SOMEONE once asked me, “What’s the point of mukti or liberation? How is it useful?”

I said, “First tell me, does your life have any use? Does it have any value for this existence? If you died right now, actually it would be ecologically very useful. Good manure! Liberation is not about social utility. It is about the life process itself.”

If you’d spent years in a 5x5 feet cubicle, and I were to unlock you and put you in a 10x10 feet cubicle, it would feel like total liberation. But after three days, again you’d feel stuck. After 10 years, if I declared you free and put you in a 100x100 feet cubicle, again it would seem like blissful release. But a little later, the same longing would return. So liberation is not my idea. It is the fundamental urge within every human being. There is something within us that dislikes fences. However liberated you are, you are still seeking liberation. What does that mean? It means you are seeking ultimate liberation, isn’t it? You are seeking ‘mukti’.

So, how do we attain liberation? If you stop putting limitations on yourself, you’re liberated. It’s as simple as that. The way you think, feel, act right now is a compulsive process. Because of this compulsiveness, everything is limited, unconscious and repetitive, and that is imprisonment.

Do not think of mukti as some grand terminology. Liberation, freedom, divinity—these are just words. Are you seeking solace or are you seeking a solution? If you are seeking solace, you can believe in something—some ideology, philosophy or story—and it will help you. But if you are seeking a solution, then belief is not worthwhile. Belief gives you only two options: either to believe or disbelieve. If you believe me, you’re not getting any closer to liberation. If you disbelieve me, you’re still no closer.

Looking up at the sky and thinking ‘freedom’ is no good. If you want to fly, you don’t look at the sky. Just look at what is holding you down, limiting you, right now. If you break that, you can move into the next level of limitation, and then see how to break that.

Let’s start with a basic question. How do you know that you’re alive right now? Only because you’re conscious, isn’t it? So, you’re already conscious. It is just that it is happening in a limited way. All you need to do is rev up the voltage, so that consciousness happens in your experience in a much larger way. Consider a light bulb. If you start cranking up its voltage, you see more and more of what was previously not in your vision. You crank up to full voltage and you suddenly see everything. People and objects that previously didn’t exist, are now suddenly in your perception.

The basis of the first Isha programme is just that—to crank up your system in such a way that you’re far more aware than you are right now. As you become more aware, you become less compulsive. As you become less compulsive, you start moving towards liberation. If you became a hundred times more conscious than you are right now, nothing would be compulsive within you. And life would be fabulous.

So, what is ultimate liberation? When there are no more cubicles in your life, when you are here and now, that is liberation. Disappearing into the ‘here and now’ means transcending the limitations of space and time. So what happens next? Where do you go? Nowhere. All ‘going’ is over. When there is no longer any separation between you and this existence, that is ultimate liberation.

The intellectual problem is, how can nothingness and infinity be the same? It is. The most incredible contribution to mathematics is the zero. It’s not by accident that it was born in this land. And it’s not just mathematics; it’s a profound insight, born of inner realisation. If you want to reach the infinite, adding numbers won’t get you there. Zero means nothingness, but if you want to reach the infinite, nothingness is the only way.