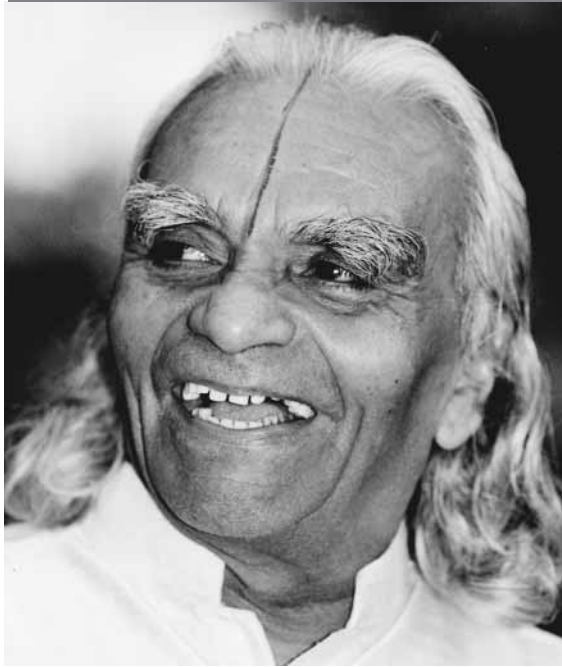


# Yoga Vancouver

Iyengar Yoga Vancouver Newsletter

JULY 2003



## To Pune and Back: the Vancouver contingent returns



*Yoga is a light which, once lit, can never fade out. The more you do, the brighter the flame burns in you. Yoga is a foundation for all things in the world. It has been given to us, but we do not know how to make use of it. When we know, the whole world will be revolutionized.*

B.K.S. Iyengar



B.K.S. Iyengar  
Yoga Association

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Late in November, Sarah Godfrey, Lori Johnson, Maureen Malanchuk, Claudia MacDonald and Gerie Primerano set off to India to spend December studying at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Institute in Pune.

Six months later, the experience is still reverberating for all of them.

What sticks with Maureen is "the privilege of practicing yoga in the same room with B.K.S. Iyengar."

For Gerie, Pune was transformative. "It's not the kind of 'holiday' where you come home and say, "the weather was great, the people were friendly and now that I'm back I feel as though I never left home," she says.

"Although it's true that the weather was ideal and the hospitality gave me warm and fuzzy feelings, I'm not sure that I've left India! I had the experiences of a lifetime, which have transformed my very core."

For Sarah, "what first comes to mind is an image of the actual institute and the flow of students in and out of the doorway. The locals arrive on their motorcycles for their daily or weekly class, and the foreign students parade up the stairs, week after week, month after month.

"In amongst the flow and rhythm of the students, one sees Geeta, Mr. Iyengar and Prashant also passing through the doorway ready to teach a class, or perhaps returning from their practice. It's like a steady stream of people towards this oasis of yoga."

Sarah, Maureen and Claudia were willing to share their impressions of the institute, and some of the insights they took with them when they came back to Canada. You can find their accounts of their Pune experiences starting on Page 4.

# Workshop Report: Ingela Abbot

March 14 to 16, 2003 at The Yoga Space,  
1715 Cook Street, Vancouver

By Louie Ettling



Ingela Abbot is a seasoned practitioner, teacher and trainer of teachers and a long-time friend and colleague of the B.K.S Iyengar Yoga Association of B.C. She directs Yoga Northwest in Bellingham ([www.yoganorthwest.com](http://www.yoganorthwest.com)).

During this last of a series of visits here, Ingela taught nearly 40 students over three days. Enthusiasm towards her and yoga in general grew steadily towards the conclusion of the workshop.

Ingela struck me as a teacher who does not work from a self-aggrandizing place within herself. She shares very generously what she calls "yoga secrets." She broke so many secrets by telling them, that she ended up laughingly searching for words other than "secrets" and started calling them "tips, points, ideas, techniques, philosophies, helping hands and aids towards deeper understanding".

