

Issue 1

9th April 2021

Project uP's

LAHAR



Feminist Chronicles

Stories from
people like
you and us.



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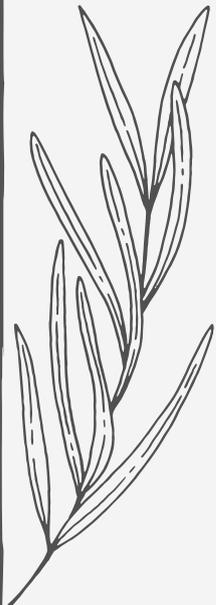
About Lahar

Introducing Lahar, Project uP's official magazine, through which we aim to bring about a wave of change, one page at a time.

Lahar is a one of its kind endeavour that shall attempt to create an inclusive space, which encapsulates people's personal encounters with vast beliefs and systems relating to social development. In a world saturated with corporate definitions of human rights, Lahar shall intertwine an intersectional approach with a humane portrait of what it means to be a human in an ever-evolving world order.

Our aim?

To tell your story, to make aware and engrain empathy, to bind in love, and to set free creativity.



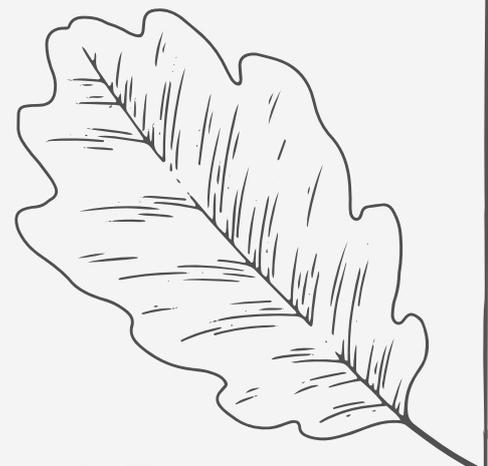
prose

About Feminist Chronicles

The first issue of Lahar aims at looking at Feminism through a lens not used very often- the one that doesn't talk about it as a movement or an ideology, but simply as a reality lived by people like you and us on a daily basis.

The issue includes short stories narrated by people talking about what Feminism means to them, and how they form their personal perspective of it.

Along with this, we bring to you the conversations we've had around the same with renowned women who are also wonderful individuals, and have been writing/advocating about feminism and related realms on a daily basis- Dr.Tanaya Narendra (famously known as Dr.Cuterus), Dr.Ayesha Khan, and Ms.Damni Kain.



interviews.



"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
famously known as Dr. Cuterus



Meet Dr. Tanaya! She's a medic who is passionate about sexual and reproductive health, and likes to put the 'fun' in fundamental sex ed!



When did you start writing about feminism? How do you shape your idea of feminism?

I don't believe that I need to separately define myself as a feminist. I think if you inherently believe in equality of genders, you're a feminist, and I believe everybody is and should be a feminist, because I don't think there are people out there who truly don't believe that all people are equal. As a doctor and somebody who works so much with reproductive rights and areas that generally women face a lot of violence in, I think I started actively working in all of this 2-3 years ago, after I finished medical school and I realised I had a voice that I could use. Before that, I was a timid little kid, so it was after that I found my voice and was able to talk about it. Having said that, I think there is a long way to go with the work that I do, and there's a lot more that I can do.

interviews.

"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
famously known as Dr. Cuterus



In the development and the social sector, we often talk about intersectionality. However, when it comes to the medical sphere, the discussion still seems far away. Being someone from the field, how do you manage to and think others can incorporate intersectional values and practices?

