The very serviceable washermen and washerwomen are a caste by themselves. Indeed, among themselves are numerous castes refusing to eat or drink together or intermarry. No Hindu not of the washer caste ever thinks of washing his own clothes; it would destroy all his dignity and ruin his caste, and his future happiness would even be imperiled. The washermen are much despised by the higher castes to whom they render indispensable and invaluable service. The clothes are cleaned by beating them on a stone, and if necessary by steaming. "The wise foreigner does not intrust delicate laces or other fragile articles to the native washerman—at least not twice."