Swami Desikan’s
Vegasetu Stotram

Annotated commentary in English By:
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INTRODUCTION

The name Vegaa-setu meaning a dam across the river Vegaa (Vegavati) for the Perumal (Lord) indicates the part He played in protecting the Aswamedhayaga performed by Brahma to visualize the Lord; Brahma dEvan sought the protection of that yaga at Hasthi Giri from being washed away by the irate Saraswati who desired to wreck that yaga by taking the form of a river in spate. This is to be found in the Sthalapurana.

The Lord, however, attained greater fame and name by packing up His Adisesha couch and following Tirumazhisai Alvar at his behest and later re-spreading that Adisesha couch and lying on it once again (now using as pillow His left hand instead of the right hand). For this fine gesture of walking away from His AasTAnam,
inconsistent with the state of archa, this Lord is popularly known as Yathoktakari or, as Desika has put it, bhagavath-bhakthi-mathaam Yathokthakaari (5) -- one who acts as dictated to by His Devotees.
Slokas 2 to 4 and 7 refer to the Lord's puranic greatness as Vegaasetu.
Slokas 5 and 7 refer to both aspects.
Slokas 6 and 8 deal with His subservience to His devotees.

SLOKAS - COMMENTARY

अमान्ये बेठ्ठू नाथवर्ण: कवितार्किक केसरी ||
वेदान्ताचार्य वयोंमे सम्भिंश्चां सदा ह्रदि ||

shrImaan.h ve~NkaTa naathaaryaH kavitaarkika kesarI.
vedaantaachaarya varyo me sannidhattaaM sadaa hR^idi.

Swami Desikan chose Anushtub metre for the beginning verse of this slokam. It is traditional to use the short metre of Anushtub for aphoristic statement of theological truth. Saardhoola- vikriditham metre is generally used for elaboration of the theological truth. In view of our Acharyaa's interest to celebrate the Puranic story here and the centrality of one of the Vaishnava principles -- Bhaktha DaakshiNyam of the Lord -- Swami elected not to use too many lengthy metres in this short stotram. He deliberately chose Anushtub for the first verse to point out the UPAAYA -- PhALA BHAAVAM -- of the Lord of Thiruvehhaa. This stotram has 10 verses set in seven different poetic meters in accordance with the rules of Alankaara saasthram. Swami Desikan uses anushtub metre for the second and tenth verse as well.
The other metres used by Swami with specific purpose in mind are: Aaryaa (verse 3), Upajaathi (verse 4) that is used for imparting Puranic flavor, Oupacchandasikam (Verse 5), Vasanta Tilakam (Verse 6) for poetic fancy, Maalini (Verses 7 and 8) and Mandaakraantha (verse 9). Thus Swami Desikan used 7 metres in a stotram consisting of 10 verses. His skills as a poet are abundantly evident here.
Verse 1

एकं वेगवती मध्ये हस्तिशौले च दृश्यते।
उपाय फल भावेन स्वयम व्यक्तम् परम् महः॥ १ ॥

Yekam Vegavathee-madhye HasthiSailE cha dhrusyathE
upAya-phala-bhAvEEna svayam vyaktham Param maha:

In the first verse, he refers to the Swayam vyaktha svarupam of the Lord as “SVAYAM VYAKTHAM PARAM EKAM MAHA:” This mighty effulgence that manifested itself out of His own Sankalpam to neutralize the anger of His daughter in law is saluted here. He states that this Mahaa Tejas at Thiruvehhaa and the other illustrious Tejas that arose from Brahma’s sacrificial fire on Hasthi giri have the complimentary relationship of means (Upaayam) and fruit (Palan). One is in the middle of river Vegavathi (Saraswathi) and the other is on the top of the sacred hillock known as Hasthi Giri.
VERSE 2:

ఇష్ట గమయిత్మూపారమేశేసేటురభం: ॥
యత్ర సారస్వత్ బహుతో విశ్రమయిత్తి విశ్రముంం ॥ २ ॥

yeeshteh gamayithum paaramesha sethurabhangura : I
yatra saarasvatham srothO visraamyathi visrungalam II

'HasthiSaiLESan'
Here Swami Desikan describes the Lord, who took the form of a dam to obstruct the intent of Saraswathi to destroy her consort's Yajnam. Swami describes that indestructible and immovable dam (Sethu) as “Abhangura: Yesha Sethu”. He points out that dam has the power to serve as an unfailing bridge to get one across the dangerous and turbulent ocean of SamsArA to the other side recognized as Moksham or Parama Padam. Swami Desikan pays tribute to this Maha Tejas beyond description by humans as the dam where the power of human speech finds its halting place. “Saarasvatham Visrungalm Srotha:” refers to both the halting of the floods of Saraswathi as well as the end to the flow of words that one uses in an attempt to praise the Lord through eulogies. “Yatho Vaachaa Nivartanteh, Apraapya manasaa saha:” is the mood of our Acharya here.
VERSE 3:

Jayathi jagadeka sethu:
VegavathimadhyalakshithO Deva: I
prasamayathi Ya: prajaanaam
prathithaan samsAraladhikallOlAn II

Here Swami Desikan recommends that we perform Prapatthi and cross the
dangerous floods of SamsAram by traveling over the safe bridge of the Lord, who
took the form of the Dam in the middle of the swift flowing river Vegavathi. He
salutes the Lord of ThiruvehhA as “Jagadekha Sethu:” (The unmatchable, one and
only Sethu). Swami Desikan salutes the Lord's kalyana gunam of Jagath
Rakshakthvam and supreme power by pointing out that He saves the people of the
world from the dangers associated with the tall and ferocious waves of the ocean of
SamsArA by subjugating them.
VERSE 4:

विभातु मे चेतसि विष्णु सेठुः
वेगापगा वेग विघात हेतुः ।
अम्भोजयोऽन: यदुपत्नासीत
अभझ रक्षा हयमेघ दीक्षा ॥ ४ ॥

The salutation here is to the Vishnu Sethu, which is Vishnu in the form of a dam (Sethu) in the middle of Vegavathi river (Vega Aapagaa) to serve as the means to arrest the fast flowing floods (Vega Vigaatha Hetu:). Swami wants that Vishnu Sethu to shine in his mind. In the second half of verse set in UpajAthi metre to hint at the Sthala PurANam, he salutes the special route that the Lord took to protect his lotus-born Son’s (Ambhoja YOneh:) Aswamedha Yaagam (Hayamedha DeekshA) to an uninterrupted conclusion through His protective intervention (Abhanga Rakshaa). There was hence no Bhangam (risk/danger) to that Yaj~nam. Swami salutes the means taken by the Lord as Yadh Upaj~nam to resonate with the word Yajnam.
VERSE 5: OUPACCHANDASIKAM METRE

chutaanaanana saptha tanthu gopthA
saritham Vegavatheemasou nirundhan
Paripushayathi mangaLaani pumsAm
bhagavaan bhakthimataam Yathokthakaaree

Here at this Divya desam, the Lord stood as a divine dam to arrest the furious flow of Saraswathi in the form of a river and saved the Yajnam of Brahma. When his Bhaktha (Thirumazhisai AzhwAr) commanded Him to roll up his bed of Adisesha and accompany him, He did so; afterwards, when the Azhwar requested Him to return to His divya Desam and spread his bed back again to rest there, he did obey the instructions of the Azhwaar and earned therefore the name “Sonna VaNNam Seytha PerumAL / YathoktakAri”. This Lord of ThiruvehhA blesses all those, who worship Him at His divya desam with devotion.
VERSE 6: VASANTHA TILAKAA METRE

