

**SRI SATHYA SAI CENTRAL COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**National Spiritual Wing**

**R8 – AKHANDA BHAJAN**

**1. Name of religious event / Observance / Celebration:**

Global Akhanda Bhajan

**2. Picture:**

2.1 Picture or symbol pertaining to the particular observance/celebration



2.2 The date/period of the religious event

*“As part of the birthday celebrations of Bhagawan Baba, on the second Saturday-Sunday in November, Bhajans (devotional singing) are conducted continuously for 24 hours at all Sathya Sai Centres on a global level praying for peace, harmony and bliss to all mankind”*

[http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda\\_Bhajan.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda_Bhajan.htm)

**3. About the festival:**

*The significance of community singing is immense, according to Baba. It is the easiest way to reach God in the present age. Speaking on the efficacy of Bhajans, Baba says, “The spiritual vibration produced by Bhajans confer great joy both on those who sing them and those who hear the songs. Bhajans remove all negative thoughts, soothe the nerves, purify the mind and fill the body and the heart with sweet love for the divine. As one sings Bhajans, the mind is saturated with God Consciousness and a great ecstasy wells up from within. No mental or intellectual effort is called for, as there is no need to understand anything while uttering the holy names of God and singing His glory. The singing and the atmosphere created by Bhajans takes one beyond the realms of the body, mind and the intellect and helps to establish communion with the higher self (consciousness) within. Therefore, singing the Bhajans becomes a beautiful and blissful experience. Many great composers and musicians like Thyagaraja established communion with God through devotional music.”*

[http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda\\_Bhajan.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda_Bhajan.htm)

*Even as a child Swami sang devotional songs about God, making them up for his friends and teaching them to his classmates, who then took them home to teach their parents. When he announced his true identity as avatar of Sai Baba, in 1940, he sang to those who had gathered about him “Manase Bhajans, guru charanam dusthara bhava sagara thatanam...”*

*Since the beginning of this work, Swami has made bhajan an important aspect of sadhana for his bhakthas. In 1942 there were no large crowds around Swami as there are now and every Thursday those present would join together for Bhajans under his leadership.*

**Excerpts from Bhagawan's Discourses:**

*"Today we are having the Akhanda Bhajan. This is being done not for the sake of one individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole.*

*The bhajans that are sung permeate the ether in the form of sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere. Thereby, the whole environment is purified. Breathing in this purified atmosphere, our hearts get purified. Reciting the Lord's name is a process of give and take. Singing the Lord's name should become an exercise in mutual sharing of joy and holiness. It should be remembered that the sounds we produce reverberate in the atmosphere. They remain permanently in the ether as waves and outlast the individual uttering the sounds.*

*Community bhajans should not be treated as a pastime. When thousands of persons join in singing bhajans, they should be fully absorbed in the devotion and the ecstasy of that experience. The singing should be vibrant and soulful and not mechanical or uninspiring. It should combine bhava (feeling), raga (melody) and tala (rhythm). What delight can be experienced when all sing in chorus, with the same feeling, in the same tune and to the same timing! When there is such unity the Divine can be experienced.*

*Not all realize the potency and efficacy of reciting the Lord's name. The first requisite is purity of thought, word and deed. The name that is uttered by the tongue should be meditated upon by the mind. What is uttered and dwelt upon should be hailed by clapping the hands. This threefold concentration on the Divine name - unity of mind, speech and action - purifies the heart and nourishes the feeling of devotion.*

*When the chanting of the Name is done in community singing, it should be in a form in which the entire group can participate easily. The tune, the rhythm, etc. should be such that all can follow the bhajan. If the lead singer takes up a song that is not familiar to others, the response from the group will be poor. There will be no enthusiasm or genuine participation. Their minds will be distracted. When all the devotees participate in the bhajan, the vibrations that are produced will generate joy and harmony."*

Divine Discourse on Akhanda Bhajan day on November 8, 1986

[http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda\\_Bhajan.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda_Bhajan.htm)

