The end of the year often provokes questions about time. How do we make sense of the past? What lies ahead? Where are we going?

A question I often ask people is: have you ever experienced a yesterday or a tomorrow? You can remember yesterdays, you can imagine tomorrows, but they are only ideas. In your experience, no such thing has ever happened. Your experience of life has always been right here and now. Your experience of life is happening in this very moment. So time is a human idea. There is no such thing in this existence.

Time and space are essential dimensions for physical creation. But if you touch a dimension beyond the physical, there is no such thing as here and there, now and then. Everything is here. Everything is now.

Once you aspire to be spiritual, it means you aspire to go beyond the limitations of the physical. In this pursuit, the biggest barrier is your resistance to death. This makes you cling hard to the physical which renders your efforts to transcend its limitations futile. It’s like putting your anchor down and rowing your boat. It will be just an enormous waste of energy and life. But once you go beyond the physical, you find time and space are merely creations of your conscious mind.

Physicists today are saying that a whole process of creation and destruction is going on in what is known as the vacuum states. In this culture, we have always talked of time in terms of time cycles. Modern physicists have been talking so far about an ever-expanding universe. But now they’re also saying for the first time that just as there was a big bang, it is possible that some day there will be a big crunch. This means that, as this universe expands from something infinitely small into something infinitely large, a reverse process can happen and bring everything into the here and now.

This is something mystics have always known within themselves, experientially. When we talk ‘nirvana’, ‘moksha’, ‘shoonya’, this is exactly what we are saying: this universe came from nothing and if you take it through the full cycle, then it will once again become absolute nothingness.

Because I am not a slave of human ideas, I have never been a slave of time. Only when your experience of right now is not enough, you want to go elsewhere. If this moment is big enough, where would you want to go? You’d find there is no such thing as time; there is only eternity.

And yet, I am always on time, and our programmes at Isha are always punctual! I see punctuality not as discipline or time management, but as a matter of simple decency. Because our lives are valuable, nobody has a right to expend somebody else’s life. So being on time at any cost is very important to me, sometimes at the risk of my life. I am very conscious of time when my eyes are open, but the moment I close my eyes, I’m completely timeless.

So where are we all going? If you have not gone to enough places, going somewhere is very exciting. Most people spend their lives trying to become like someone else. The constant comparing and aspiring to be someone different, the need to be one up on somebody, just wastes the fundamental possibility in a human being. If you nurture who you are in the best possible way, this seed will naturally find its ultimate possibility.

On a certain day, two little boys, Johnny and Tommy, were having their usual argument. “My father can beat up your father,” said Johnny. Tommy replied, “My father can beat up your father.” Johnny said, “No way, my father will win.” Then Johnny said, “Okay, but my mother is better than your mother.” Tommy paused for a moment and said: “Maybe that’s true because even my father says so.” Life is just going on like this for most people.

This is why we talk of liberation. If you have not been around enough, just being is exciting. But if you remember the antiquity your being carries within itself, then the only thing that is truly attractive for you is non-being. When you are not bound by the physical, when you simply disappear into space and time, you transcend their limitations.

Then where do you go? When all going stops, that’s the endgame. You don’t go anywhere. That is ultimate liberation.