श्रीमान्न पितामह वधू परिचयंमाणः।
शेते भुजङ्ग ययने स महाभुजः ॥
प्रत्यादि शन्ति भव सब्जरणं प्रजानां
भक्तानुगान्तुरिः सत्य गतागतानि ॥ ६ ॥

SrimAn pitAmaha vadhU paricharyamANa:
Setheh bhuJanga sayanCh sa mahAbhujanga : I
pratyAdisanthi bhava samcharaNam prajAnAm
bhakthAnuganthurIha yasya gatAgatAni II

'yathOkthakAri'
In this Divya Desam, the humbled Saraswathi Devi is seen at the foot of the resting Lord (Vishnu Sethu) with folded hands. She has a pose that suggests her readiness to serve her father-in-law in a chastened mood. Swami Desikan also uses a pun (sledai) on the word Bhujanga in this verse. The two meanings are: (1) the Lord resting on a snake (Adi Seshan) as Bhujanga Sayanan (2) One who has intense desire for those devoted to Him such as the Gopis of Brindavanam and Azhwaars like Thirumozhisai. At this Divya desam, the Lord with His consort receives the Kaimkaryam of Saraswathi and protects His devotees in many ways. Those devotees, who meditate and reflect upon the comings and goings (gathaagathaani) of the Lord at the request of Thirumazhisai Azhwaar here, would be blessed fully to be saved from the terrors of Samsaaraa. His attitude as he rests on his serpent bed seems to be like that of an intensely desirous one, who wants to associate with similar minded bhakthaas, who have intense desire for Him.

**BHUJANGA AND OTHER SAYANAMS OF THE LORD**

Incidentally, the Bhujanga Sayana Sevai at this Divya Desam is one of the 8 sayana poses that we have the Darsanam of the Lord in Archa form at the 27 divya Desams. The Bhujanga Sayanam has been chosen by the Lord in the following 19 Divya Desams:

1. Thiruvehha
2. Thiruvananthapuram
3. Srirangam
4. Thiru Anbil
5. Thiru Aadhanoor
6. Thiru YevvuL
7. Thirukkarambanur
8. Thiru Kabisthalam
9. Thirukkoshtiyur
10. ThirukkoLur
11. Thirucchirupuliyyur
12. Thiru Terriambalam
13. Thiruppaarkadal (Apraakrutham)
14. Thirupppirithi (Jyoshi mutt)
15. ThiruppuLingudi
16. ThirupuLLam Bhoothamgudi
17. Thiruppenagar
18. Thiruvaataaru
19. ThiruveLLiagudi

**THE OTHER SAYANA KSHETRAMS AND THE TYPES OF SAYANAMS ARE:**

1. Bhoga Sayanam/Tillai Thirucchitrakootam
2. Maanikka sayanam/Thiruneermalai
3. Vata Patra sayanam Srivilliputthur
4. Veera sayanam/Thiru IndaLUr
5. UdyOga sayanam/Thirukkudanthai
6. Darba Sayanam/ThirupullaaNi
7. Sthala Sayanm/Thirukkadanmllai .
VERSE 7: MAALINI METRE

prasamitha hayamedha vyaapadam padma Yoneh:
sritha jana paratantram sesha bhogeh sayaanam I
saraNamupagathaa: sma: saantha: Nisseshadhosham
satamaNisethum saasvatham vegavatyaa: II

The Archa murthy at Thiruvehhaa is under the control of those, who approach Him and surrender unto Him. No Dhosham or imperfection can approach Him. He is blemishless. On the middle of the river Vegavathi, he rests on Adiseshaa like a dam constituted by blue gem stones with his beautiful bluish hue. Resting thus, He saved the yajnam of Brahma from the impending danger. May we approach this Lord of many kalyANa gunams and offer our SaraNAgathi and be saved!
The Lord of Thiruvahha is the one, who follows the wishes of those doing prapatthi to Him. He banishes the sorrow of His devotees and all of those associated with them. He appears before them for that purpose. Only because of His appearance first to protect Brahma's Yajnam, Sri Varadaraja came out of the sacrificial fire and stayed on the top of Atthigiri to give boons to all who worship Him. He is indeed the cause of Varadan, the boon giver's appearance on this earth.