**Origin of Akhanda Bhajans**

"Srimati Sundaramma is one of the old devotees who have known Sri Sathya Sai Baba since he was a boy of sixteen. Her father, Seshagiri Rao, came to Sri Sathya Sai Baba after her. Sundaramma continued the weekly Bhajans singing with great dedication and without interruption for an entire year. Her father, Seshagiri Rao, thought that they should celebrate the completion of the year of Bhajan singing in a suitable style. Each member of the family thought of different ways to celebrate the anniversary in a befitting manner, but Seshagiri Rao's idea was adopted: Akhanda Bhajans (unbroken Bhajans) for the one whole day and one whole night. The decision having been taken, they got down to planning the performance at their house – which songs to sing, what Prasadam to distribute and pooling of resources to obtain the ingredients of Prasadam. This was particularly tricky as, in those days. There was rationing of rice and the system had to be worked out fairly in cash and in kind.

After making all the preliminary arrangements, father and daughter went to Puttaparthi to announce their attention to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was very happy to hear their plans and responded startlingly. "I have come only for this reason, for the sake of my devotees. Go ahead with the Akhanda Bhajans. I will be there with you throughout the singing."

Sundaramma explained that, up to that moment, they had planned only a very simple celebration. But, if Sri Sathya Sai Baba was himself going to attend, then, she felt that she ought to make more elaborate arrangements. Then Sri Sathya Sai Baba said he would take charge of all the arrangements. He asked her to book a place in town and to have the Akhanda Bhajans sung there so that all those who wanted to attend could do so more conveniently. He also advised her to ask other devotees to assist in the event.

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**Meaning of Bhajan**

“The word ‘Bhajan’ has been derived from the Sanskrit root ‘Bhaj’ which means to render service. Bhajan singing is indeed a mode of providing service for the audience to purify their mind and heart.” Sai Baba

**Meaning of Akhanda Bhajan**

Akhanda means uninterrupted, without any gap. “Akhanda-Bhajan” means that it should not be just a twenty-four hour, or even a seven day affair. It must go on from birth to death. Bhajan (devotional song) has to start in childhood and continue onward. It must be constant company of man, his solace and strength. Do not postpone it until old age, for it is the essential food for the mind”.

Sai Baba, SSS, Vol 1.125.

This day you have resolved to imbibe Divine Bliss by reciting the glory in chorus and with music, continuously for twenty-four hours. You call it Akhanda Bhajan, even though it will end after that period. Still the idea is good and programme will yield good results.

Sai Baba, SSS, Vol X p 79

This has been named an Akhanda Bhajan, that is to say, Bhajan done without a break. But was it really an Akhanda Bhajan? It begins at 06:30 on the evening of the day, and is closed at 6:30 on the evening of the next day. Can we call it ‘unbroken Bhajan’? What is a period of 24 hours when we consider the vastness of the universe and the eternity of time? It is just a wink, a minute part of the life of man on earth. By engaging yourselves in the recitation of the Name of God for one single day, you claim to have done Bhajan ‘without a break.’ Akhanda Bhajan must be as continuous as breathing itself if it is to deserve its name.

Sai Baba SSS Vol X p 67

**4. Suggested programme or method of observing the event:**

**On Commencement**

The Bhajan commences with the lighting of the sacred lamp-the Akhanda Jyothi-that is kept burning for 24 hours. Thus the sacred lamp will be lit in each country during the 24 hours period based on local time.

Before the Bhajans are completed the world would be a girdle of Akhanda Jyothis lit round the globe in Sai centres. The Akhanda jyothi not only helps to concentrate the minds of devotees but promotes also a sense of spiritual unity and harmony among the devotees. The prayers will be for Peace in the world.

This is being done not for the sake of one individual, one nation, or one community. It is for the welfares of humanity as a whole. The Bhajans that are sung permeate the ether in the form of sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere, thereby, the whole environment gets purified.