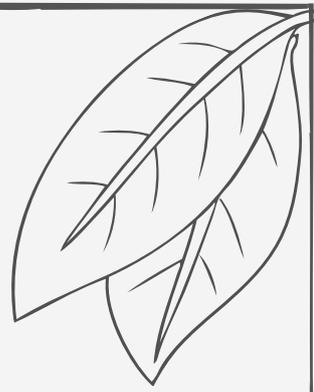
I think I'm a very small changemaker with that regard, but I'm hoping with this platform there will be more young medical students who will be inspired to be more inclusive in their practices. So, the first thing that we absolutely need to do is update our medical textbooks. I was taught about pedophilia, necrophilia and being a lesbian in the same chapter. That shows the kind of hateful and bigoted textbooks we have. That's the biggest step we need to take. We need to change the language we have in our medical textbooks and medical communities, and update that to reflect the current times. I think that will be a huge step in changing the mindsets of the people who are doctors and are involved in these fields, and I hope it snowballs from there.



interviews.

"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
famously known as Dr. Cuterus



From your point of view, how do you think feminism can be shifted from a concept to a corporeal reality, where we can garner empirical data to provide the tangible evidence of change?

We need policymakers, we need young individuals who are willing to shake up the system, we need scientists who study this, and we need a less misogynistic environment than the one we live in, where there's so many barriers to women's issues being taken seriously.

If I speak from a health perspective, the way period pains are a problem across the world, if that were to happen to a man, it would've been taken up so much early and there would be so much more research around it. There's an essay by Simone de Beauvoir, which also talks about how if men had periods, then there would be a monthly period leave for everybody, periods would be celebrated, companies wouldn't be all hush-hush about it.

Basically what I mean to say is, that we need more think tanks, young leaders, young changemakers, old policy-makers, all of these people to be involved, with more science, more money, funnelling towards the research of 'women'ly subjects and related things.

interviews.

"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
famously known as Dr. Cuterus



Since you're in the medical field, how have you been able to and how important is it to de-stigmatise fat bodies, given they're still considered as 'unhealthy', despite there being multiple biological reasons associated with the same?

As someone who's a larger woman myself, I do have an understanding of how difficult it is to be a larger bodied person, particularly in the medical context. Like, if you go to the doctor, a lot of times, everything that you have is just dismissed by saying 'lose weight and it'll be cured'. So, I feel like education is very very key. It's only now we're moving towards a fat acceptance world and we're only now learning that health at all sizes is a real concept. And, there's so many things that we don't understand about metabolism, and so many other things that we're just beginning to understand now. For example, BMI, which is a standard indicator of health everywhere, is not meant to be used for this purpose. BMI is not a very great indicator of your health status because somebody who has a lot of muscle mass will come up as obese, because muscles carry a lot of weight. So, a class-A athlete will technically have an obese BMI, which is not sort. So, I think education is key, along with which we also need more research; fund it more, study it more, and talk about it more!



interviews.

"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
famously known as Dr. Cuterus



Most of the people who write about feminism agree to how we have a long way to go in this journey. Even in your videos, you mention how people go to a gynaecologist thinking of them to be a safe space, but are often hushed and asked to not talk about sex and related topics openly. So, have you personally had any such instances which made you feel we're far far away from the goal?

So, I have a man who follows me on instagram. He has a daughter and he is a single father. He uses my videos to explain different concepts to his daughter as she's at the age of puberty. We know how hard it is to be a single father in the Indian context when it comes to these conversations. So on the one hand, there's situations like these where you see the real world impact of being a feminist and talking about these things, and how it can alter people's life experiences.

But, on the other hand there's instances like, for example, every time I go to a family occasion, there are some of my relatives who don't talk to me anymore, because I go scream words like 'penis' on the internet. In my experience, young doctors have been very supportive of it, and mostly old doctors in particular don't seem to like it.

The response has been very varied that way. And that's why we need more feminism, more education, so that people can understand that these are not only completely harmless topics to talk about but also not talking about them is very harmful.

interviews.

