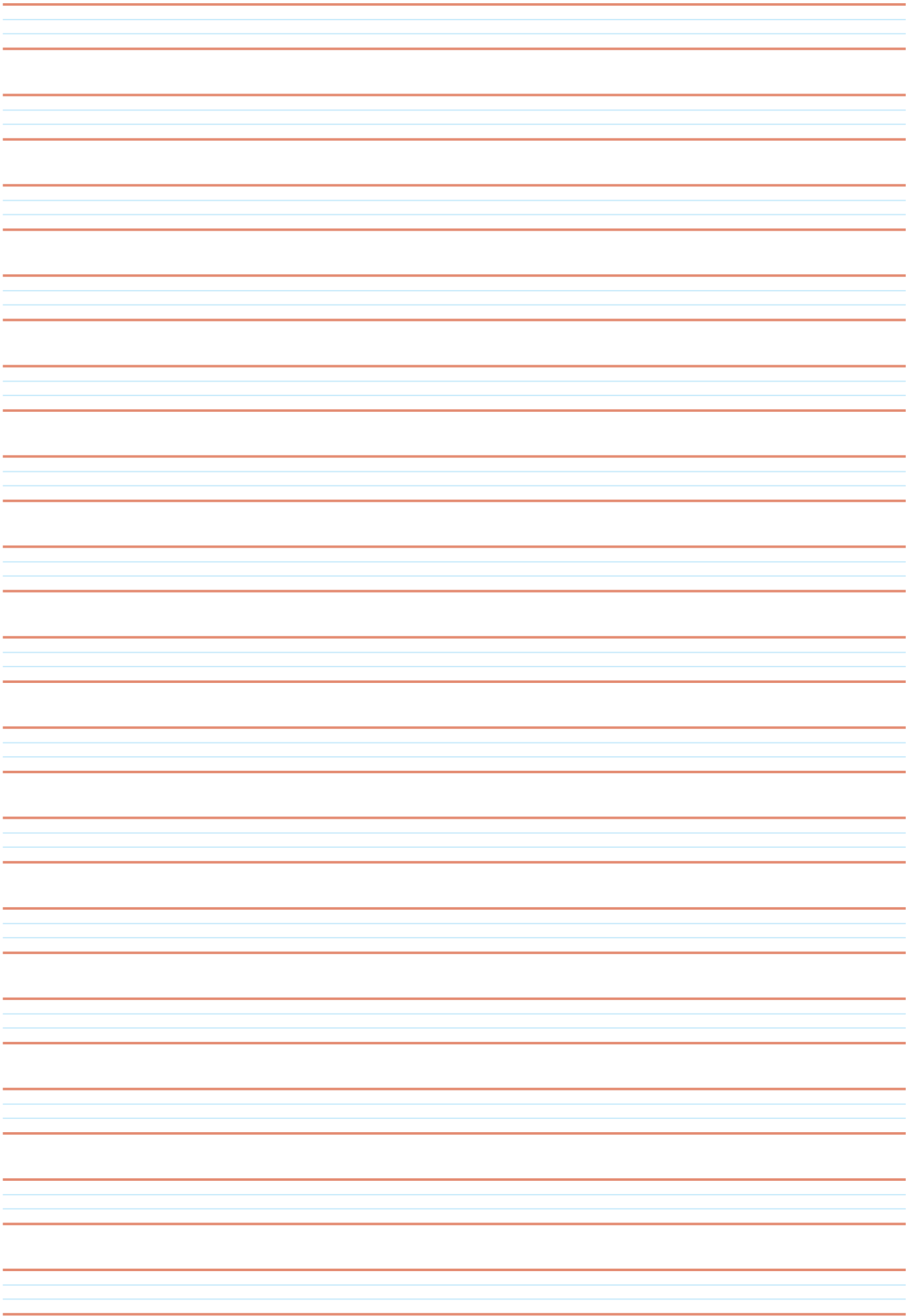
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मराठी

MARATHI

Background Image: **HIMROO TEXTILE**
(Textile tradition of Maharashtra)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Marathi language belongs to the southern family of the Indo-Aryan group of languages. The origin of the language can be traced to *Maharashtri Prakrit*. It is believed that *Maharashtri* was spoken as early as the fifth century CE. The earliest record of the Marathi language can be found in John Fryer's *A new account of East-India and Persia* published in 1698 CE.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

The Marathi language is a part of 22 Scheduled languages recognized by the Constitution of India. In 1966, it became the official language of the state of Maharashtra. It is one of the official language in the state of Goa. It is the fourth most spoken language in India. Outside India, the language is even spoken in Australia, Canada, Israel, and Mauritius.

DIALECTS

Of the numerous dialects that Marathi is spoken in, the three major ones are, *Deshi*, *Konkani*, and *Warhadi*. The differentiating factor in these dialects is mainly the peculiar intonation and specific utterances. The Marathi language has two forms of the alphabet, *Balbodh*, and *Modi*. While *Balbodh* form reflects the *Devanagari* script, *Modi* is a stylized version of *Balbodh*.