- Baba

**Suggestion/Guide for South Africa at CENTRE or REGIONAL level:**

- **Duration:** Conduct a programme for 24 hours of Bhajan singing (the Sai Chalisa can also be sung)
- **Formal Introduction:** Can be done by a short message about the Akhanda Bhajan followed by the lighting of the Akhanda Jyoti (light) signifying the commencement of the 24 hour programme
- **It is recommended to display the venue with “representations” of different faiths and a photo of Bhagawan Baba**

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- Centres could also conduct the Akhanda Bhajan REGIONALLY, with centres/groups rotating or filling time slots.
- They may even invite groups/organisations from other religions to make it a more universal call for global peace in which devotional songs and/or prayer could be delivered during their time slots.
- Conclude with the Arathi and other ending prayers (a short concluding message may be given on the significance)

**5. Verbal dedication / prayer / chant / other - with meanings:**

**6. Any personal offering / sacrifice / practice**

**7. Other material for preparation / discussion:**

7.1 Any other recommended material that could be used for additional information / preparation, such as VCDs, DVDS, books, charts, etc

**8. Bibliography / Reference Section for all references used**

1. [http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda\\_Bhajan.htm](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/Akhanda_Bhajan.htm)
2. Sai Baba SSS Vol X p 67 & p 79
3. Sai Baba, SSS, Vol 1.125
4. Sathya Sai Baba, 13 November 2007, Prasanthi Nilayam

**9. Divine Discourse or other:**

**Glimpses of The Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam (1994)**

*The Akhanda Bhajan had special significance this year when Bhagavan lit the Akhanda Jyoti on November 12, 1994, in the renovated Prasanthi Mandir. The Mandir wore a new attractive look with seven artistically designed and exquisitely executed domes replacing the huge imposing new Mandap in front for accommodating the vast concourse of devotees waiting for Darshna. The Mandap with twenty massive ornamental pillars, covered with shining polished granite slabs and bearing a lotus-shaped bowl to carry concealed lighting, transformed the former open Darshna grounds into a spacious hall with polished black and white marble slabs for the flooring. Two wings of the hall appeared like two gigantic pianos, with a series of elephant images decorating the frieze. At night the Mandir appeared like a Fairy Land with multicoloured illuminations setting the Mandir in bold relief and enhancing the beauty of the sacred edifice.*

*The Mandap was filled with thousands of eager devotees from all over the world while the Mandir was occupied by students from three campuses of the Sai Institute. On the Akhanda Bhajan day (Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> November), Bhagavan came to the Mandap before the Bhajans started and gave Darshan to all sections of the crowd. The Akhanda Bhajan commenced at 6:00p.m after Bhagavan lit the Akhanda Jyoti (lamp) in the Mandir. After the first song on Ganesh sung by the men students, the Bhajan song, "Akhanda Jyoti Jalao" was sung by the women students. The Bhajans continued nonstop for twenty four hours with men and women leading by turns Bhagavan sat through the Bhajan for nearly two hours on Saturday. On Sunday morning, bhagavan went round the devotees, giving Darshan, and stayed for the Bhajans for two hours.*

*The Bhajan came to a close at 6:00p.m, on Sunday, with the distribution of Prasadam to all the devotees with the blessings of Bhagavan. Prasadam consisted of tamarind rice and sweet rice.*

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*Bhagavan supervised the distribution of Prasadam after taking Aarati and stayed on till all were served. Editor SS, 12/94, p 318.*

***Baba's Miracle at Akhanda Bhajan***

*Nine families started at Akhanda Bhajan Mandali in 1944, consisting mostly of our relations. We had Bhajans every Thursday evening regularly. In 1946, we requested swami to attend our first annual Akhanda Bhajan, which He did. Swami stayed with us for the full 24 hours of the Bhajans. We had originally planned the Bhajans for about 150 people with our limited means. As bhagavan attended the function, including several distinguished devotees who came with swami. We had a problem as to how to give Prasadam to all of them, as we had not anticipated such a situation. We represented our problem to swami. Baba with his merciful love, came to the kitchen and blessed the food, after the function was over we served Pongal to over 1000 people till the evening, it never got finished. This miracle is one of the earliest experiences in our lives, which is still green in our memory. We did this annual Akhanda Bhajan for twenty five years continuously. Once or twice Baba could not attend the function, but we took into account only the years when He attended,*