"Educate & Agitate"

In Conversation with Dr. Tanaya Narendra,
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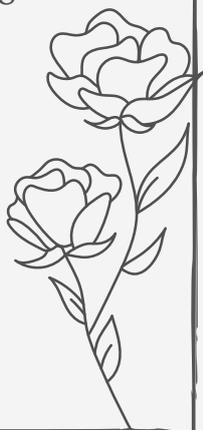


People from all genders face different kinds of abuse. How do you think gender advocacy should be made inclusive enough to accommodate interests and issues of all genders?

TW: Sexual Abuse.

I've worked with an organisation that had this problem that a lot of times, these underprivileged kids were being sexually assaulted, and they liked it, because for them, it's a nice touch, and they often come from families with neglect, so being touched is something they enjoy.

How do you explain to them that this is bad, this shouldn't be happening to you, and even though it's your body's natural response that you're enjoying it, you need to protect yourself here. Why this was happening was because these people didn't know what is right, what is not, and what their bodies are. So, the first thing we need to do in terms of any kind of advocacy with regards to gender, to sexual abuse, to preventing sexual assault, is educate, agitate, educate, agitate. If we have such a situation where young people are aware of what is right, what is wrong, what's happening with their bodies, it automatically makes the job easier. And that's not to say that education is the only barrier; we also need more people to be inclusive about it, to support the victims of any kind of violation in any way. And this should not take place or be talked about in a girls/cis-women-only scenario; it has to be across the board. It should be everywhere.



interviews.

"You Have To Do The Best You Can."

In Conversation with Dr. Ayesha Khan.



Postdoctoral Fellow | Laboratory of Cesar A. Arias, M.D., Ph.D.
Center for Antimicrobial Resistance and Microbial Genomics (CARMiG)
Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Internal Medicine
McGovern Medical School
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

 *How has your journey been in the field of medicine.*

It has, first, been a wake up call. It's like we idolise all these fields, and think that people are going into them for the same reason as I did, to prioritise those who are sick, to heal them. But then I realised, that the truth is, just like any other field, healthcare is extremely inequitable. There are a lot of healthcare disparities, as in, marginalised communities across the world don't get the same access as others do.



interviews.

"You Have To Do The Best You Can."

In Conversation with Dr. Ayesha Khan.

 *Intersectionality appears to divide people in different spaces. So, according to you, how can we unite people?*

By having initiatives that are focused on cross community solidarity, for example, having community programs, festivals, fairs. Taking the opportunity where people are somewhere to host something that's not focused only towards feminism, but it's about multiple issues and brings in people that are embodying multiple types of hardships to be able to share their stories. At the same time, how much we separate these issues are indicative of how people view them.

 *What are some of the most provocative or necessary texts you might have come across on reading intersectional interpretations of justice in medicine or in any other field and which ones would you like to suggest ?*

I think everyone should read 'Our Prison is Obsolete', 'Women, Race and Class', 'Freedom is a Constant Struggle' by Angela Davis. Those are great examples of the literal intersectionality that needs to occur and a book called 'Medical Apartheid' by Harriet Washington that talks about racism in the healthcare system, specifically.

'Hood Feminism' by Mikki Kendall is a good example of intersectional literature. It's specifically about intersectional feminism.



interviews.

"You Have To Do The Best You Can."

In Conversation with Dr. Ayesha Khan.

 *Do you think online activism is substantial enough?*

I think only way activism is substantial is if you implement the idea and theories you're talking about. So, it depends how you use that platform; if you do not use words that the community actually understands then who are you doing it for? Little things on those regards that I do is I don't use really big technical terms and make sure that graphic representation is way better than writing, so all of it becomes more accessible.



interviews.

"A Process of Unlearning"

In Conversation with Ms. Damni Kain.



Political Editor and Writer
Decenter Magazine | The Wire | Firstpost | News Laundry

When did you start writing about feminism? Or what was it that made you realise the importance of doing so?