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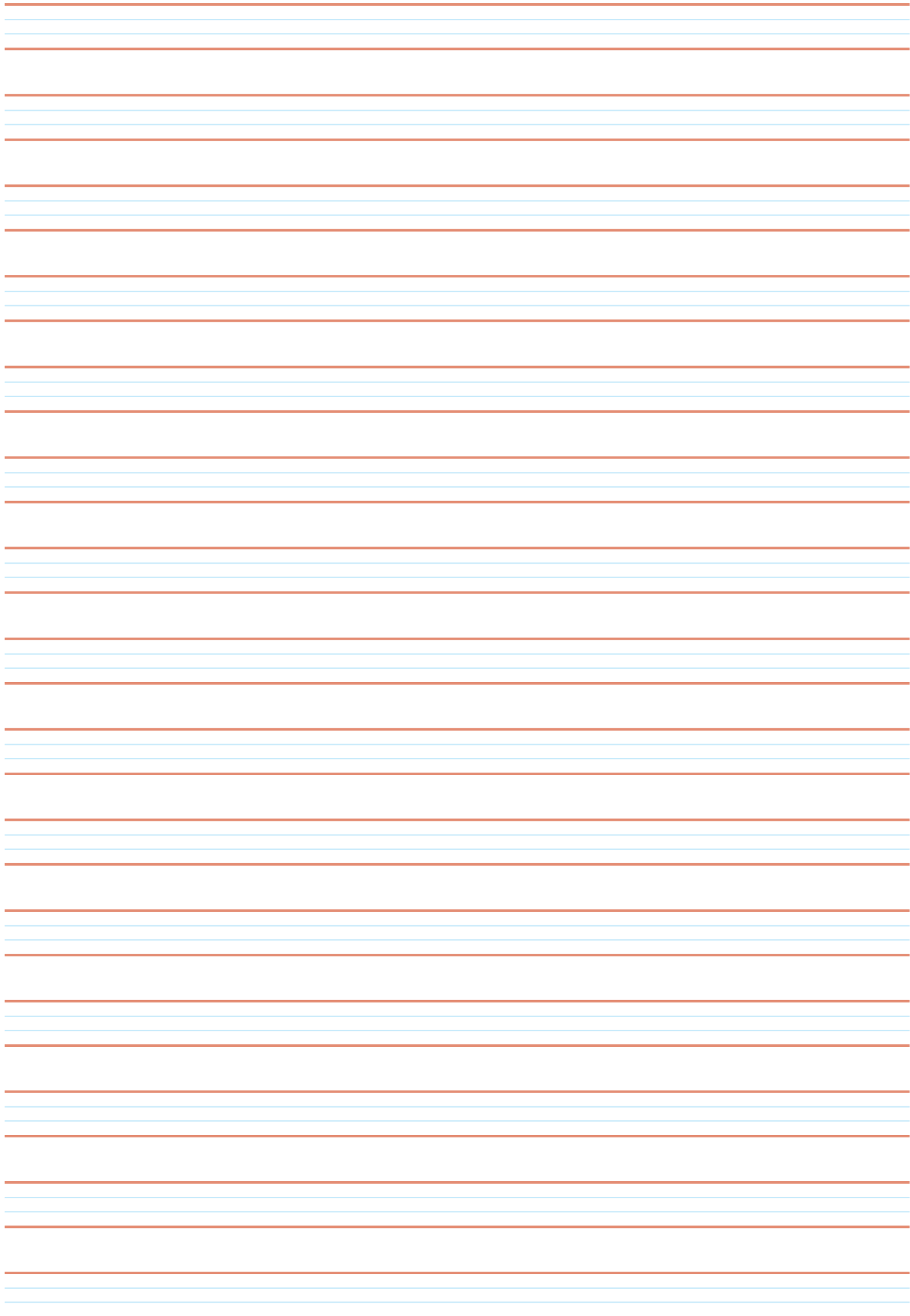
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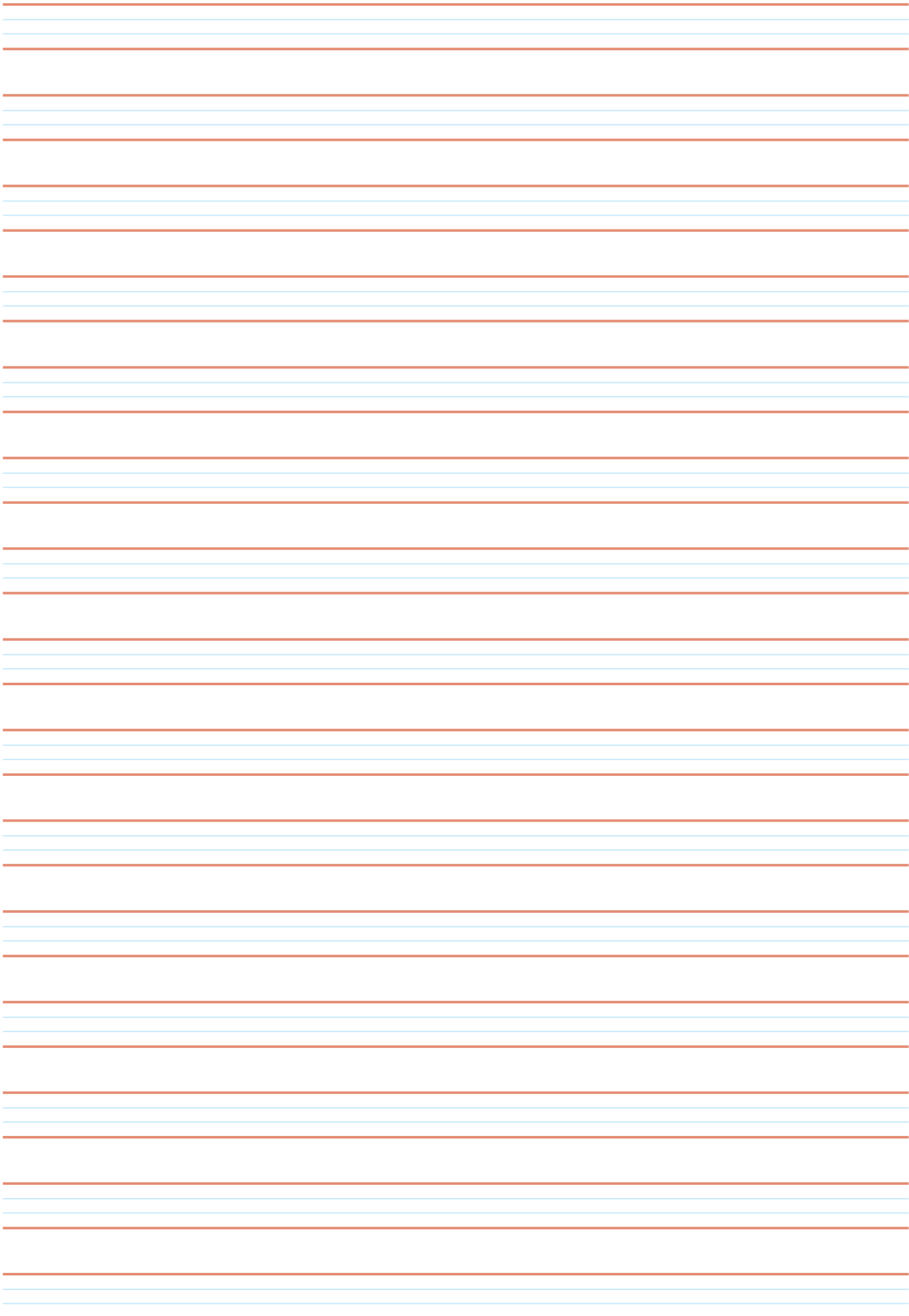
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NEPALI

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Nepali language is also known as *Nepalese*, *Gurkha*, *Gurkhali*, *Gorkhali*, or *Khaskura*. Its origin can be traced back to the Indo-Aryan language family, specifically the Eastern Pahari branch. Nepali is related to Apabhramsha, Prakrit, and Sanskrit. It is believed to be a descendant of the language spoken by the Khasa people, who ruled western Nepal during the 11th–14th centuries. Further, the unification of Nepal under the Gorkha Kingdom in the 18th century played a crucial role in the standardisation and spread of the Nepali language. Nepali is written in the *Newari* and *Devanagari* script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

In 1992, the Nepali language was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is an official language in the state of Sikkim and the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration of West Bengal. Nepali also has a significant number of speakers in other Indian states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Uttarakhand. Further, it is the lingua franca of Nepal.

DIALECTS

Different geographical territories have various dialects and sub-dialectic families of the Nepali language. Some of the major dialects of this language are *Purbeli*, *Majhhali*, *Orapachchhima*, *Majhapachchhima*, *Parpachchhima*, *Khas-Kura*, *Bheri-Karnali* and *Doteli/Achhami*. The *Purbeli* dialect is spoken in the region of Assam, and it is also sub-categorised into *Prabati* and *Gorkhali*.

