

Let's try to define life. Some people call it a gift, others a test, a blessing, or a burden — but let's try to *quantify* it instead. I like to imagine life as a line, more specifically a *timeline*. It begins at point **A**, the moment of birth, and ends at point **Z**, the moment of death.

And the million-dollar question, the one philosophers have chased for centuries—is what exists before A or after Z. But just as important, and far more urgent, is what happens *between* them. What do we make out of the space, the seconds, the breaths that fill the distance from A to Z?

Most people waste much of that span *waiting*: waiting to feel ready, waiting for better days, waiting for permission to live. Meanwhile, time keeps ticking. Even now, as I'm writing this, the clock is quietly moving forward, and something oddly simple made me realize this.

Lately, I've been collecting vinyl records. And that hobby forced me to understand time in a way that nothing else has. Music streaming destroyed our sense of duration, and you might look at me and say, "Saaim, how the hell are music and time connected?" Just hear me out.

Streaming lets you skip endlessly, wander through infinite songs, jump from one vibe to another in seconds. You can listen to whatever you want, whenever you want, however many times you want. It fills the entire "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of modern music consumption.

But records? They're primitive — beautifully primitive.

You can't just tap to switch a track. You choose an album, place it on the turntable, set the needle, power everything on, and commit.

If the album is 30 minutes long, the *experience* becomes closer to 45 minutes. And those 45 minutes are intentional. Authentic. You dedicate almost an hour of your life to listening — fully listening — to something you chose. No skipping. No distractions. Just presence.

And that's when the concept of time hits:

If a full day is 24 hours, and listening to one album takes 45 minutes, you could only listen to 32 albums in an entire day — even if you did nothing but listen.

Suddenly, you realize something:

In a finite life, the time you spend listening matters. You wouldn't waste those 45 minutes on music you don't connect with — music that's just noise, meaningless, empty.

So why do we waste our *lives* — our limited albums — on things that feel exactly like noise?

If life is a ticking clock, why are we surrendering valuable time to jobs, routines, people, obligations, and expectations that add nothing to our meaning? Why are we letting others dictate how we spend the most precious, irreversible currency we own?

We rarely quantify our existence. We don't realize that every action, every step, every thought, every yes or no is a withdrawal from our life's account. We are nothing but ticking clocks trying to pretend we're infinite.

So if time is limited, painfully limited, why should we care what anyone thinks of how we choose to spend it?

And here's the thing no one tells you:

Most people don't live their lives, they *inherit* them. They follow patterns, expectations, timelines that were handed to them long before they ever understood themselves. School → job → marriage → routine → regrets. All to appease some invisible audience that doesn't even exist.

But when you quantify time, when you feel how limited it is, everything shifts.

You start asking different questions:

- **If my life were an album, would I be proud to have listened to it?**
- **Do the people in my life add harmony or noise?**
- **Am I choosing my days, or am I just letting them happen to me?**
- **What would I do if I stopped performing and started living?**

Time becomes sharper. Clearer.

It becomes something you defend instead of something you waste.

And the truth is:

No one ever regrets choosing meaning over noise.

But almost everyone regrets the opposite.

Your life is not a playlist you can rewind.

It's a vinyl record — fragile, finite, and deeply intentional.

Once side A ends, you flip it. And you keep flipping until the grooves wear out.

So make the sound worth it.

Make the moments matter.

Make the album yours, not someone else's.

And stop living like you owe anyone an explanation for how you spend the only time you'll ever get.

- Saaim Japanwaala