Becoming a feminist is a process which involves conscious efforts to learn and unlearn. As social beings, we definitely absorb the unequal structures of society in our thought process, actions and behaviour. It was a long process for me as well. But if I have to mark an event which provided me the strength to be vocal on important questions of the contemporary time- it was the period when I contested for the post of President at Delhi University Student Union Elections in 2019. It was a life changing point as Contesting elections not only made me more aware about politics but helped me explore myself too. I saw writing as a part of activism which I wish to continue now as a part of academics as well.



interviews.

"A Process of Unlearning"

In Conversation with Ms. Damni Kain

How do we place importance on historically neglected women such as Savitribai Phule? How can we do better to not repeat the same mistakes?

Writing history is an essentially political process. The discourse of knowledge that we receive is a product of power relationships. We need to situate the erasure of important events of history under this backdrop. One such important figure is Savitribai Phule. Savitribai established the foundations of renaissance with regards to women's education by her courage and undeterred will, marking a groundbreaking shift in the way women's existence was hitherto imagined. History of social reform in India remains incomplete without giving Phule due recognition for her pioneering efforts to uplift the downtrodden through an egalitarian mode of living. Her activism includes teaching, leadership, groundwork, poetry and a lot more. She not only changed the socio-political milieu of the 19th century Maharashtra but left a legacy for coming generations to follow. Much of the rights that today form a part of gender equality and justice, can be seen as a product of the revolutionary steps taken by her and Fatima Sheikh long back. The current age needs to remember the emancipatory ideals of Savitribai and Fatima Sheikh. This will require a constant engagement, discussion and awareness by people across all social groups through various modes of dissemination of information and processes of sensitisation.



interviews.

"A Process of Unlearning"

In Conversation with Ms. Damni Kain

 *What is after intersectional feminism? Is it, or has it ever been enough to address the diversity of women's lived experiences? Is accounting "women's lived experiences" the ultimate end goal?*

Intersectionality is a concept fundamental to understand societal inequalities. The various systems of societal oppression do not act independently of each other.

According to Bilge (2010), the concept of intersectionality arose from the pioneering work of black feminists on the hierarchical nature of inequality and dominance. Women's experience cannot be homogenised and the question of 'difference' hence needs to be rightfully recognised to achieve the goal which feminism promises. Determining factors like caste and race are important to understand how women from various social groups are positioned in a hierarchical social arrangement. Dr. BR Ambedkar long back in his 1916 paper titled, "Castes in India" argued that the mechanism of caste system thrives by controlling women and sustained endogamy. This clearly highlights the interlocked pattern of brahmanical patriarchy.

Intersectionality hence is important to not only provide solutions but to also understand the causes holistically.

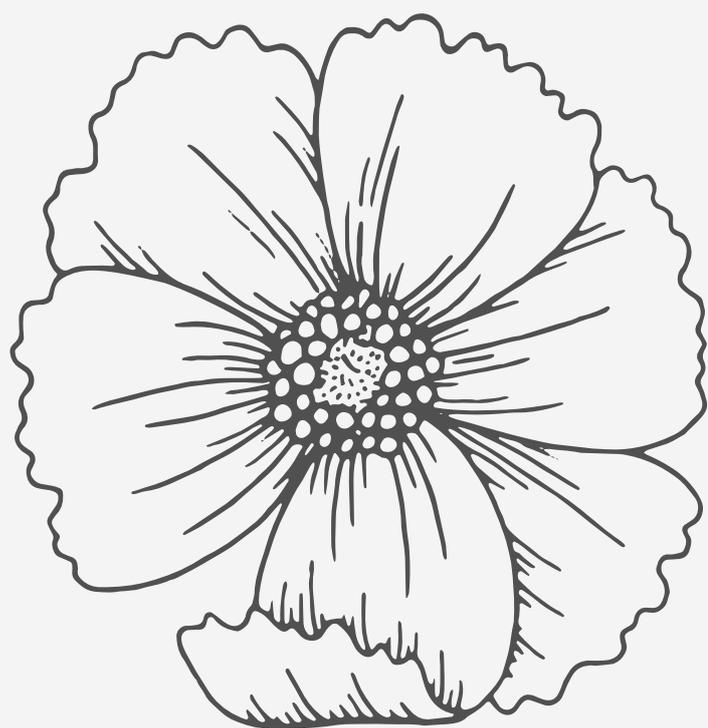
Moreover, patriarchy negatively affects people across gender and sexuality, hence the goal needs a conscious self-reflective participation of all.



