

Press Release: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 29, 2013

Press Contact: Cynthia Henderson
cynthialynn47@gmail.com

DVD release - Celestial Celebrations

Rita Sahai, respected Bay Area Hindustani singer, composer and music teacher, a UC Davis Music Department faculty, and director of the UC Davis Hindustani Ensemble, recently released a two volume DVD set entitled “Celestial Celebration ~ Navagraha Utsav,” a live recording of a concert of the same name which took place in 2012. Swami Omkarananda blessed the inauguration and release of the DVD set at a special ceremony held during the “Meera Festival” on Saturday August 24, 2013 at the Badarikashrama Temple in San Leandro. Rita Sahai and other prominent Bay Area singers offered their unique bhajans for the event to commemorate “Sant Meerabai,” the 16th Century, woman, poet-saint. Meera is one of Sahai’s heroines and she loves to set Meera’s bhajans to music. Sahai and her students performed Meera bhajans in original compositions at the festival. Swami Omkarananda praised Rita's musical talent and expressed appreciation for her unfailing musical contributions to the Temple over the years.

Sahai composed and created the musical notes for the nine compositions of Navagraha Utsav, representing the celestial influences of planets (or grahas) aligned to a specific day of the week. The beauty of each composition was highlighted by the choice of a unique classical raga for each planetary influence (e.g. *Shahana* for Monday and the Moon, *Jog* for Wednesday and Mercury, *Khamaj* for Friday and Venus).

Nearly 300 music lovers attended a concert based on this “constellation of ragas.” The concert was performed by Sahai and her multi-age Vasundhara choir of singers and guest artist Jennifer Berezan at the Freight & Salvage auditorium in Berkeley in October last year. The DVD set emanated from this performance and is offered by Sahai as a tribute to the Guru and Elders to bring harmony to all beings in the universe. Readers are invited to visit Rita Sahai’s website: www.ritasahai.com and *Rita Sahai’s Music* on Facebook to purchase the DVD for the *Celestial Celebrations* concert, the DVD for the earlier concert *Vasundhara*, and all her other recordings, and read more information about this extraordinary composer, performer, professor and uplifting contributor to our community.

~ Review by Subhash Risbud