Which do you think is more important, time or money?

In today’s society, capitalism is the way. It’s even spreading to the East, getting into the Chinese Communist economy. There is a lot to be said for it, and it has created a lot of jobs. Think of Starbucks, MacDonald’s and the number of people who have been employed there. Money is the way, and the more money people have, the more we look up to them, it seems. I would guess that most people when asked which they would like most, time or money, most might say “money”. We think that money is the solution to all our problems. Live for now. Get as much as we can as quick as we can, seems to be a modern philosophy.

What is the difference between time and money? Money is a means of living, a tool for survival. It didn’t always exist. People used to barter instead. But it seems that money always existed, so attached we are to it. Money can solve many of our problems. However, it cannot give us an infinite life. Time, however, is life itself.

Without money we can live, but without time we don’t have anything. When our time is up, no matter how much money we have, we have to leave this world and leave all the money accumulated behind.

Each person’s life is the time allotted to him or her. And on average our time runs out before 100 years. With money we might be able to extend our life a little, but regardless of how much money we have but cannot extend it indefinitely. Look at Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple, who was said to have amassed a fortune of $6.5 billion but died at the relatively young age of 56.

What is important is not having piles of money, but knowing what to do with the money we have, isn’t it? Knowing what to do with our money implies a meaning or purpose. Without a purpose or meaning in life, no matter how much money we had we would never feel fulfilled. This might be the reason why so often people who have won the lottery end up ruining their lives. What they believed was their greatest good fortune turned out to be their greatest misfortune. Without a clear cut vision of the purpose of life, all the wealth amassed would seem meaningless.

Wealth brings comfort, but not happiness. However, wealth used in the right way can be used to lead oneself and others to happiness, once we know what direction that happiness lies.When the purpose is noble, then the value of money also becomes noble. The purpose gives value to money, and not the other way around.

What if Steve Jobs, when close to death, was asked, if given a choice which would he choose now, more money or more time? I think we could agree that he would have said ‘time’.bWhat happens when we get sick? We put all our time and effort into getting well – in order to extend our life, in other words to give us more time.

When it comes down to it, time is what we really want more of, because the truth is that no one wants to die, not even those who commit suicide. Those who commit suicide are seeking happiness just like everyone else.

There was a movie out recently called *Out of Time*. In the movie, money was replaced by time as the most valuable commodity. At birth each person is allotted twenty-five years of life. If they don’t accumulate more time by work or otherwise, they will die on their 25th birthday. More time can be accumulated just like real currency by working, or getting a loan or stealing. The poorest have jobs that pay the least, some living on enough time to live from day to day. The very wealthy have hundreds or thousands of years on their clock. They only way they can die is by an accident or being robbed. As a result they are terrified to venture far from their homes, as they dread being robbed and killed for their fortune that they carry, like everyone else, in a chip in their arm. Eager to protect their longevity, they live lives of safety, chronic monotony and boredom. While at the other end of the spectrum the poor live in the moment, appreciating each day as it were their last, because it very well might be.

In reality all human beings are like the very poor in this movie. In fact we are poorer than poor because unlike them who have a few hours or a day to live, all we have is this moment. The poor in the movie are sure of living 24 hours once they are paid. In life we are not guaranteed any time at all. We live from breath to breath. If the incoming breath does not follow the outgoing breath, life ends, said Buddha. Yet how many of us are aware of this truth? Don’t we live as though we have forty or sixty years of life ahead of us? Actually, in truth we live as though we will never die teaches Buddhism. Why? If asked today, do you think you will die tomorrow, we will answer, “no”. And when tomorrow comes and we are asked the same question, we will reply with the same answer. And so on it goes. It’s like trying to walk on your shadow. Our true self does not feel impermanence Buddhism teaches. We are dead to it, like a corpse. But thanks to Amida’s power, as we listen to the teachings and have darkness of mind eliminated, it becomes clear that money and everything else in this world was means of attaining this supreme truth. Time is our most precious commodity since without life or an extended life we could not possibly have had the most important means to achieve the purpose of human life.