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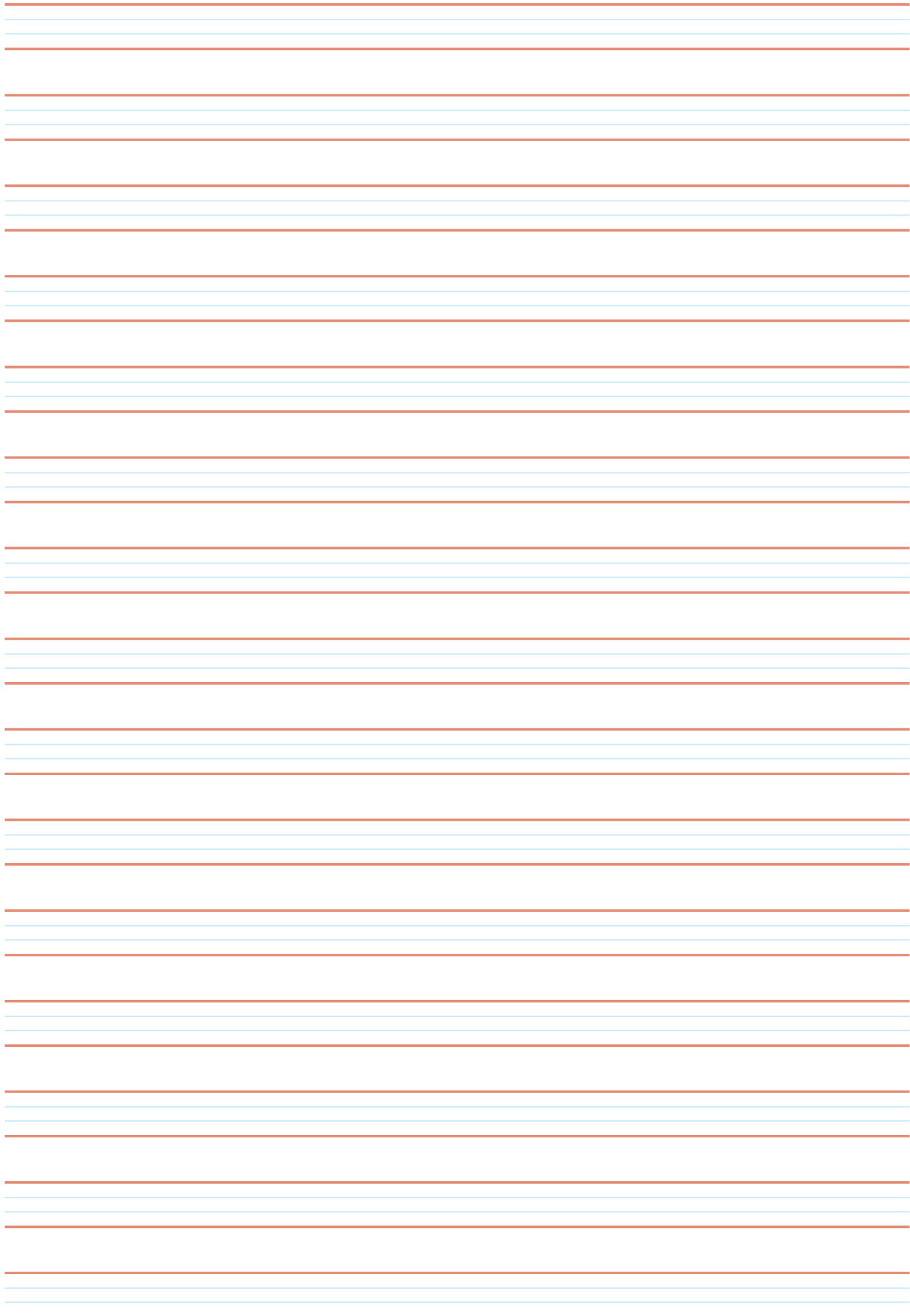
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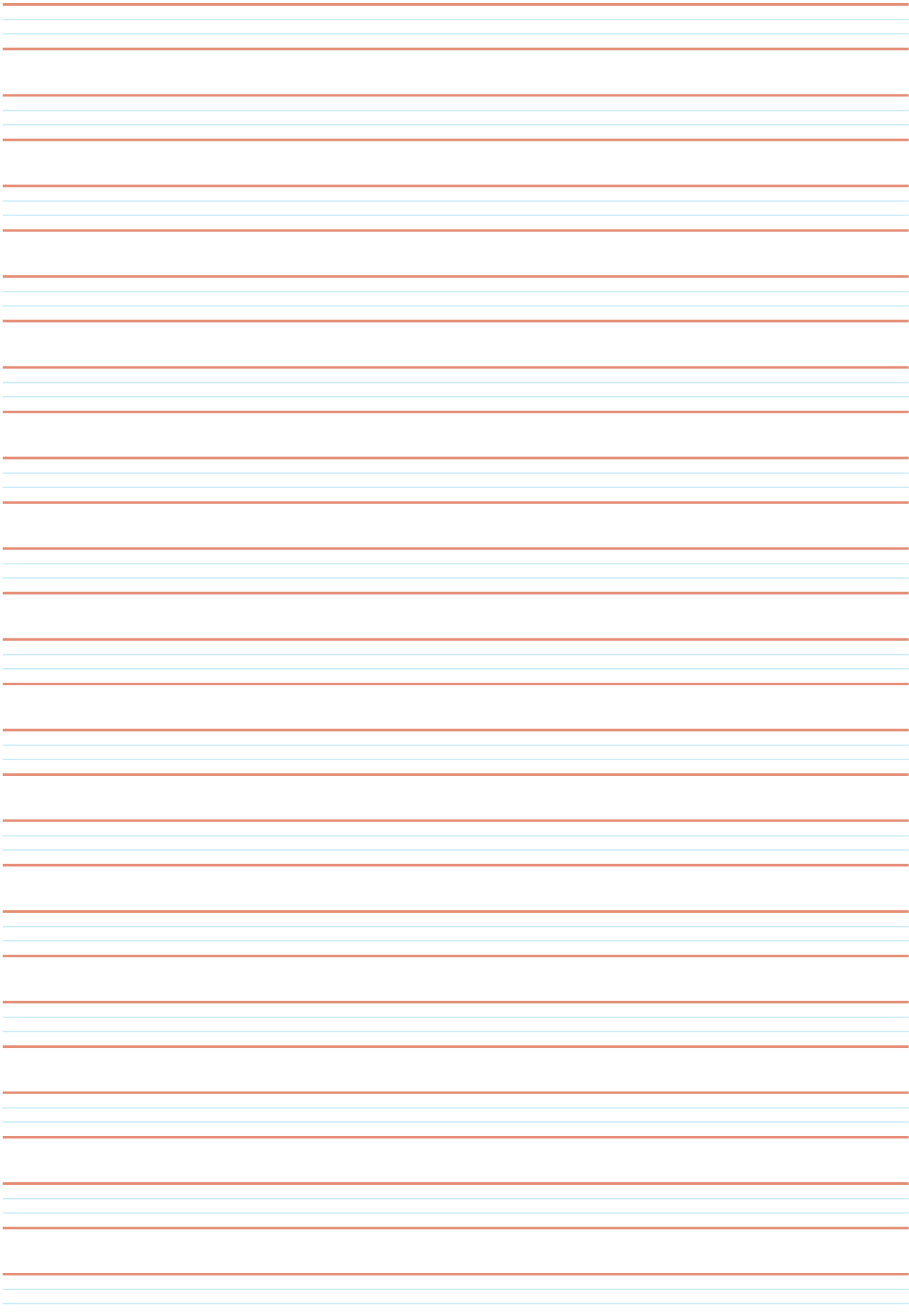
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ODIA

Background Image: **PATTACHITRA**
(Textile tradition of **Odisha**)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Odia is an Indo-Aryan language historically divided into Old Odia (10th -13th century), Early Middle Odia (13th-15th century), Middle Odia (15th-17th century), Late Middle Odia (17th -18th century) and Modern Odia (18th century till present day). The *Odia* script was developed from the *Kalinga* script, one of the many descendants of the *Brahmi* script of ancient India. The earliest known inscription in the Odia language, in the *Kalinga* script, dates back to the 10th century CE. The curved style of the *Odia* script is a result of the tradition of writing on palm leaves that tend to tear if too many straight lines are used.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Odia is the official language of Odisha and it is spoken by 75% of the population of the state. It is also spoken in parts of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. It is the one of the official languages of Jharkhand. Odia is one of the 22 official languages of India and was made part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1950. This language has also been designated as an Indian classical language.

DIALECTS

The Odia language consists of several dialects. These include *Baleswari* which is mostly spoken in Baleswar, Bhadrak, Mayurbhanj and Kendujhar districts. *Baleswaria* is a variant of this dialect spoken in Baleswar. *Kataki* is a dialect spoken in coastal and central regions of the state. *Ganjami*, *Sundargadi*, *Sambalpuri*, *Desia*, *Medinipuri Odia*, *Singhbhumi Odia*, *Phulbani Odia*, and *Debagadia Odia* are some other dialects of Odia spoken in Odisha and across the eastern region of India.

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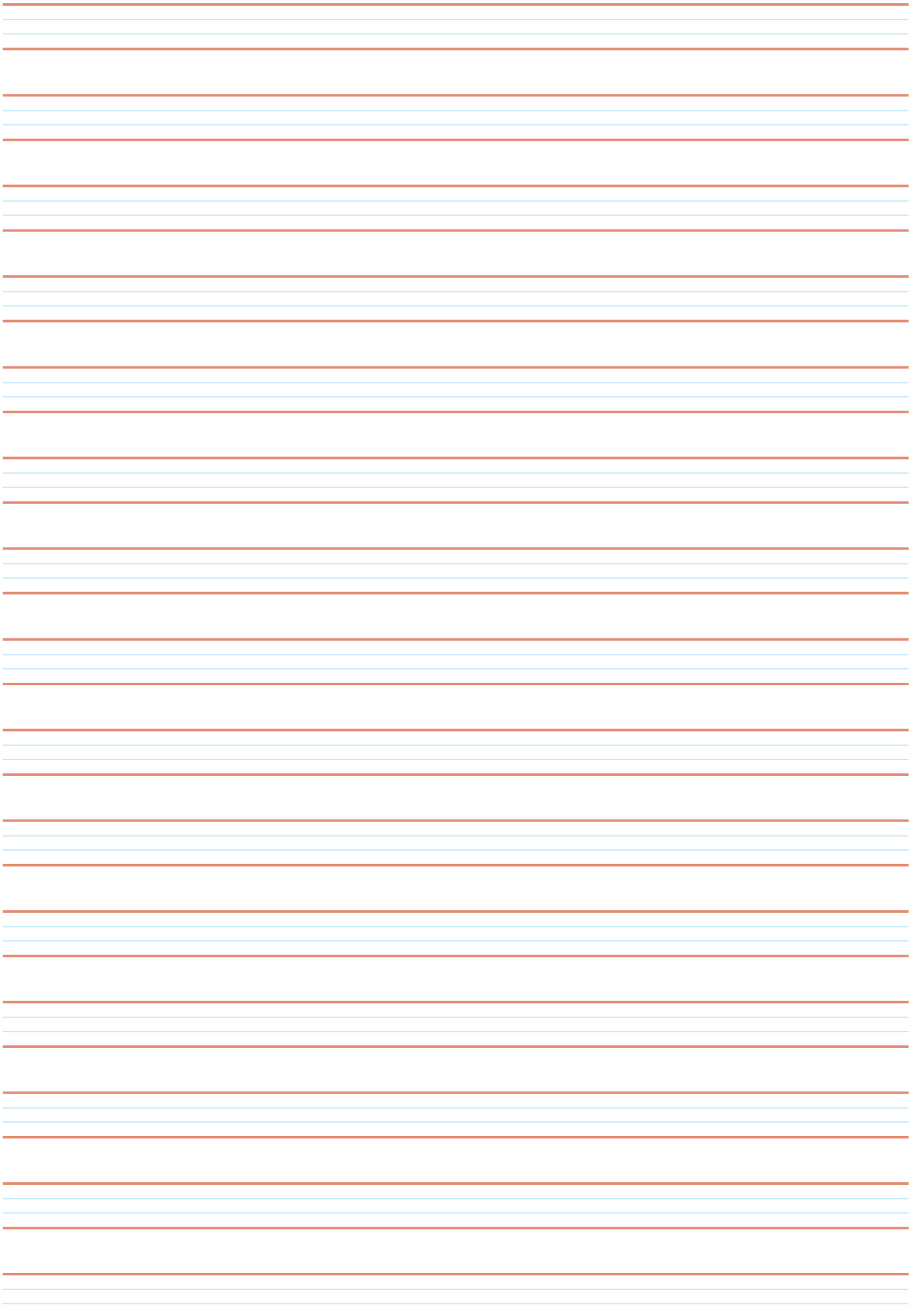
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PUNJABI

