An Enchanting Journey

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Usually *Namamrito* or *Namakirtan*, one of the three genres of traditional *kirtan*, is presented in an open space near temples and houses of rich Hindus. Kirtan troupes perform *Namamrito* chanting the names of Krishna and Ram through different *ragas* for several *prohars* (3 hours). Recently a 40 *prohar* (five day) *Namamrito Kirtan* presentation programme took place near the Harishava temple in Rajarbagh Madartek, where traditional *Kirtan* troupes from different corners of the country performed.

Most of the *Namamrito Kirtan* troupes consist of 12 members, of which four/five are *kirtaniyas* (singers) and rests are instrumentalists. Each show begins with a presentation of *bansi* (flute), the key instrument for *kirtan*. In most cases *mridanga*, *dhol* and *kortal* are used as accompanying instruments and a few of the troupes even use the violin and sarod.

Though the troupes repeat the same verse throughout their performance, it does not sound monotonous, because of the mastery in improvisation by the singers and musicians. The performance is very intimate and informal and the audience can join in as they please. At the end of a performance each troupe departs by blowing the conch shell and burning dhup, while another troupe appears accompanied by *Bansi* background music.