Because of Ingela's mischievous and fun-loving tone, these thoughts did seem like juicy secrets, passed on from teacher to teacher and coming from her heartfelt, well-digested practice - healthy yoga gossip.

A technical point that helped me personally was the following: in Setu Banda Sarvangasana (and backbends in general), tune into the top of the hamstrings and draw them towards the sitting bones while the centre of the buttocks lifts.

Ingela ended the workshop with this quote from the Dalai Lama:

"Every day, think as you wake up, today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

"I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry, or think badly about others, I am going to benefit others as much as I can."

This quote had a particular effect on the very weekend when many people all over the world were either in the final stages of starting a war or busy with intense last-minute attempts to prevent that war.

This was a non-violent and peaceful workshop during which we celebrated a discipline which allows us to cope in a tense world deeply in need of true balance.

At the end of the workshop I asked participants to write down anything that touched them during the workshop. Here are a few of their comments:

- Each teacher has his/her special way of bringing us back to yoga truths and why we carry on along this journey. Ingela started our weekend by reminding us of that union of mind, body and soul - quieting the mind's chatter, coming back from the past and future, back home to the here and now, to who we really are (which is more than just our bodies).

I also finally understood HATHA with the Ha - sun - being energized vital and generating heat and the THA being quiet, reflective. Ingela invited us to bring that balance between HA and THA to our asanas and to our lives. Thank you Ingela for your vitality, strength and laughter. Your wisdom will stay with me for life."

- On an inhalation, say "may I be healthy, happy and whole." On an exhalation, breathe, "may all beings be

healthy, happy and whole."

Energize bones and empty muscles - in order to avoid ego entering in (via over-strenuous actions). The bones are light. The muscles are empty. The bones are alive, the muscles empty.

- Perfection is not necessary, just try. The process is what is important, not just the perfect end pose.
- About the hand position for Sirsasana (Head balance); Tight zip, loose grip.
- Balance, space and freedom come from every movement having a counter movement. Try to achieve a 50/50 compromise between these two opposing movements.
- Outer balance, inner silence.
- Often in a pose Ingela's mantra is "relax your eyes, your face, your throat, your tongue and breathe freely."
- We were encouraged to work with simplicity, passion, awareness.
- As a new student to yoga all the "secrets" were helpful in contacting the mind of the body.
- I loved the joyfulness in the class, the lightness with which she shared profundities and her assumption that everybody could just do everything.
- The instruction of turning the inner thigh back and the outer calf in, was helpful.
- I liked the suggestion to do a stretch or pose three times a week for 28 days to see change.
- The action of the scapulae is crucial to the comfort of the neck in backbends, in inversions or when looking up.
- The inhalation is soft and gentle. The exhalation is long smooth and relaxed. Listen to the silence and soften from inside.
- Roll the tail down, push the upper thighs back and rotate the calves towards the centre.
- To achieve and maintain discipline, at the onset of a practice, think about where you want to be in one month, in a year, in fifty years.

- Backbends: Move the back of the knees into the heels and from the back of the knees towards the sitting bones. (the sitting bones, on the other hand go towards the knees - not a contradiction, but an action/counter action).
- In all poses: move the shoulders away from the ears, move the shoulder blades in, move the shoulder blades and thoracic spine towards the waist.
- Sirsasana (head balance): a mantra: Push arms down, breathe, swing up. No fear, but courage.
- There is stillness after exhalation.
- Release: Tension, Tightness, Tiredness
- The tongue is soft and the breath moving.
- I really like the idea of finding the “off switch” to the busy mind. I think I managed to achieve this once during Pranayama.

**Louie Etting** is co-founder of *The Yoga Space in Vancouver* ([www.theyogospace.ca](http://www.theyogospace.ca)), where she teaches most of her classes.