My

Feminist

Reality.



prose

Letting People Be.

- *Uma Sathwika Manda*

Growing up in a household wherein there never existed any discrimination between my brother and I, I never really had the chance to ponder over those millions of girls that grieve over the inequality that prevails around. Through the years, I learnt more about the reality that existed outside my tiny world. I was taught about the various sexual orientations that people identify themselves with. And eventually, I also read about feminism and that people have different perceptions of this concept. Here is mine: Feminism, to me, is letting people be the way they are, accepting that we all have our own set of beliefs, and not judging others for being the way they are.



prose

Self-Love

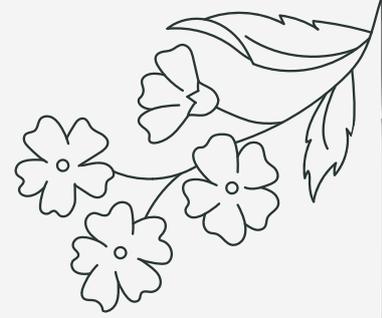
- Ishita Goel

Feminism, for me, is a journey of self-love. It is a process of realising that my voice matters equally in a society where I am constantly hushed and taken lightly, where I am told to stop making a big deal out of nothing when I am only trying to make decisions for my future. It has made me realise that I can be myself and shape my future without necessarily conforming to society's standards and expectations. I now understand that I alone can have power over my choices and have the right to stand up for myself whenever oppressed. At the same time, feminism keeps me in check; it reminds me that I have no right to make someone else feel bad for who they are and bring them down.



prose

The Gospel Truth



- Krithya Shakthi

If you sigh thinking of how overused the word “feminism” is, this one is for you! The conventional dictionary definition of the word throws light on equality of the sexes on socio-economic, political and personal grounds. There is perennial stigma around this topic of discussion. The feminist movement has come a long way. However, it has not reached anywhere close to the finish line. The ugly truth is that misogyny and patriarchy is something we are witnessing in our own lives.

“Feminism advocates hate for men and puts women at a more superior position”. “Women can be allowed to do anything, even if ethically or morally incorrect”. The gospel truth is that feminism is about equal rights for men just as it is for women. Society has made us give into flawed postulations such as men don’t have to share domestic work, women can’t be the breadwinner of a family and so on. If a person fits into these gender stereotypes, they are considered an “ideal” man or woman or will be judged for the rest of their lives. At this juncture, I would like to leave it to you to decide if you are a feminist or not!

prose

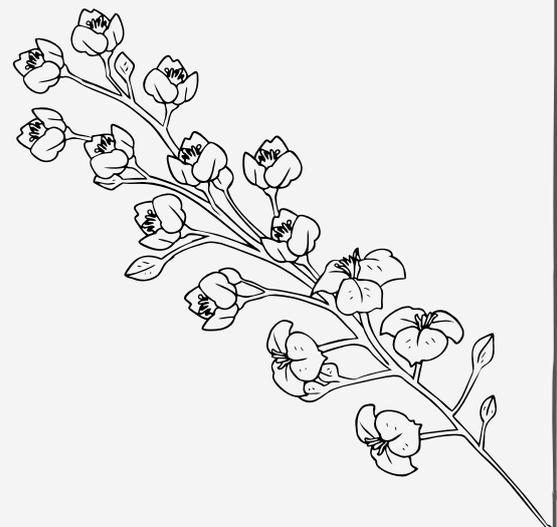
It's not a bad word

- Raghav Rozra

At my school, people are generally open-minded towards thoughts like feminism, and being a feminist is not something that makes people uncomfortable.