Background Image: **PHULKARI**
(Textile tradition of Punjab)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Native to Punjab - the land of five rivers, Punjabi, also spelled as '*Panjabi*' in India is an Indo-Aryan language with salient characteristics. Rich in history and cultural heritage, the language has roots in the ancient Apabhramsa, Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. The *Gurmukhi* script is used to write Punjabi in India.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Punjabi is enlisted in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as one of the 22 Scheduled languages of India. It was declared the official language of the Indian state of Punjab by the Punjab (State) Language Act of 1967. It is also one of the official languages of the national capital, Delhi, and is widely spoken in the neighbouring states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

The language is also spoken by the Punjabi communities residing in various parts of the world. Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are countries with significant Punjabi-speaking populations.

DIALECTS

The rich history of the Punjabi language and the territorial expanse over which it is spoken have given rise to a number of unique dialects. *Majhi*, widely considered to be the standard form of Punjabi is spoken in the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. It also serves as a linguistic benchmark for Punjabi literature and education.

Other dialects such as *Doabi*, spoken in the districts of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala; *Malwi*, dominant in Ferozpur, Bhatinda, Sangrur, Ludhiana and the western parts of Patiala and *Powadhi*, found in eastern parts of Patiala and Sangrur and the district of Ropar contribute to the language's variety.

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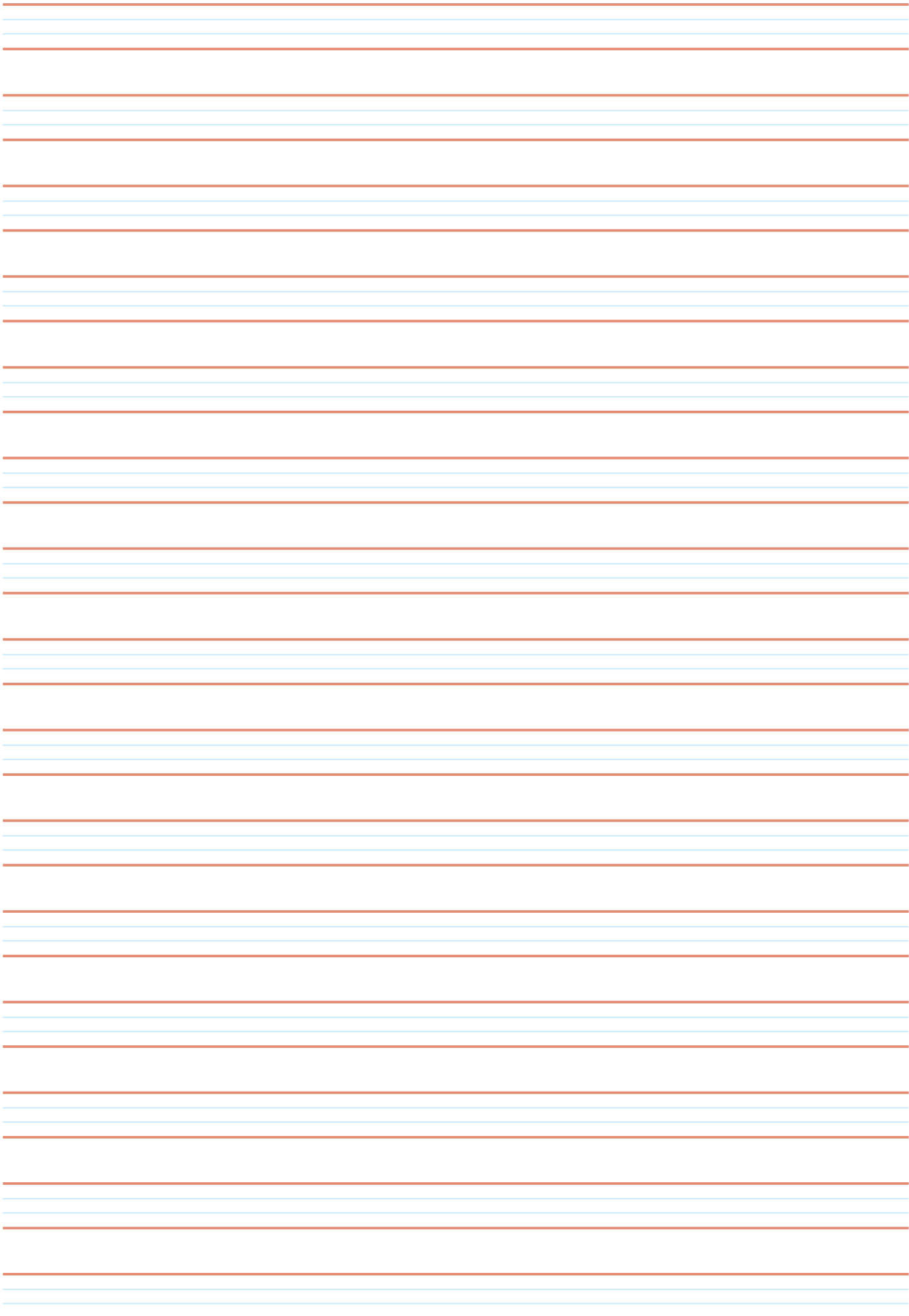
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SANSKRIT

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Sanskrit is a Proto-Indo-Iranian language of the Proto-Indo-European language group, which is written in the *Devanagari* or *Nagari* scripts. Today, around 46% of the world speaks some or the other Indo-European language, out of which the most popular are English, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Out of the languages spoken and written in the Indian subcontinent, Sanskrit has also been used in various Buddhist and Jain texts. Sanskrit is a standardized and formalized version of the Old Indo-Aryan language, which began as Vedic Sanskrit around 1500 BCE. In ancient times, Sanskrit was perhaps the most widely spoken language of the Indian subcontinent but it is still used today for Hindu religious rituals, Buddhist chants, and Jain textual writing. Vedic Sanskrit was followed by the development of Classical Sanskrit after Panini, an ancient Indian linguist and grammarian, wrote his work, *Ashtadhyayi*, which is considered the authoritative source of Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Sanskrit is one of the six languages that enjoy a Classical status according to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The other five are Tamil, Malayalam, Odia, Kannada, and Telugu. It consists of literature that dates back to a period of 1500-2000 years. The Sanskrit literary tradition is also not borrowed from another speech community.