**Yoga Philosophy: The yamas, or universal ethical restraints, constitute the first limb of Patanjali's system of ashtanga yoga. Ingelise Nherlan continues her series on the yamas and niyamas (individual disciplines) with an examination of brahmacharya. The remaining yamas are ahimsa (non-harming), satya (truth), asteya (non-stealing) and aparigraha (non-hoarding).**

Many years ago during a Q&A session with Guruji he was asked this question: “Is it necessary to be a brahmacharya to be a Yogi?”

Guruji smiled, shook his head a little and answered: “My dear friend. I have six children.”

The answer came promptly and was clear.

Although brahmacharya - the word is often translated as celibacy - is one of the concepts contained in the yamas and niyamas, we are reminded that Patanjali's ashtanga yoga is taught as being eight limbs, as in “the tree of yoga” i.e. the trunk and many horizontal branches. It is not taught as being a vertical ladder where one step must be mastered before the next ascent can take place.

In Pune we are taught to begin teaching pranayama only when the student has a very minimum of 6 to 12 month of asana studies, We are not taught to master all advanced poses and then - and only then - to start pranayama.

So it is with brahmacharya. The ability to live a life in brahmacharya evolves with time, as do all Yogic disciplines. Even a hamstring takes its time to stretch and reach its full potential.

From seed to Samadhi.

What might a life in brahmacharya mean? Does it consist of sternly saying no to the senses, and particularly sexual desire? Or does the practice of yoga somehow change our orientation to the senses?

Turning to the asanas, we see that unlike most other asanas paschimottanasana has two additional names, namely ugrasana and brahmacharyasana.

Ugra means formidable, forceful and noble. Brahmacharya means religious study, self-restraint and celibacy. This indicates to me that the state of brahmacharya stretches further than mere sexual celibacy.

Paschimottanasana must therefore be one of the asanas which helps to control senses that are out of control, overwhelming or just plain hindering spiritual growth.

The poses of the eka pada rajakapotanana cycle (the one-legged king pigeon poses) are also mentioned as asanas that help contain sexual energy. (See asana 188 in *Light on Yoga*.) It would be interesting to explore all of the asanas which particularly have this common denominator.

Many other, if not all asanas, work in subtle ways to gently “nudge” or “tuck” away at that in us which “binds” us to the physical plane.

Therefore, once again it is safe to say: “Practice with devotion. All is well. All will be well.”

*Ingelise Nherlan is a senior teachers in Canada and has been awarded a Senior Intermediate III certificate. She teaches in West Vancouver. You can reach her at [ingelise@shaw.ca](mailto:ingelise@shaw.ca) or at Room for Yoga, 604-926-6985.*

## A YOGA SUCCESS STORY

By Marilyn Shepherd

In November and December many of us are looking for ways to give back to the community. This is also a time of the year when we can experience additional stress with the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season.

I had an idea of a way to combine stress reduction in a spirit of giving: stage a Yog-a-thon!

On December 15, 2002 I participated with 19 of my students in staging a “Yog-a-thon” in White Rock.

On Yog-a-thon day, the participants received 5 hours of yoga instruction in 3 segments: a silent guided practice, a restorative segment followed by an energizing finale with advanced postures. Students left calm, balanced and energized to enjoy the holiday season.

Best of all, through sponsorships or personal donations, the participants raised over \$2,017.00 for the day.

We chose to donate this entire sum to “PARSA” (Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for

Afghanistan), an organization working directly and personally with widowed Afghani women to help them develop skills to help support their families ([www.parsa-afghanistan.org](http://www.parsa-afghanistan.org)).

What a success! The student support and feedback was amazing and we all hope our donations have made a difference to Afghani women on their challenging journey in a troubled part of our world.

Based on our success, we agreed to stage the event again this year. Here is your official advance notice to all teachers and students to join us, Sunday December 14, 2003.

I hope some of you Teachers out there will volunteer to instruct a portion of the afternoon. As much as I loved teaching that whole day I would happily share the privilege with you.