A break at home, though, was sufficient to break the bubble that kept me thinking the only nay-sayers of feminism were pre-teen boys or grouchy old men on the Internet. Both my parents chuckled and asked things like, “Is it that stressed to be a woman?” “Women aren’t the only individuals who lack support- what does ‘feminism’ do for the disabled?” Other relatives echoed their thoughts. And even women my age don’t see themselves as feminists.

I believe, that believers of feminism aren't just those who burn their bras or those who call out men for their problematic behaviours, but any individual who understands the socio-political-economic gap between the status of men and women, and utilises their privilege to work towards it.



prose

Dump The Tradition.

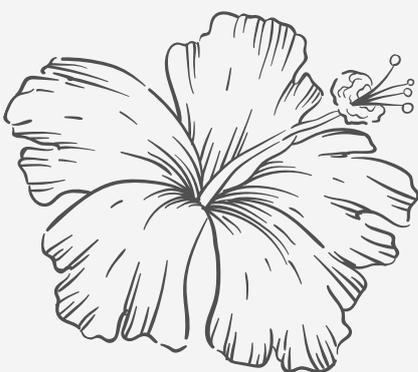
- Radhika Ahuja

As the glorious Letty Cottin Pogrebin's rightly said-
"When men are oppressed it's a tragedy but when women are
oppressed its tradition".

And in my humble opinion, dumping that tradition out of the
park is exactly what feminism is about. Both conscious and
unconscious gender bias is rampant within us, and to get rid
of it, we need to come to terms with the fact that we definitely
are the problem- BUT, we are the solution too.

I believe it is important that feminism is intersectional and
that it doesn't exclude people based on their religion, race
and socioeconomic status. It needs to be for everyone and not
categorically for the people you like or dislike. A big part of
feminism is letting women do whatever the they want.

This includes supporting them when they aspire to become
the President but also supporting them when they don't wish
to work and simply wish to stay at home. Feminism isn't
about making women stronger, women are already strong, it's
about changing the way the world perceives that strength.



artwork

SPEAK UP

- Kevin Kain



poetry

हा मै स्त्री हु ।

- Ikmanpreet Kaur



मै ही पत्नी , मै ही माँ
दुख भरी अँधेरी रात हु मै ,
किसी के लिए लक्ष्मी , तो किसी की सेविका ,
तो किसी की अनचाही औलाद हू मै ।

किसी का पुड्य तोह किसी का दोष ,
ज़माने की पुरानी सोच हु मै ,
मेरे सपनो की आखिर किसी को क्या परवाह,
क्युंकि उनके लिए भोज हु मै।

किसी के लिए मजा तो किसी के लिए सजा ,
ज़माने के लिए एक चीज़ हु मै ,
पल्लू ओडू तोह मेरी इज्जत ,
नहीं तोह उनके लिए बत्मीज़ हु मै ।

हा मै स्त्री हु ,

मै रहने से कतराती हु खुद के ही घरबार में ,
मेरी इज्जत तोह एक विज्ञापन है ,
जो बिक जाती है बाज़ार में ,

शक्ति का रूप कह पूजी जाती , फिर भी मै अबल हो गयी ,
कभी अशिफा , कभी अरुड़ा , तोह कभी निर्भया हो गयी ,
अभ क्या बताऊ तुम लोगो को की ज़माने की हफस के लिए मै क्या क्या हो गयी ,
पर उस कुदरत ने बड़ी फुर्सत से बनाया मुझे , इसलिए मै फिर से माँ हो गयी ।

poetry

I am done being saved.

- Ishika Maheshwari

You keep me like a prized possession;
An object that goes through constant suppression.

You tell me it's the world you don't trust,
Those dirty minds and eyes filled with lust.