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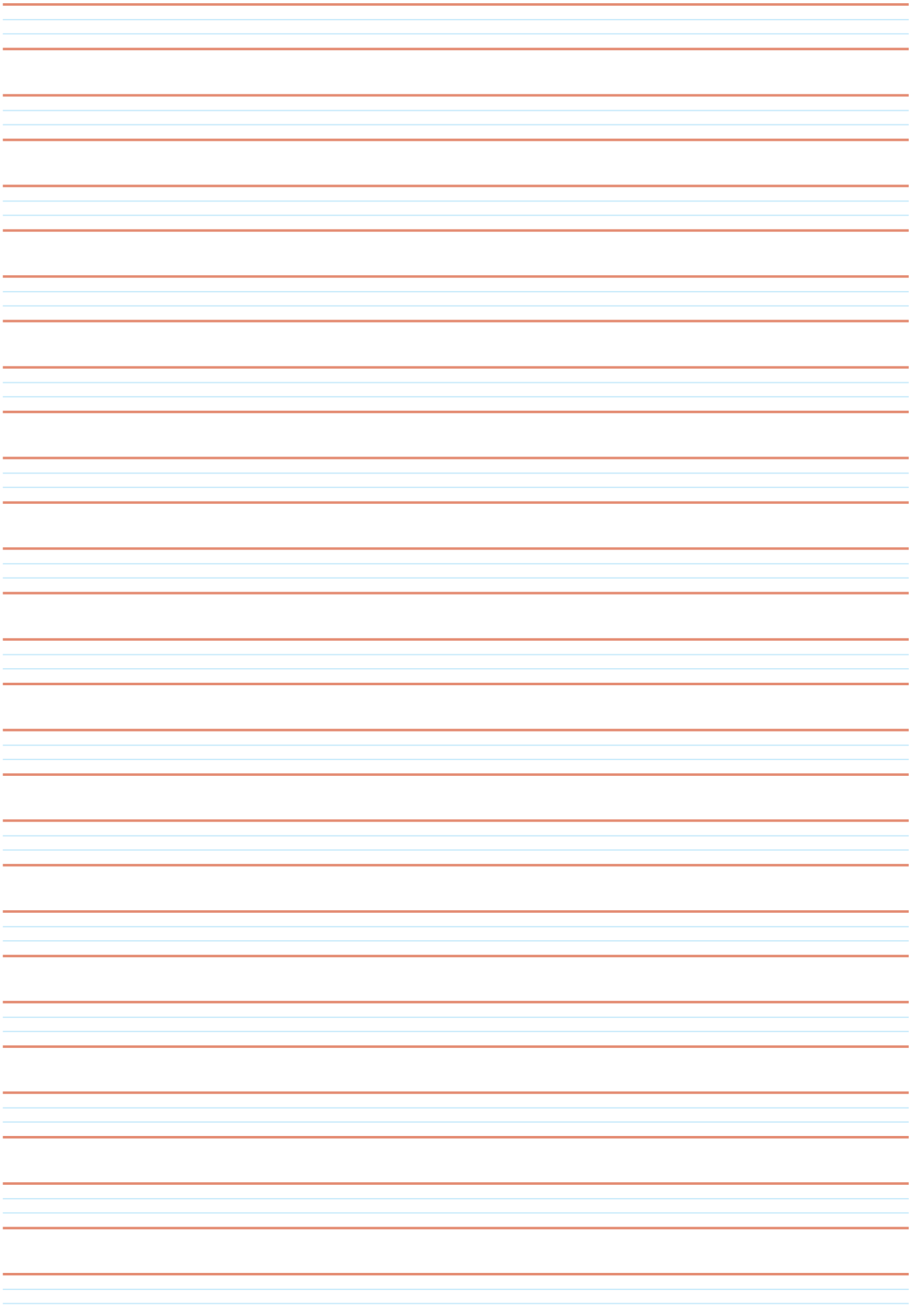
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ORIGIN & HISTORY

Santhali is a Munda language of considerable antiquity. All Munda languages like Santhali, Mundari and Ho are believed to have emerged from a common ancestral language that may be called Proto-Munda. This language reached India from South East Asia around 3500-4000 years ago. The Munda languages are part of the Austroasiatic language group. Thus, Santhali is distantly related to other Austroasiatic languages such as the Khmer language of Cambodia and the Vietnamese language.

Until the early twentieth century, Santhali was primarily an oral language. Though attempts were made to write Santhali in *Bangla*, *Devanagari*, *Latin* and other scripts, all the sounds of the language could not be accurately expressed. In 1925, a writer and educator named Pandit Raghunath Murmu began to develop the *Ol Chiki* script for Santhali. Unlike other Indic scripts, *Ol Chiki* is alphabetical in nature, with vowels and consonants being represented independently. The script is also partly pictographic as each letter is associated with an image. *Ol Chiki* is now the official script for Santhali in India.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Santhali is a widely-spoken Munda language in the world. It is not only the mother tongue of the Santhal tribe but is also spoken by other communities like the Mahali and Birhor tribes. Santhali is primarily used in the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and Assam in India. A few thousand speakers also inhabit Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. The language is spoken in pockets of Bangladesh and Nepal as well. In 2003, Santhali was added to the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

DIALECTS

During the colonial period, two major dialects of Santhali were identified. Northern Santhali was spoken in Bhagalpur, Monghyr, the Santhal Parganas, Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh and Manbhum. Favoured by the majority of Santhali speakers, this dialect was considered the standard and more polished version of the language. The Southern dialect was spoken in Midnapur, Singhbhum, Mayurbhanj and Balasore. Compared to the Northern variant, the Southern dialect of Santhali makes use of fewer vowels. In recent years, *Kamari-Santali*, *Khole*, *Lohari-Santali*, *Mahali*, *Manjhi* and *Paharia* have been recognised as dialects of Santhali.

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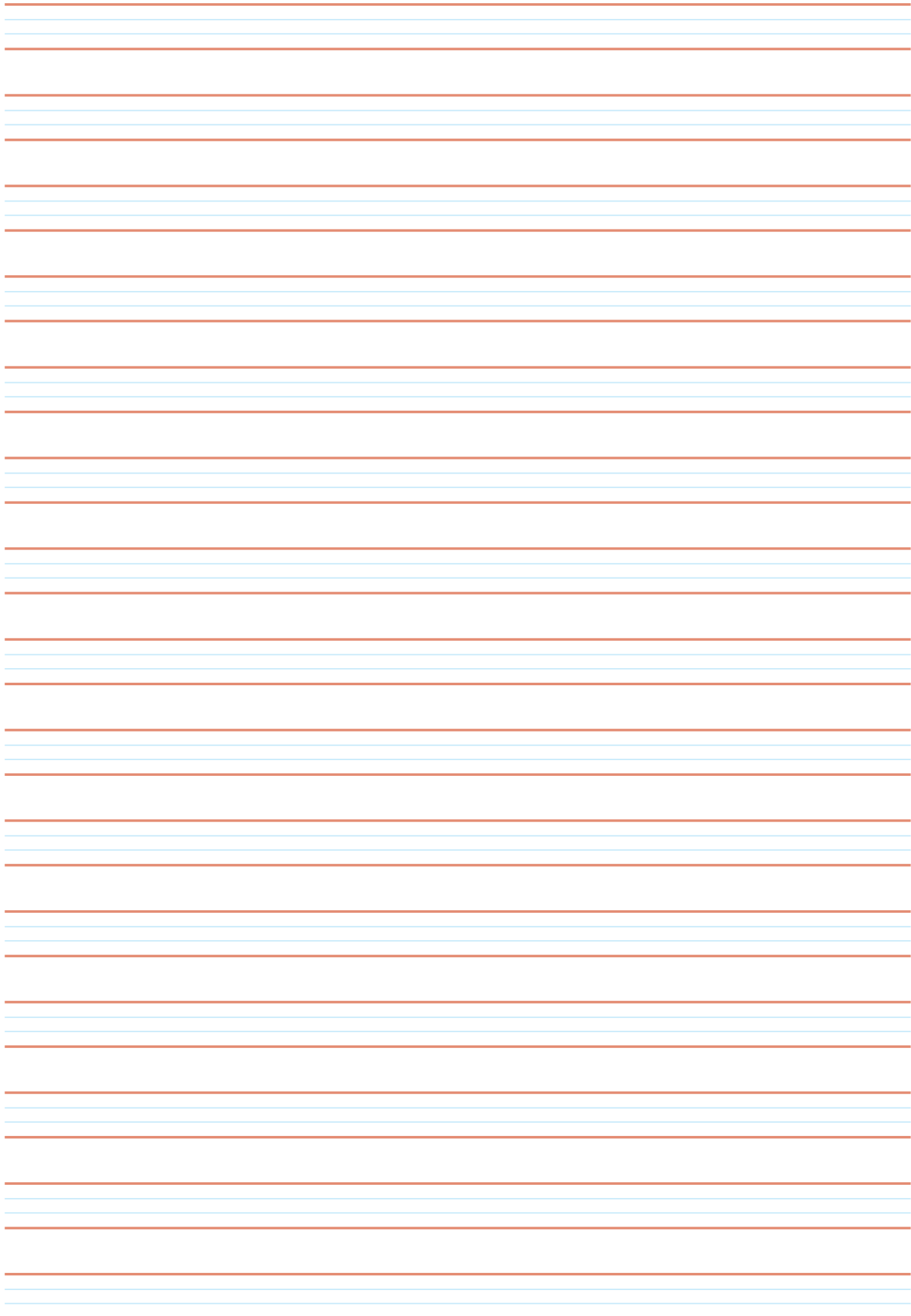
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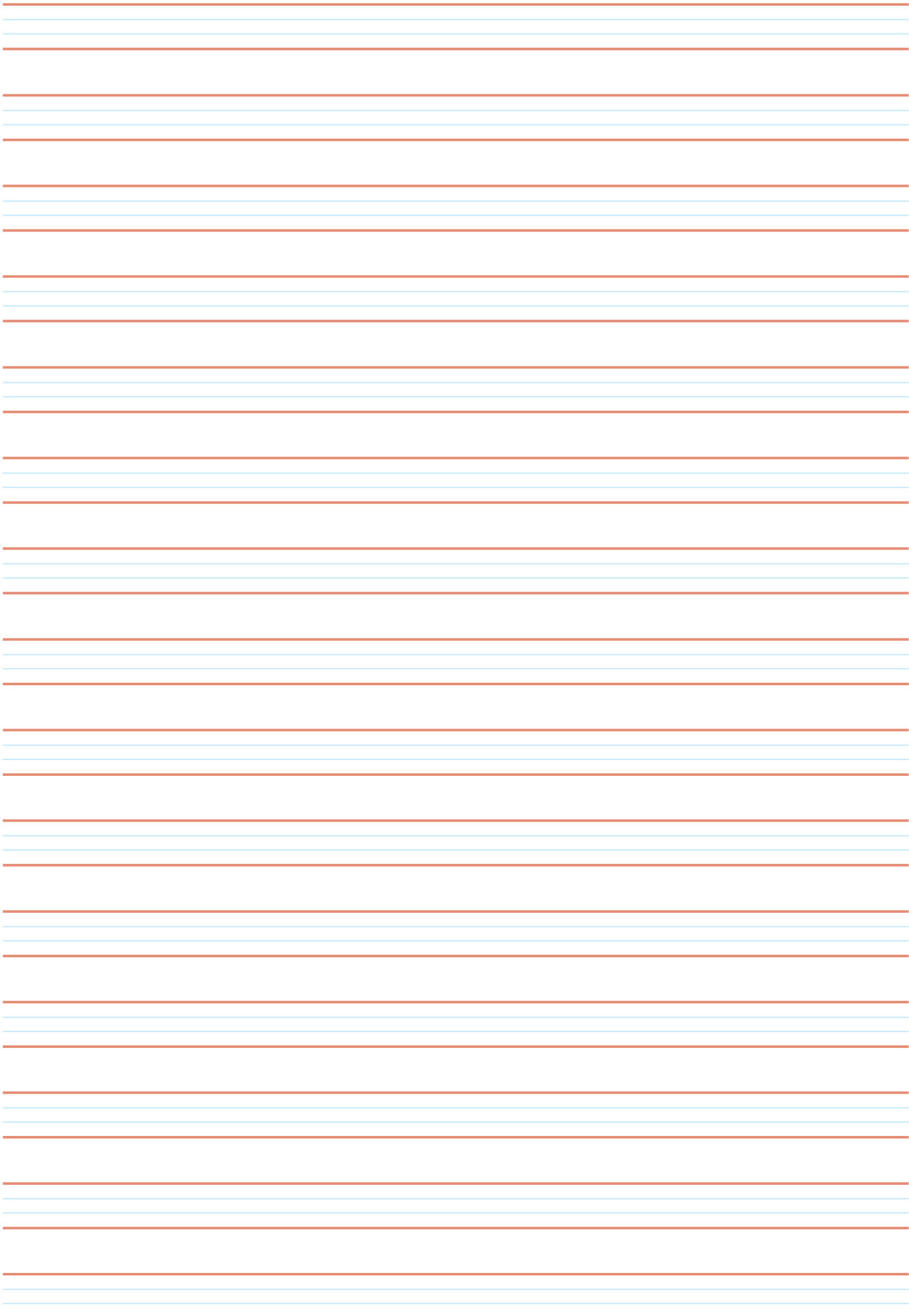
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SINDHI