There are two ways in which BhagavAn protects the chetanAs. In one way, He removes the obstacles that they face; in the other way, He gives them the fruits of their penance through His boon-granting power. As YathokthakAri, He responds to those who offer Prapatthi to Him by the first way. Varadarajan responds in the complimentary, second way and concentrates on the boon-giving activity. Varadarajan's work is made lighter thanks to YathokthakAri's taking the load off Varadaraja by destroying the sufferings of the Prapannaas first. As a result of that special activity of YathokthakAri, Varadarajan becomes one hundred percent more effective in His area of specialty (viz). Boon-giving to those, who perform SaranaGathi to Him. Varadaraja's glory thus gets multiplied thanks to YathokthakAri.

Here Swami Desikan says that YathokthakAri is “SaraNam upagathAnAm AadEsakAri” (i-e), He follows the orders of those, who perform Saranagathi at His holy feet. He comes in front of them (sammukha:) and destroys their sufferings (ParithApaam Samayathi). Because of YathokthakAri’s proximity, Varadaraja’s (VaaraNAdhri Iswarasya) glory as a boon-granting Lord (Vara vitharaNa bhUma:) multiplies a hundred fold always.
VERSE 9: MANDAAKRANTHAA METRE

काण्ठी भाग्य कमल निलया चेतसोभिष्ट सिद्धि:\
कत्याणां निधिरविकलः कोषपि कारण्यार्थी:।
पुण्यानां न: परिणतिसौं भूषयन्त भोगिन्द्रयां
वेगासेतुरु जयति विपुलो विश्वरश्रैकहेतु:॥ ९ ॥

Kanchee Bhagyam kamala nilayA chetasO abhishta siddhi:
kalyAnAnAm nidhiravikala: kopi kArunyarAsi : I
puNyAnAm na: pariNathirasou bhooshayan bhogisayAm
vegaasethurjayathi vipulO viswarakshaikahetu : II

The description of the Lord of Thiruvehha as the embodiment of the fortune of the
district of Kaanchipuram is given by Swami Desikan here. He states that the Lord
took archaa form here is to fulfill the wishes of His consort, who is concerned about
the erring chetanAs and is keen on directing them to the right way to get the boon of
Moksham from Her Lord. The Lord of Thiruvehha appears like the ripened fruit of
the chetana's punyam. YatokthakAri is the house of all auspicious guNAs. He is the
ocean of mercy intent on saving the suffering chetanAs. Such a magnanimous and
merciful Lord rests on His bed of Adisesha at Thiruvehhaa and beautifies Adisesha
through his association.
VERSE 10: ANUSHTUB METRE

वेगासेतोरिद्मू स्तोत्रमू वेद्‌इटे‌शेन निर्मितमू।
ये पठन्ति जनास्तेषां यथोवतं कुरुते हरि:॥ १०॥

vegasethOridam stotram Venkatesaena nirmitham I
yeh patanteh janAstheshAm yathoktham kuruteh Hari : II

This Vegaa Sethu stotram was composed by poet Venkatesa. Those, who recite it
with devotion, will get their wishes fulfilled by the Lord of Thiruvehha. True to His
words “I will protect the Prapannas, who seek refuge in me” as Rama and “I will
relieve you of all sins” as KrishNa, the Lord of Thiruvehha will protect the Chetanas,
who offer Prapatthi unto Him.

कवितार्किक सिंहाय कल्याण गुणशालिने।
श्रीमते वेदइटे‌शाय वेदांत गुरवे नमः॥

kavitaarkika siMhaaya kalyaaNa guNa shaaline.
shrimate ve~NkaTesaaya vedaanta gurave namaH