



# Footprints of Dawn

*Vasanthi Vasudev*

I sat at noon....by the dull, grey sea  
She matched her mood to the cloud- cast sky.  
The sun was nowhere to be seen ...  
The beach was empty, but for some twosomes  
And a gaunt old man,  
Non-descript and unkempt.  
Leaning heavily on his crooked stick,  
Dragging deep, his two bare feet,  
He shuffled his way towards her.  
The sand bore deep marks...  
His footprints...dark and definite,  
Printed themselves on the crunchy sand,  
Even as the crooked stick  
Scratched jagged lines, like barbed fences,  
To guard sandy feet, on the shores.



I watched him walk towards the waves  
Leaving prints by dozens, behind his steps.

How easy was it to print on sand?

How easy it was to leave a mark,

To give a foot hold ....!

Pensive, I watched my mind

Go on a stroll, unleashed...

Racing into the past,

Wandering into alleys of time.

'When I gave away my lunch

To the derelict woman, so old,

Who sat, outside the temple gate,

Hands pressed hard on starving stomach,

Did I leave a print in her life?

Did that meal give her a foothold?

Did it alter the course of her story?

When I sat with the little boy

For days and weeks

Inspiring him to learn,

Ignoring his mistakes

Stroking him, gentle,

With smiles and claps...

Did I give him a foot hold?

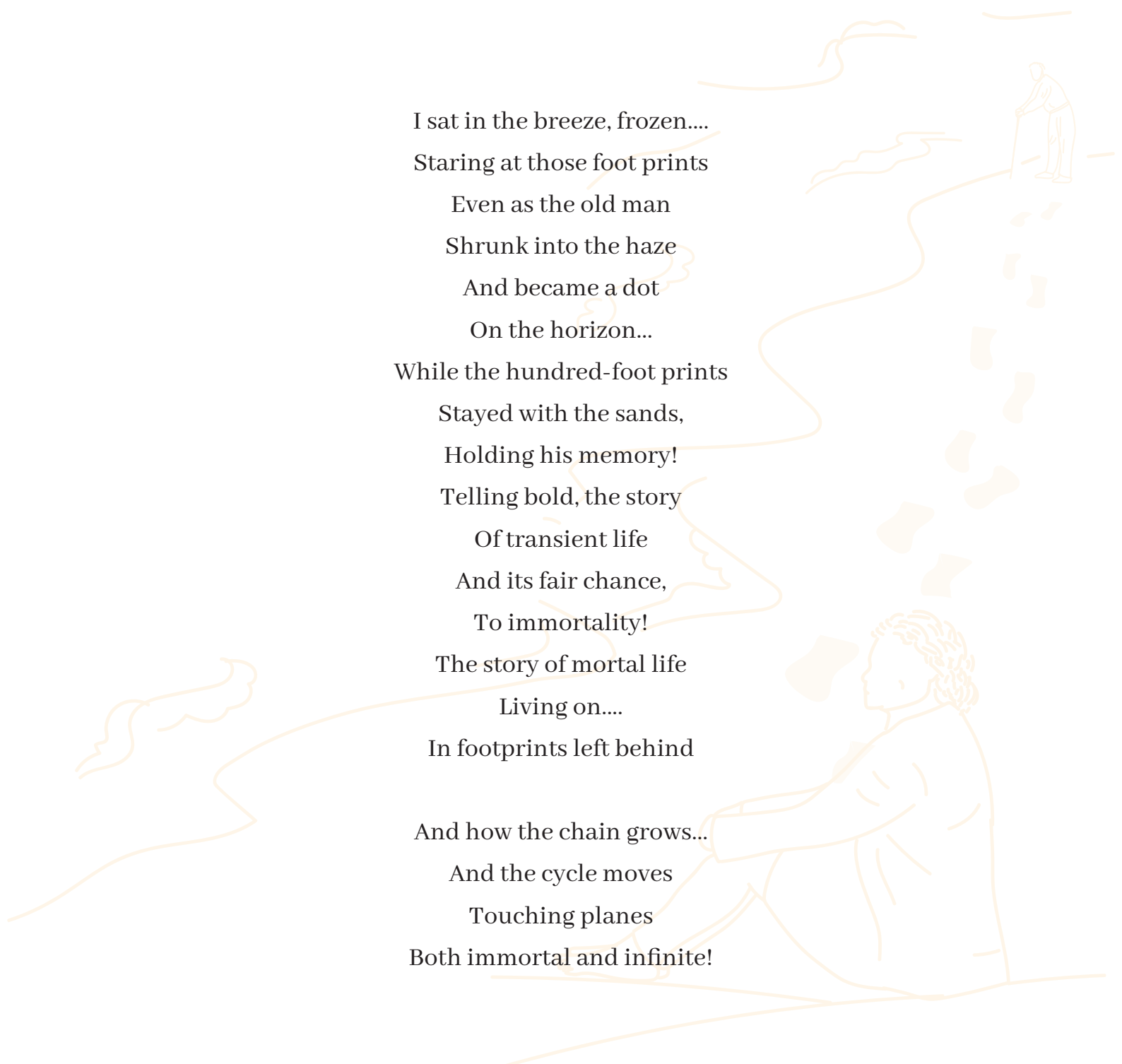
Did it alter the course of his story?

When I emptied my cupboards  
And gave away clothes, utensils and sundry,  
When I gave heartily, to a cause  
When I contributed, donated,  
Gave scholarships many,  
Did I leave a mark?  
Did I alter the course of someone's history?

I wondered, I pondered,  
I reminisced, I ruminated...  
Until I was horrified; aghast!  
I keep a count of so many things...

My possessions, all!  
Paper money, gold and finery,  
But scarcely have I any count  
Of how many lives  
I may have touched....

Worse still,  
I have no count  
Of how many lives  
I could have touched  
But being off the mark,  
Sadly, missed!  
Missed to leave a mark  
Missed to give a foot hold  
To let someone, hold,  
Hold and lift high  
To an opportunity,  
Or an ability;  
To just a dream, maybe!



I sat in the breeze, frozen....  
Staring at those foot prints  
Even as the old man  
Shrunk into the haze  
And became a dot  
On the horizon...  
While the hundred-foot prints  
Stayed with the sands,  
Holding his memory!  
Telling bold, the story  
Of transient life  
And its fair chance,  
To immortality!  
The story of mortal life  
Living on....  
In footprints left behind  
  
And how the chain grows...  
And the cycle moves  
Touching planes  
Both immortal and infinite!

I lifted my gaze ....  
And saw the grey veil lift;  
The sun took centre stage,  
On the cloudless sky;  
The sea became bright blue  
And the sands dazzled, golden....  
I sprang forth, holding firm,  
My resolve; my mission...  
I rushed into those foot prints  
And ran towards the sea.  
My steps became sure,  
My goals, now changed,  
My purpose, reborn,  
Fresh and new born!  
Full of promise,  
The rosy promise  
Of breaking dawn!

*Verses*  
BY VASANTHI