Please give me a call at 604-531-8051 or email me at [journeytotheheart@shaw.ca](mailto:journeytotheheart@shaw.ca) if you would like to share in the fun of this meaningful event.



By *Claudia MacDonald*

The first time I was in Pune I was part of a Canadian “Intensive” of 35 or 40 people taught exclusively by Geeta and occasionally by Mr. Iyengar when his enthusiasm for his subject compelled him to interject from time to time, often resulting in a passionate conversations between the two in Maharati.

This December I returned, with four others from Vancouver. Although I seemed to remember nothing about the streets, places and routes, I felt strangely at home.

I had arranged to share an apartment with Yvonne Kipp from Cortez Island and Robin Cantor and her husband Jim from Victoria, a huge place used by many visiting yogis, as the telephone record book revealed.

The owner’s devotion to Mr. Iyengar was obvious: photos on the wall and a large wall clock with silhouettes of Mr. Iyengar’s poses instead of numbers. There were yoga props in a little side room and folding metal chairs in case we hadn’t done enough yoga during our daily classes and practices at the Institute.

The first visit to the Institute to register also held that interesting combination of strangeness and familiarity. Pandu, the secretary, sat behind his desk, taking registrations, a task he has performed for over 20 years. There were people sitting on benches in the lobby,

looking through thick albums of Mr. Iyengar in poses and giving special needs instruction. Floor to ceiling glass cases housed countless gifts given to Mr. Iyengar over the years, including an Inuit sculpture we Canadians had given him. The hall and stairway walls were lined with varied awards and distinctions. The single ladies washroom sat behind a white cotton modesty curtain where we could wash both our hands and our feet. It hadn’t changed except for the new red and turquoise plastic buckets that held water for ladling over our feet.

Our days alternated between morning and evening classes, with a practice session at the opposite end of the day. Classes were taught by both Geeta and Prashant Iyengar, with Geeta teaching an extra women’s class and pranayama class per week.

We were joining what has always been called the “public classes” which the local students have attended weekly for years. With the high demand from around the world and the extra students arriving for Mr. Iyengar’s birthday celebrations (December 14), December is a spectacularly crowded time; someone claimed to have counted 115 to 120 students in one class.

It became quite entertaining trying to get a mat and find a piece of floor to place it on and be able to keep it while

getting blankets, straps, bolsters, etc., but having been forewarned, we worked in ad hoc teams, one to the mats and spots, one to the tiny equipment room to obtain the props. Often Geeta and Prashant would come in after all that and say “put all props away and get a sticky mat only”. And somehow it all worked except, perhaps, if you ended up in the back row for an evening’s pranayama (which easily happened if you were in a detached “go with the flow” state of mind) only to have an amazing cacophony of I don’t know what kind of bird in the nearby treetops threaten to drown out Geeta’s precious instructions and to also become one of the first bodies encountered by the mosquitoes entering the open windows.

The pranayama instruction was superb! I felt as though every cell of my body was absorbing the instruction, the words penetrating directly into my consciousness. Both teachers conveyed the depth, power and subtlety of the study of breath.

Geeta taught us many variations of pranayama, including Bastrika for nasal cleansing. During one session she taught meditation: head up, eyes unfocused and “looking as though at something behind you,” breathing softly, focusing on the sides of the sternum, “like branches left and right breathing out sideways into each lung, breathing from inner edges of the lungs.”

Geeta, noticing the number of people with coughs and colds, taught a pranayama session geared to not irritating the throat: by focusing on the abdomen and the tip of the nostrils, we could “jump over” the throat and then take a couple of thoracic breaths (focusing on the inner edges of the lungs and the sternum) to store energy in the chest (the prana zone) and to use the “lower range” in the throat during Viloma breathing.