***Food For Thought***

*Whoever does namasmarana, whatever be the name they take and wherever they are, their life will be sanctified. They will be free from sin. Do not be too concerned with raga and thala (tune and rhythm). There is only one raga that is hridayaraga (the raga arising out of one's own heart). That is "Soham". Let your life be tuned to this raga of "Soham". Then, whatever activity you undertake, it will become a success. You are most fortunate to participate in this Akhanda Bhajan. This is a great opportunity. Do not lose the opportunity of participating in the Bhajan. If you make good use of it, your life will be sanctified. The global Akhanda Bhajan is held only for this purpose every year.*

*Sathya Sai Baba, 13 November 2007, Prasanthi Nilayam*

***Swami's Quotes on Akhanda Bhajans***

*"Akhanda-Bhajan means that it should not be just a twenty four hour, or even a seven-day affair. It must go on from birth to death. Bhajans (devotional song) has to start in childhood and continue onwards. It must be constant companions of man, his solace and strength. Do don't postpone it until old age, for it is the essential food for the mind."*

*Sai Baba, SSS, Vol 1, 125*

*So is the singing of devotional songs and contemplating of God's name done solely for the individual need? No! as baba said in June 1965: "Bhajan is done not only to make yourself divinely pure, but also to make your surroundings and everyone around you become spiritually uplifting. When you do Bhajans for an Akhanda (long) period, it means that you are calling all the Divine Souls and all the Gods to purify the entire world.*

*When one sings Bhajans throughout the day and night with great vigour and devotion, the whole world is benefited and everyone becomes divinely charged.*

*When you sing during Akhanda Bhajan, you sing for the whole world and for everyone's well-being, that is why each and every person should sing during Akhanda Bhajan with great devotion."*

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*Brothers and sisters, as Baba mentioned once before when we sing the Bhajans it permeate the ether in the form sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere, thereby, the whole environment gets purified. Hence the Akhanda Bhajans is being done not for the sake of our individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole.*

*Some of us may not realize that after every Divine discourse our Lord sings a Bhajan purely for our sake not His, so as to enable us to become aware of the sweetness of the Name, which we can realize that God is ever with us in our physical being. Baba said “of what avail is to simply worship My Name and My Form, without attempting to cultivate My Samathwa equal love towards all, Shanthi –unruffled equanimity, Prema –love, Sahana patience and fortitude, and Ananda – blissful nature!”*

*So let’s all make a conscious effort in attending the Akhanda Bhajans so we can all play our part to spiritually uplift our environment for the better world for all to enjoy God’s gift and creation. In SSS – Vol–3070(1997), Baba said: “Do not think that God dwells in some temple, shrine or place of pilgrimage. He is omnipresent and His abode in man is-the human heart. When Naaradha sought to know from Vishnu what was His permanent abode, the Lord replies: “wherever my devotees chant my glories, I am present there.” When God dwells in the heart, why should devotees seek Him elsewhere?”*

*So let’s all make a conscious effort in attending the Akhanda Bhajans so we can all play our part to spiritually uplift our environment for the better world for all to enjoy God’s gift and creation. In SSS Vol –30-70(1997), Baba said: “Do not think that God dwells in some temple, shrine or place of pilgrimage. He is omnipresent and His abode in man is-the human heart. When Naaradha sought to know from Vishnu what was His permanent abode, the Lord replies: “wherever my devotees chant my glories, I am present there.” When God dwells in the heart, why should devotees seek Him elsewhere?”*

*“Conduct your Bhajans with a pure unsullied heart, oblivious to all worldly desires. When you chant the Lord’s name with a pure heart, you will experience the Divine, “If a man, devotes one moment of the time devoted to thoughts of family, friends, business and wealth, to thoughts on the Lotus Feet of the Lord, he will have no need to fear the messenger of death.”*

*“Men’s thoughts today are wholly concerned with acquisition of material possessions, power and pelf. How much happier would they be if they devoted a fraction of their time to contemplate the glories of God. Hours, days, years are wasted in the pursuit of things of the world. One moment devoted to thought of God will make all the difference.”*

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