

**“Whose support do I seek to reach a safe space?”
: A survivor of Violence**

“Domestic violence is not new to our society. What is more disturbing is that during this lockdown, women are unable to approach anyone for help. In these times, State mechanisms like Helplines, created for support, should be made fully functional.” - *Jignasha*

The physical and mental abuse faced by Manisha at the hands of her husband and in-laws intensified during the lock down. It had turned intolerable but Manisha was hesitant to call her father since it was a recent marriage of 2 months, done out of her own choice and against his advice. She ultimately, got in touch with her uncle (mama) living in Bhavnagar who contacted Jignasha, known for her sensitive work with survivors. Jignasha’s prompt suggestion to call 181, the women’s helpline, didn’t work and neither did the call to the Police on 100. Both calls went unanswered! Having moved from Bhavnagar to Surat after her marriage, Manisha was distraught with no access to anyone known to her.

Jignasha herself dialed 100 in Bhavnagar to request support. They suggested contacting the Police commissioner, since they couldn’t help as the case was not under their jurisdiction. Manisha’s uncle called the Police Commissioner of Bhavnagar who then got in touch with Surat Police. The pressure resulted in Manisha being moved to a safe space, Mahila Samakhya’s shelter home. She planned to go back to Bhavnagar after the lock down. Jignasha’s happiness shone on her face, in being able to bring Manisha out of the violent situation. A week at the Shelter saw Manisha’s husband and in laws coming to ask her to come back home. Like many women, she chose to return to her marital family. Jignasha continues to stay in touch with her regarding her wellbeing.

“We were able to help Manisha but there are many voices that remain unheard. Our Nyay Samiti is committed to reach out to more women in the community, create awareness and provide feminist counselling and support.”

Jignasha is a member of the Nyay Samiti of the 2500+ member strong, Samarthan Mahila Sangathan, supported by Utthan. She is also working as a Saathi Fellow of Utthan, to promote Constitutional values at the community level. The hope is that internalization of these values, the guiding pillars of our democracy will in the long run, help ensure a safe and enabling environment for all.



Figure 1: A strong rapport with women-Jignasha's strength