

## Chatushloki – Post 1

Srimathe Raamaanujaaya Namaha

Sri Rangapriya Divya Paadukaabhyaam Namaha

Srimushnam Srimath Andavan's Rendition of Chatushloki

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4Wjnr3GLcM>



With Asmad Achaaryan's anugraham, Adiyen would like to begin the post on Chatushloki today.

Our divine mother, Maha Lakshmi is glorified in many works like Vaikhaanasa Agama, Paancha Raathra Agama, Ithihaasa Puranaas, Lakshmi Ashtotharam, Lakshmi Sahasra Namam, Indira Sthuthi, Divya Prabandham, Sri Sthavam, Guna Rathna Kosham, Purusha Sooktham, Sri Sooktham, Bhu Sooktham, Neela Sooktham, Medha Sooktham, Sri Sthuthi, Bhu Sthuthi Godha Sthuthi and Chathushloki.

When we think of Thaayaar, what comes to our mind is her compassion. She is indeed the quintessence of compassion. Once Parashara Bhattar asks "why are you quietly looking down? Is it because you are a pathivratha (chaste woman)? But we are you children." Then Thaayaar responds "I am looking down because I feel remorseful for not doing enough for my dear children." Such is her compassion. Although she blesses us with all kinds of aishwaryams, kaivalyam and even moksham, she always feels that she could have done more for us.

Let us begin to enjoy her attributes as expressed in Chatushloki by the revered Guru Yamunacharya also known as Alavandhaar. So, who is Alavandhaar?

Alavandhaar is a great Srivaishnavite scholar who was the grandson of Naatha Muni, the sage who retrieved nalayira divya prabandham for us. He was born in 916 AD to Ishwara Muni and was named as Yamunai Thuraivan. He was an ekasanthagrahi (one who could grasp and memorize with a single recitation!) Once a scholar by name Akki Azhwan invited scholars for a debate. Yamunai Thuraivan, a young lad offered to go for the debate. The king was astonished to see a young man trying to counter a learned scholar. He said that he would reward the winner with half his kingdom. Yamunai Thuraivan challenged Akki Azhwan to negate 3 statements:

1. Your mother is not barren.
2. Your king is righteous
3. Your queen is a chaste woman

Akki Azhwan was baffled and did not know how to negate these statements without incurring the wrath of the king and the queen. Then Yamunai Thuraivan justified the statements in the following manner quoting Manu Smruthi:

1. Akki Azhwan was his mother's only child. According to shastras, a mother who has only one child is considered barren.
2. The king has to bear one sixth of the sins committed by his subjects. Therefore, he cannot be fully righteous.
3. The king represents Agni, Vayu, Surya, Chandra, Yama, Kubera, Varuna and Indra. The queen cannot be considered chaste because she belongs to all these people and not just her husband.

People were thrilled to see Yamunai Thuraivan's acumen and sharp wit. The queen was overjoyed and cried out "Alavandhaar...you have conquered."

As promised, the king gave half of his kingdom to Alavandhaar and the young scholar became a king overnight!

Alavandhaar got fully engrossed as a monarch and got distracted from spiritual pursuit. His grandfather Naathamuni was very sad that Alavandhaar strayed away from the true purpose of life. He requested his disciple Rama Mishra also known as Manakkaal Nambi to somehow bring Alavandhaar back to the path of devotion to Vishnu.

Manakkaal Nambi hatched a plan. He delivered a special type of leafy vegetable called "Thoodhuvalai Keerai" to the palace every day for about 2 months. The king enjoyed the preparation made with this leafy vegetable very much. Suddenly Nambi stopped supplying this vegetable to the palace. The king missed this item and enquired the cook as to why this item was missing from the menu. The cook replied that the person who normally delivered Thoodhuvalai Keerai did not come that day. The king asked the cook to bring the brahmin to the palace if he came again. The next day, when Manakkaal Nambi came to deliver "thoodhuvalai keerai" the cook took him to meet Alavandhaar.

The king, Alavandhaar said “every day you bring me this tasty thoodhuvalai keerai. But you don’t take any payment for it. How can I reward you? Is there anything I can do for you? Manakkaal Nambi replied “Your grandfather Naathamuni has bequeathed a great treasure for you. All I want is for you to accept this precious asset. The treasure is kept in an island amidst seven walls and is well guarded by a serpent. “

Alavandhaar was really in need of money and got excited about the treasure trove. He wanted to go there with his full army since this valuable fortune was vigilantly guarded. But Manakkaal Nambi told him that it was better to go there quietly. So just the two of them set out on their journey to find the priceless wealth.

On his way, Manakkaal Nambi went on narrating Bhagavadh Geetha, Alavandhaar was slowly getting enticed by the sublime verses. When Manakkaal Nambi came to the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Bhagavad Geetha and recited the following shloka

**mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya |  
nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ ||**

“Fix you mind and intellect in me. Here after you will live in me only. There is no doubt about it.”

A spark ran through Alavandhaar and he exclaimed “Alas I have wasted my life in accumulating materialistic wealth. When will I acquire the state of mind to stay fixated at the lotus feet of Sriman Narayana. “Manakkaal Nambi consoled Alavandhaar saying “just like the clouds obscure the sky for a short while, worldly desires had blinded you. Very soon darkness will be dispelled and you will see true light.”

After walking for several days, they crossed the river Kaaveri and reached the island Srirangam! When they reached the main temple doors, Manakkaal Nambi said “look here, your grandfather, Naatha Muni’s only property was Sri RangaNaatha, the lord of Ranga Nayaki...See how they are resting on the serpent king, Anantha Sesha.”

At the very first glance, Alavandhaar fell unconscious at the feet of the divine couple...

To be continued...

Alavandhaar thiruvadigale sharanam

Seeking blessings

Hema Srinath