Background Image: **SINDHI TEXTILE**
(Textile tradition in regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

There are numerous debates about the origin of Sindhi language. While some linguists believe that the language is derived from *Varchada Apabhramsa*, others argue that the language traces its roots to the Indus Valley civilization. Nonetheless, all the theories agree that Sindhi is one of the oldest languages of the Indian subcontinent.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

In 1967, Sindhi was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as one of the 22 official languages of India. The language is spoken in almost all states but predominantly in Gujarat and Maharashtra which have a large Sindhi population. It is also spoken in South-East Asian regions like Hong Kong, Thailand, and Singapore. Sindhi is also the official language of the Sindh province in Pakistan.

DIALECTS

The Sindhi language is spoken in six dialects, *Siraiki*, *Vicholi*, *Lari*, *Lasi*, *Thari*, and *Kutchi*. The predominant dialect spoken in India is *Kutchi*. Historically, Sindhi was written in different scripts like *Gurmukhi*, *Khojiki*, *Shikarpuri*, and *Khudawadi*. Today the language is written in Arabic *Naskh* and the *Devanagari* script. The Sindhi language was developed by a harmonious combination of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Urdu, and therefore, it has 56 letters, while Urdu has more than 30 letters and Arabic has 28.

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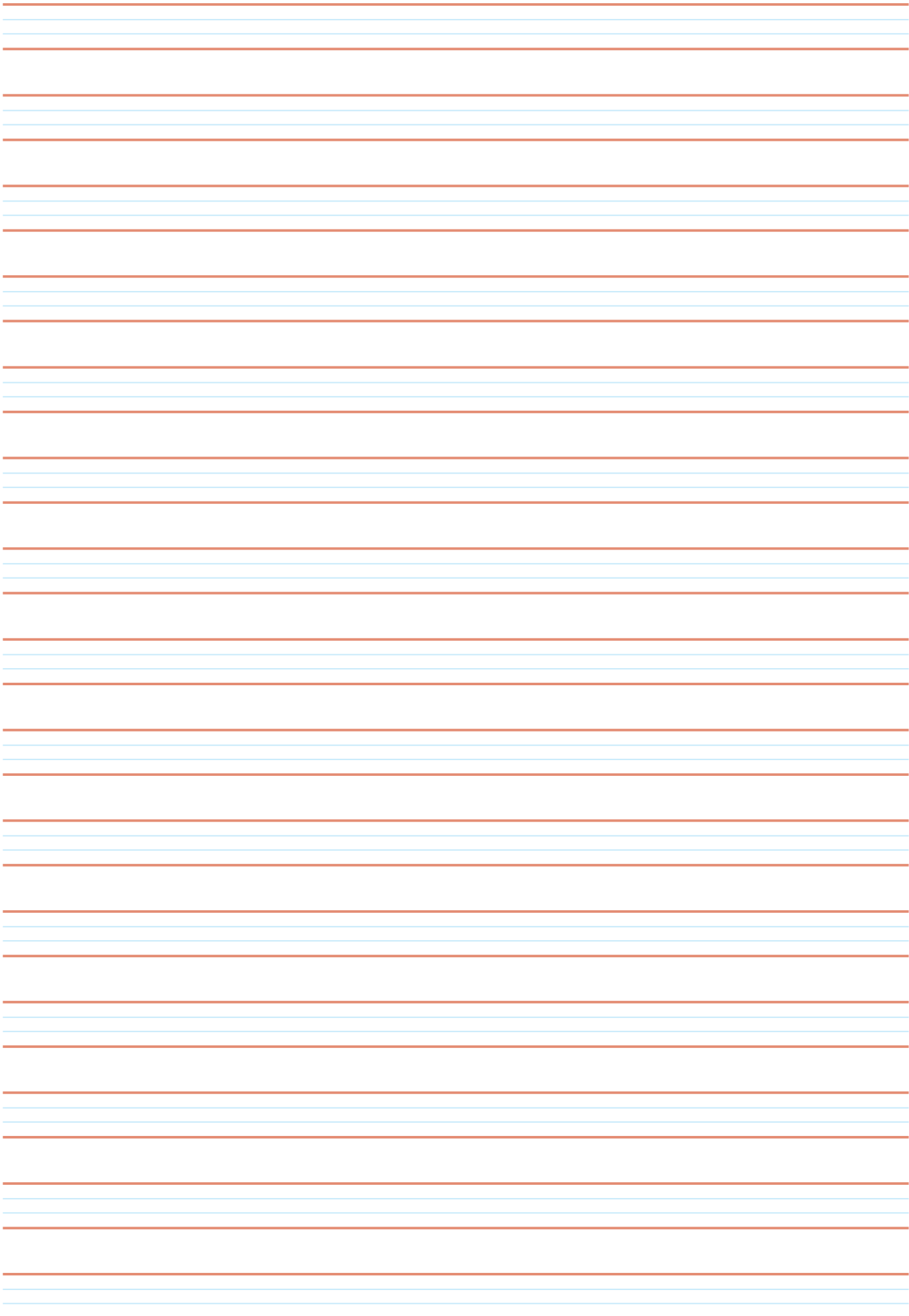
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TAMIL

