Voices of Sisters



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I found myself reflecting on light during a recent community sharing that began around the celebration of Deepawali, the festival of lights. Though the festival has passed, its symbol remains with me as we now move toward Easter — another moment when Christians proclaim that light shines in the darkness.

Across many faith traditions, people celebrate the victory of light over darkness. Deepawali (or Diwali) in the Hindu tradition, Hanukkah in the Jewish tradition and the Christian feasts of Christmas and Easter all carry this theme. In Islam, the Quran speaks of God as "light upon light" (Surah An-Nur 24:35), a divine presence that guides us even when we feel lost.

My Catholic faith teaches me that Jesus is called "the Light of the World" (John 8:12). The Gospel of John reminds us: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). Yet there are moments in life when that light feels distant.

A few years ago, I experienced such a moment.

The loss of my job felt like a storm that swept through my life. I had poured my heart into that work, often spending long hours trying to meet everyone's expectations and carry my responsibilities faithfully. Yet the environment around me slowly became one of criticism and fault-finding. Decisions were made about me without me. Voices that once supported me grew silent.

> If your light feels strong right now, hold it out for someone else. And if you're barely holding on, know that we were never meant to make it alone.
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I felt cornered by judgments and weighed down by discouragement. My confidence began to crumble. I started doubting my own strength and abilities.

Gradually, I began to shrink in my own skin. The silence from those I once counted on felt deafening. Each day felt like walking through a fog. Outwardly I carried on with a smile, wearing the familiar mask of "All is well." But inside, something had gone dark.

The light I once carried — the joy, the clarity, the sense of purpose — felt like it had gone out.

Then something unexpected began to happen.

A friend sent a message out of the blue: "Hi, thinking of you… no need to reply… you matter." A mentor's support by compassionate listening and assuring presence was enough for me to go one serving and healing the sick. Even people I never expected, offered words of encouragement saying, "You've been trying to keep your light burning alone. Let us help you light it again."

Those words slowly began to change everything.

In the midst of everything falling apart, I had a profound insight. During Deepwali, I lit a diya — a small earthen lamp — and realized that even a small flame can hold back darkness.

That insight helped me as I entered my own struggle.

From my school days, I remember hearing the chanting of Sanskrit mantra during important celebrations:

> Oṁ Asato mā sadgamaya, tamasomā jyotir gamaya
> mrityormā amritam Gamaya, Om śhānti śhānti śhāntiḥ

Its meaning is simple and profound:

> From the unreal lead me to the real,
> From darkness lead me to light,
> From death lead me to immortality.
> May peace be

This ancient prayer from the Upanishad, taught in schools regardless of caste, creed or religion, seeks wisdom, clarity and peace. It is a reminder that humanity across cultures longs for the same movement — from confusion to truth, from despair to hope.

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During difficult days, this prayer comes alive for me in new ways. It reminds me of the cosmic interplay of light and darkness, and that even when truth feels distant, it is still present.

Gradually, the shattered parts of my being started reassembling. I became confident in my professional services. In this interplay for light and darkness there were angels, friends and mentors, who not only listened to me but stood by me. When I didn't have the strength to fight for myself, they helped me write letters to the unions, guided me through the process, and reminded me that my voice mattered. Together, we fought for justice. And in time, I got my job back.

In the bargain what I gained was far more than employment — it was dignity. It was the reminder that I wasn't alone.

The Bhagavad Gita says: "To those who are devoted, I destroy the darkness with the lamp of wisdom" (10.11). I've come to believe that a lamp of wisdom often arrives in the form of people who show up when we least expect it. Justice always refuses to look away when we serve one another in love and shared responsibility.

As we move toward Easter, Christians remember the story of resurrection — the belief that life can emerge even from the deepest darkness. For me, that message echoes the wisdom found in many traditions: Light always appears when the darkness is bleakest.

If your light feels strong right now, hold it out for someone else. And if you're barely holding on, know that we were never meant to make it alone.