

Sometimes I forget how moving my illumination ceremony was freshman year. Seeing this really, really brings home how fast college moves by, and how there were so many moments I wanted to capture, with a phone or camera, but didn't get a chance to – and they're really really heavy, or joyful, inside me, in my heart, but, this feeling, really couldn't actually be captured with a camera or picture - With my friends, friends who became family, and also that stranger who sat next to me on the hill to help me light my candle. There's a lot of symbolism in how literally just one or two candles were lit, in order to get this whole hill to light up.

So I want to open up with some words from the holy book in Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib. In one of the prayers you do before night falls it says: **sab meh jot jot hai so-ay.** (ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤ ਜੋਤ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ) **This dhai chaanan sabh meh chaanan hoy-ay.** (ਤਸਿ ਦੈ ਚਾਨਣੀ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣ ਹੋਇ). **Amongst all is the light – You are that Light. By this Illumination, that Light is radiant within all.**

I think this really captures what it means to be a light on the hill, and even within darkness, light can be found. For me, this was in the people I met here, after sophomore, even junior year. These people are professors, friends, people who have passed away, old friends who went abroad and came back. It was in the most unexpected people and situations that I found home in, with people I could be comfortable with.

As a community, we hold each other accountable – to be brave, to act, to check ourselves, but most of all, hold space. We hold this idea of critical compassion – where I will still regard you as my brother, my sibling, my sister, knowing that you still have me when I fall, and you're still right there to push me to be the best I can be – when I slip up, when I'm not educated enough on something, when I need to do better. Out of the love and respect that we have for each other, we build each other up.

Not seeing this – and not feeling it – was some of the darkest times I had at Tufts. Feeling like I was alone, thinking I must be the only one feeling this way. But there's power in numbers, and if there's anything I learned this past week from CAFÉ – which is the pre-orientation where you basically dump a whole bunch of people from way different faiths and religions – which sounds like the set up to a really bad joke - we have more that brings us together than not. With the Light that we each carry, we have *some part* that we are able to share and spread to each other. This is how a flame becomes a beacon.

I went 3 years thinking I knew what community was – not knowing it could change, evolve, expand, include, remove, and all of that being okay. That the community I needed as a freshman looked so different than that one I found in India this summer, or the CAFÉ family last week.

Just like one candle lighting up hundreds of others, amongst all of us is this light that is radiant, and epitomizes what it means to be this light on the hill – to be a beacon, to

serve each other as family and find that family, however that looks like to you, knowing that it takes time, and care, care of ourselves and of this light inside of ourselves to not go out.

So I want to close with some more words from the Guru Granth Sahib: **jaanu joth na poochu jaatee aagai jaath na hai. Aap kaaraai aap kar-ay.**

**ਜਾਣਹੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਨ ਪੂਛਹੁ ਜਾਤੀ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਹੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਾਏ ਆਪਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥**

**Recognize the Lord's Light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter. /// He Himself acts, and He Himself inspires us to act.**

Being a light on a hill, we have this shared responsibility to act, and to make a movement from a flame.