The sunset is my cue to hide in a safe space,
It's been taught to me that it'll save me from disgrace.

Hypervigilance while walking on a silent street,
mistaking my interest in you just because I am sweet.

You pull me down every time,
Undermine my ability to fight.

But what I have learned all this while is that I am not fragile.

Teach me how to fight instead of hiding,
Trust me more than you distrust those disgusting, salacious
minds.

I want to walk outside at night without a knight.
I want to unlearn all my learnings that save me from the world
For it is time for the ones who hurt, to have their freedom burnt.



poetry

She brings life.

- Reet Singh



TW: Mention of Rape.

The moment she comes out of the womb, she is put through discrimination.

She grows a little older and is told to sit appropriately, said to "Sit like a girl".

Why can't you instead teach your boys how to look?

The girl hits puberty; with puberty come periods, but does she cry over it? No, but our society does.

'Achoot', 'sleep on the floor', 'Don't ruin the sanctity of the kitchen'.

When society didn't stop the rapists from entering temples

Then why stop girls in the name of 'ashudhi'?

Why worship 'Laxmi'?

Majority of Indian girls are not allowed to wear short clothes, and when they do, they are told 'shauk poore karlo' Is wearing what you want a hobby? Is that how our mentality should be?

'Reach home safe'

Safe from your sons? Sons, that you raise without telling them how to respect a woman?

You teach her what to wear, how to sit, when to come, where to go, but what did you teach your son?

Yes, this girl leaves her home, changes her name and lives with strangers because 'ladke ghar jamayi nahi ban sakte'; shame, isn't it?.

It's the woman who carries around life in her for nine months.

It is said that the most painful thing is to give birth. So the strongest person on the earth is a woman? No. 'Unka toh kaam hi yahi hai'

If a girl child is born, people are ready to kill her inside or leave her destitute. Is this the shining beacon of the 21st century?

If she doesn't live according to your rules, there are chances they get raped for showing their skin, where a man is nicknamed 'macho' for doing the same.

'Ladki Bachao, Ladki padhao' Why didn't you ever need to do this for a guy?

There is no life without her, and you are suffocating her!

Editor's

Note.



Editor's Note

- Aanchal Pundir

Dear readers,

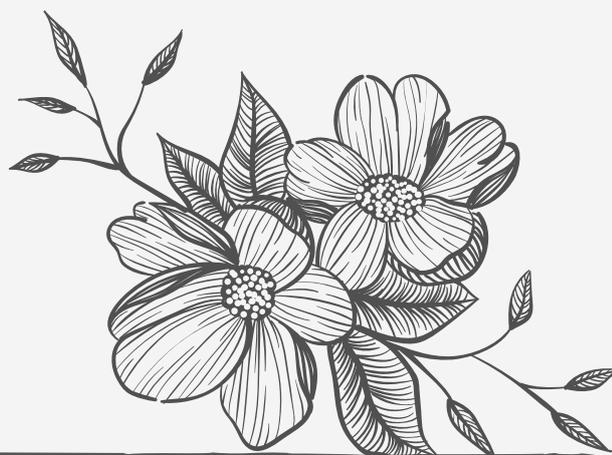
I am pleased to announce the release of our online magazine Lahar's first issue - **Feminist Chronicles**. This magazine has been curated out of a lot of passion, determination and pure love.

As I read through the issue, I see in front of myself our motto- 'waves of change, one page at a time.' And I really hope so do you.

To get in conversation with extremely smart women, who I've looked up to for a really long time now has definitely been the highlight for me.

I hope what the magazine has to offer creates some kind of value for you. Our aim has always been to impact one life with our words and deeds, and to make one heart smile. If you like what you read, or wish to share any kind of feedback, please feel free to reach out to us at laharmagazine.projectup@gmail.com!

Thank you so much for reading!



LAHAR

Waves of Change
one page at a time

लहर