I make out my report: “The characters 
Are stock, the emotional line somewhat 
Naive . . .” I stop, and put down 
My pen — who after all am in the same boat. 

Stewart Conn

The Dhobi Poem

In the morning the washed 
undergarments smelled of water 
in the road-side ditches and 
thin bamboo poles fixed 
crosswise over the whole of the land of India. 
A sagging jute cord supported 
the monsoon sky, binding 
all fears into 
a prayer of no more rain. 

The indigo applied to the white 
clothes was going thinner in the drizzle. 
Coins had changed their faces 
and markings and worth in the local bazar. 
Rumblings in the sky and lightning 
hastened him on the 
beating-stone in the dhobi-ghat, for ages. 
Price of indigo was still going higher. 
The milk-goat had died last winter. 
Kanwali will have to wait another 
year for her golden bangles. 

For centuries 
cross-legged 
the dhobi sits 
thinking of the rising prices of 
indigo and lamenting 
the death of the Sun-god. 

Feroz Ahmed-ud-din