

Say Ohm!

A look inside Silver Spring's Meditation Museum

ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY LYDIA POLIMENI

As one ascends the staircase to Silver Spring's Meditation Museum, the bustling sounds of Georgia Avenue fade away, replaced by gentle music and softly scented air. You might just be about to elevate your sense of self-awareness as well. At least that is the hope of the Meditation Museum, which was opened in July 2009 by the Brahma Kumaris, a spiritual organization headquartered in India, which promotes international understanding and personal peace.

Inside the small but ambitious space, the visitor will find in the first room a variety of permanently installed sculptures and prints accompanied by text meant to inspire reflection. According to museum director Sister Jenna, each artwork is chosen specifically for the visitor to be "touched by something true." Also on display are several ethereal portraits of a man known as Brahma Baba, a successful Indian diamond merchant who founded the Brahma Kumaris after experiencing a series of visions while meditating in 1936. His teachings included self transformation through meditation and the belief that the world is destroyed and remade every 5,000 years and cycles through various ages. This series of ages is represented in the next



Images inspired by Raja Yoga meditation, donated from the Brahma Kumaris India headquarter

room of the museum; soon to go on display is "The Copper Age," which explores the quest for meaning in existence. These exhibits map the "journey of the soul," says Sister Jenna. She sees the museum as a place to strengthen resolves and explains that since the museum's opening, they have received 5,000 visitors from many different

walks of life, all of whom have left feeling "a little stronger." Towards this goal, the museum also provides a curtained "Quiet Room" with a few "Simple Steps to a Clear Mind" helpfully posted outside.

For those who want to learn more, the museum offers a two-week course in the Brahma Kumaris' form of Raja Yoga

meditation, which also serves as inspiration for some of the displayed artwork. Sister Jenna (who personally teaches the course) explains that the goal of Raja Yoga Meditation is to master self serenity. "I believe we all meditate in some way or another; this meditation offers knowledge and awareness of the nature of a person's life, so that internal awareness becomes their center and strength."

Other popular recurring workshops include "Don't Get Mad, Get Wise" (learn why no one ever makes you angry), the "Self Esteem Workshop" and "Cooking for Peace" which includes a vegetarian and raw food demonstration and tasting. A few workshops will be offered at special times on the weekend of April 23-25th, as part of Amnesty International's Human Rights Arts Festival. All programs are free of charge and supported by voluntary donations. The Meditation Museum is located at 8236 Georgia Avenue and is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more info on the Meditation Museum, visit www.bkwdc.org/meditation-museum.html

For more info on Brahma Kumaris, visit [/www.bkwsu.com/](http://www.bkwsu.com/)