Background Image: **KANJEEVARAM SAREE**
(Textile tradition of **Tamil Nadu**)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Tamil is one of the oldest languages of South India and it belongs to the Dravidian family of languages. The oldest written literature in South India, the *Sangam* Literature is written in Tamil. Scholars believe the oldest Tamil inscription dates back to the 3rd century BCE. The script used in this inscription is said to be a variant of the *Brahmi* script known as *Tamil Brahmi*. *Tamil Brahmi* was used to write Old Tamil which spanned from the 3rd century BCE to the 7th century CE. The Old Tamil period was followed by Middle Tamil and Modern Tamil periods. Besides the *Tamil Brahmi* script, Tamil was also written in *Vattezhuthu* script which was later replaced by *Grantha* script. Today, modern *Tamil* script is used to write the language.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Tamil, spoken predominantly by the people of Tamil Nadu - a southeastern state of India – was declared a classical language in 2004. It is the official language of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry. It is also spoken in the neighbouring states of Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Interestingly, Tamil has also acquired the status of an official language in Sri Lanka. There are also a significant number of speakers of this language in Malaysia, Singapore and Fiji. Tamil is one of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

DIALECTS

Over centuries, Tamil has developed diglossia, wherein the language has distinct variations in the colloquial and the written language. Some scholars have divided the dialects of Tamil based on the geography of the region; Northern, Eastern, Western and Southern. The areas bordering Kerala, also use words from the Malayalam language. As Tamil is also a widely spoken language in Sri Lanka, several dialects of that region do not include the commonly used words in India.

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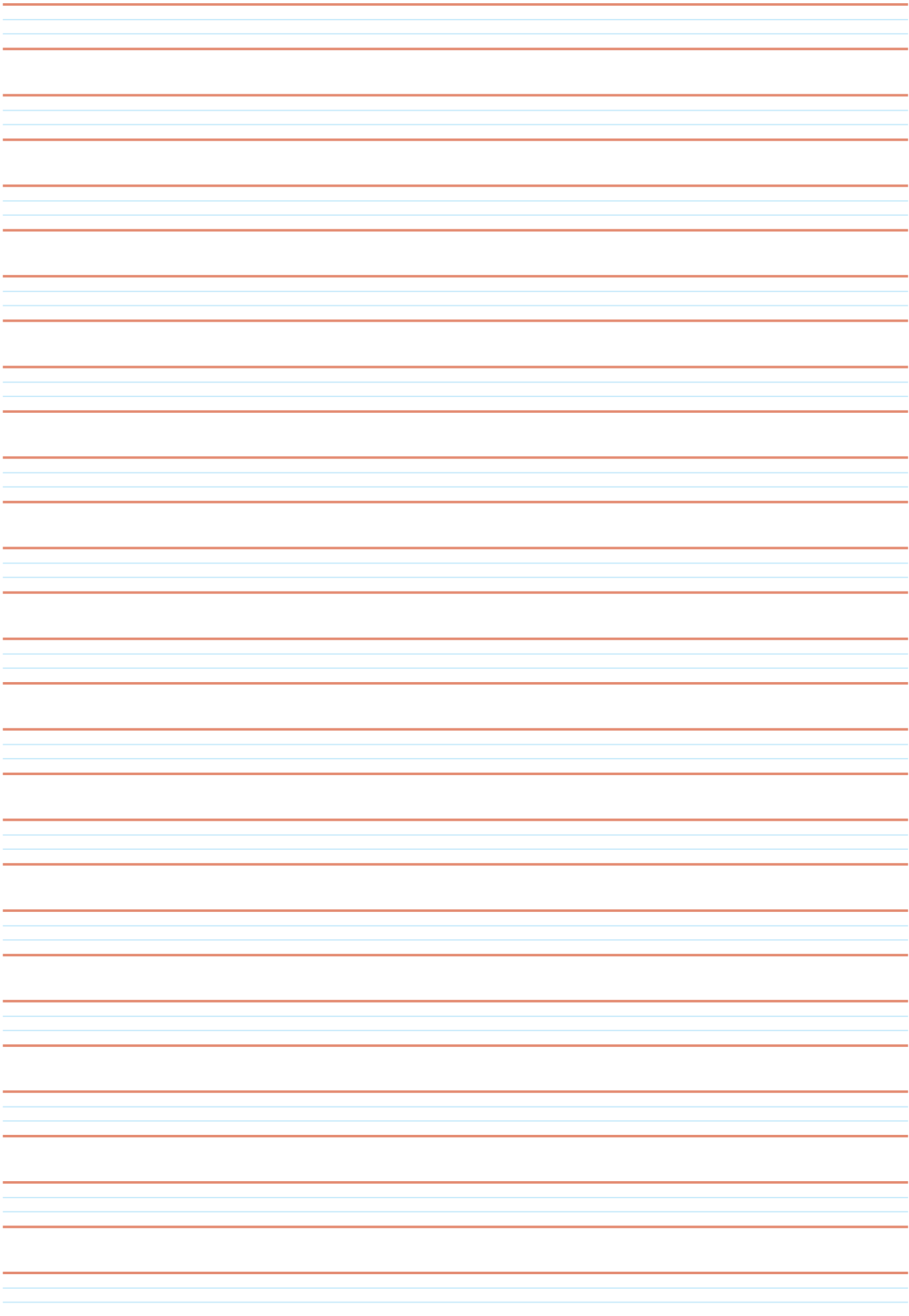
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TELUGU

Background Image: **KALAMKARI TEXTILE**
(Textile tradition of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Telugu is a Dravidian language that originated in ancient India. According to scholars, all Dravidian languages share a common ancestor that can be called Proto-Dravidian. Telugu is believed to have emerged from Proto-Dravidian around the first millennium BCE. The earliest inscriptions containing Telugu words have been dated to 400 BCE. The inscriptions of Ashoka (257 BCE) and various Satavahana rulers (2nd century BCE – 3rd century CE) also contain Telugu words. Inscriptional evidence has also been discovered in South East Asian countries like Myanmar and Indonesia. However, the first inscription written entirely in the language is from 575 CE. The *Telugu* script is closely related to the *Kannada* script and both seem to have branched off from the *Kadamba* writing system. The *Kadamba* script evolved from *Bhattiprolu*, a variant of the ancient *Brahmi* script.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Native to the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in present-day India, Telugu is the most widely spoken Dravidian language in the world. It is the fourth most commonly spoken native language in India. Telugu is also used in the neighbouring states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, parts of Jharkhand, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry. Additionally, Telugu speakers have migrated to other parts of the country as well as all over the world. In 2018, Telugu became the fastest-growing language in the United States of America. It also enjoys a protected status in South Africa. Telugu is one of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

DIALECTS

In colloquial terms, there are three main dialects of Telugu which correspond to the three geographic areas in the region, namely – Telangana, Rayalseema and Coastal Andhra. Telangana Telugu is significantly influenced by *Dakhani* or *Hyderabadi Urdu*. The Telugu in Rayalseema shares numerous words with Kannada and Tamil. The language in Coastal Andhra is considered more formal and Sanskritised. These broad categories have been formally divided into six major dialects. Though the vocabulary does not significantly change between dialects, the varying pronunciations provide a rich geographical context to the language.

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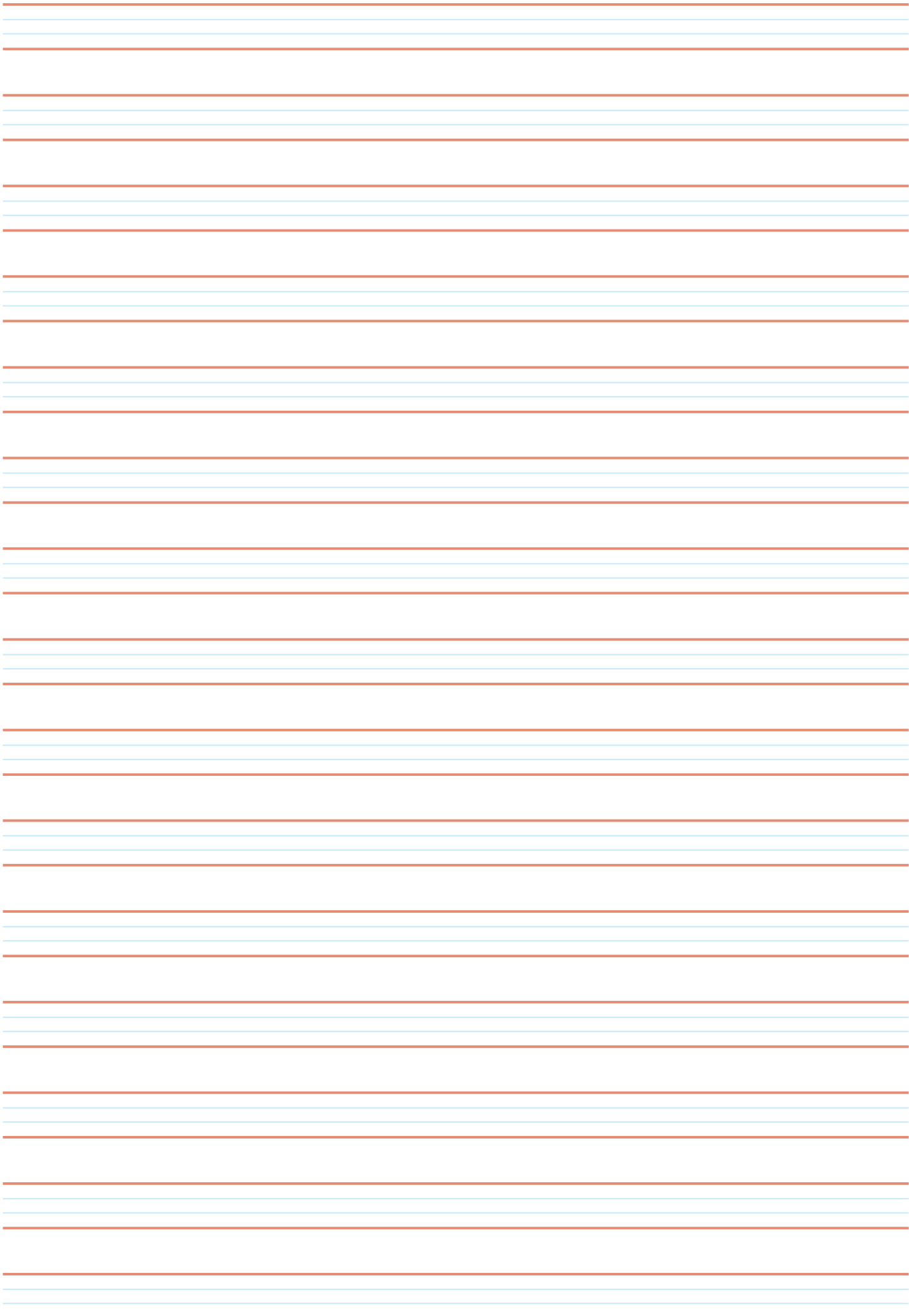
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URDU

Background Image: **CHIKANKARI TEXTILE**
(Textile tradition of **Lucknow**)

ORIGIN & HISTORY

In India, the history of the Urdu language represents a tale of cultural amalgamation. During the 13th century, Urdu is believed to have evolved through interaction between Persian and various local languages that were spoken in the Indian subcontinent - such as Braj Bhasha, Mewati, Khari Boli, and Haryanvi. Urdu is believed to have developed in and around Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) during the later Mughal Era. Hindi, Hindavi, Hindustani, and Dihlavi are some other names that were given to Urdu. By the 19th century, Urdu crystallised in Delhi with the help of poets and scholars. Today, Urdu consists of a unique grammar, vocabulary, and script. It is linked to the Indo-European language family. Urdu's script is adapted from Arabic and Persian, written from right to left.

DEMOGRAPHY & CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS

Urdu is spoken in various regions of South Asia. In India, the majority of Urdu speakers exist in North India, Hyderabad, some parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. Urdu is one of the 22 official languages of India and was made part of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1950. Urdu is an additional official language in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Telangana, and Delhi. It is also one of the five official languages of Jammu and Kashmir.

DIALECTS

In India, the Urdu language consists of several dialects that vary across different regions. Urdu's Delhi and Lucknow dialects are widely recognised as the standard form. The Lucknow dialect of Urdu is also referred to as *Lakhnavi Urdu* or *Awadhi Urdu*. Another dialect, *Dakhini* or Decanni Urdu, is primarily spoken in Hyderabad. In Kashmir, Urdu is influenced by the local Kashmiri Language.

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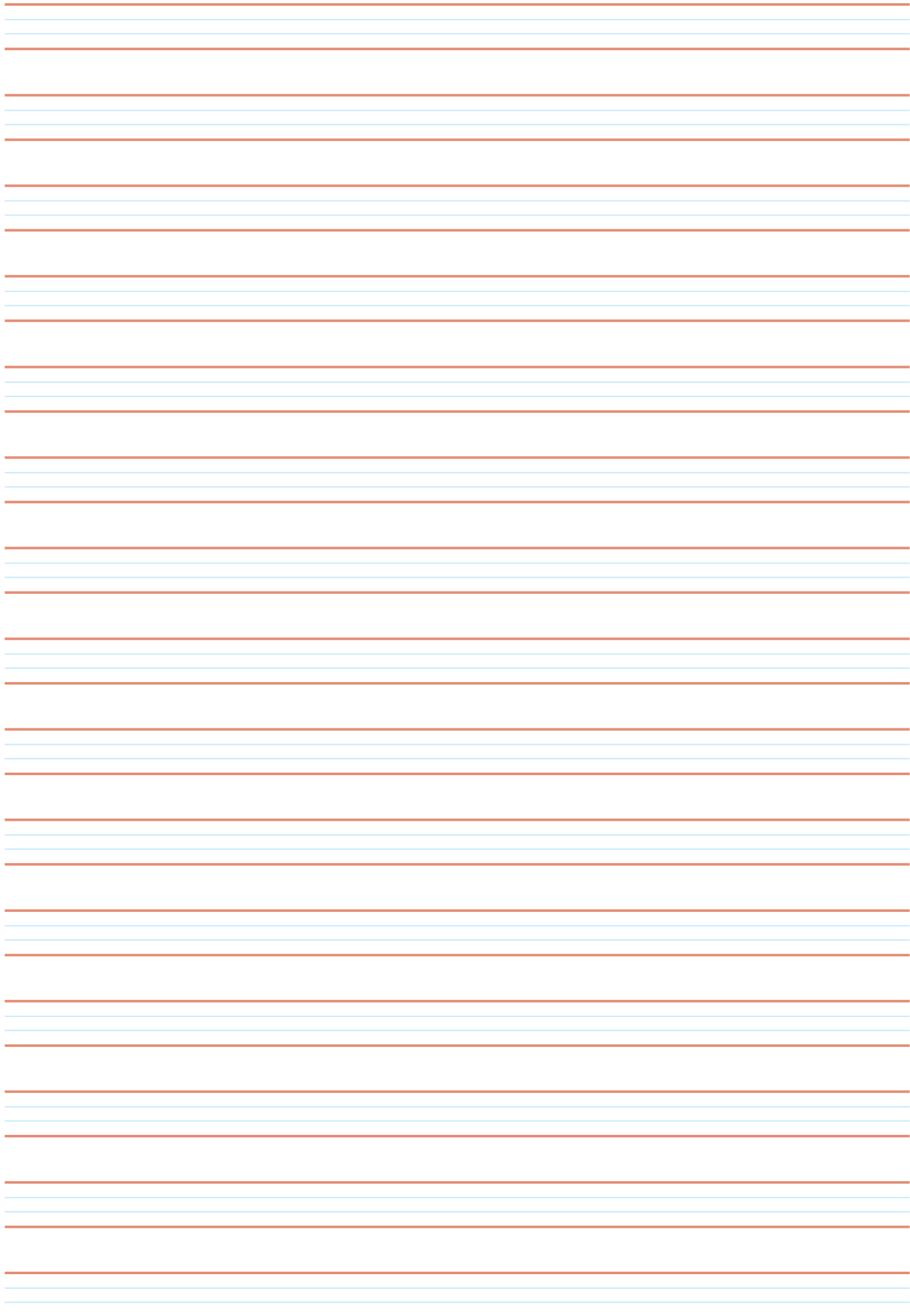
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ENGLISH

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ABOUT THE BOOK

India is one of the most diverse countries in the world in many aspects, and one of them is the number of languages spoken here. A popular proverb depicts India's linguistic diversity rather well: *Kos-kos par badle paani, chaar kos par baani* (The language spoken in India changes every few kilometres, just like the taste of the water).

A total of 22 languages have been declared as scheduled languages as per the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Initially, during the time of framing the Indian Constitution, there were 14 languages included in the Eighth Schedule. Several amendments introduced languages like Sindhi, Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali, Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali. This book is an attempt to awaken a desire to identify the scripts of India and understand the vernacular literature of our country.