Prashant encouraged us to see that we could start out muscularly and then gradually move toward accessing deeper layers of the body and to watch the transition from muscular action to “tenderness and delicacy,” “like a mother putting a child to sleep,” patting lighter and lighter, “no longer breathing the air but breathing the mind.” After one particular session I felt like my body had become a holy space, a place

of lightness where I could have sat forever without effort!

The asana instruction was also rich and detailed. Prashant, besides being very enthusiastic about Viparita Dandasana (one hour over a chair upside down, then down onto the floor for more, including Urdhva Dhanurasana) was passionately encouraging us to explore the subtle realms of asana, exploring from various aspects of self, inquiring as to the effect of one action or part of the body on another, e.g. the effect on the pelvis (say in Viparita Dandasana) from the nostrils, from the brain, from the chest; not using the physical body only, using breath, organs, brain asking “how does it affect the pose?”

He encouraged us not to be afraid to make mistakes, to acknowledge that there are many kinds of teachers within us and to prepare in different ways as an “insurance policy” so we are prepared for old age, so we are not discouraged as we age. He suggested we develop “behind ear seeing” e.g. to connect shoulder blades from behind ear seeing as the shoulder blades support the lungs and cut into the body. That “seeing” then moves into the body from the shoulder blades. You know, that kind of instruction.

Geeta’s clarity, precision and hard work are truly impressive! At one women’s class she taught a seated twist series with the arms up. Over the head. We did many poses with the head up, e.g. Uttanasana (hands forward) Adho Mukha Virasana, Marichyasana III, head toward the straight leg looking up and “climbing up” with “the dorsal spine and sacrum in” then turning the head. We also worked with the arms and head forward, hands on the floor, in Parsvottanasana. Geeta showed us a series of standing poses particularly suited for people with heart and lung problems that I found extremely soothing, linking each pose with Parsvottanasana, Uttanasana (head up), Urdva and Adho Mukha Svanasana and not coming to a standing position throughout the whole standing series. During one class, we worked with Malasana taught so precisely that I actually was able to get my hands clasped behind my back for the first time ever (with a little help from Sarah).

I had the good fortune to be singled



out for some wonderful and needed instruction in Bharadvajasana II for people with knee injuries. Geeta caught me just as I was going into it, my poor little knee way up in the air as I dutifully placed my foot way over on my Virasana leg thigh. Well, I was certainly off track on that one and welcomed the instruction even with 100 witnesses in the room!

The practice sessions we attended daily were truly lovely and peaceful, each person doing his or her own work and attended by Geeta and Mr. Iyengar, who spent much of his time in deep supported backbends, headstand and shoulderstand.

We were all moved and impressed to see Mr. Iyengar in his practice, so supple and open, as though there were no bones, as though he was a being of light. His skin seemed to shine! He worked quietly in a corner and only occasionally jumped up to give some advice to a nearby student, especially when Patricia Walden was there! On those occasions we would get up from what we were doing and form a ring around him, hungrily taking in his instructions.

One day he was helping a young Indian woman who may have been his granddaughter. He was prodding her gently and occasionally whacking her lovingly on the head while she was in supported Ardha Chandrasana. His hands moved in a gentle arching movement and they were exquisite and so skilled and full of knowledge: the hands of a genius! The sight brought tears to

my eyes as I thought of genius and mortality, all that knowledge in his hands.

I felt moved on my last day at the Institute as I climbed the stairs to find Geeta and bid her farewell. She was about to hang upside down over a rope swing, but I caught her in time to give her my thanks, respect, namaste and love.

*Claudia MacDonald has developed a thriving and highly respected yoga program in both the Grandview- Woodlands and Yaletown areas. She can be reached at 604 874-1968 or iyoga@intergate.ca.*

*By Sarah Godfrey*

It had been twenty years exactly since I last stepped on Indian soil and I was eager to return. My travel companions, Maureen Malanchuk and Gerie Primerano, made the long trek there seem remarkably effortless. After months of planning here we were at the Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Institute with all that it offers, evokes and demands. We were enrolled in General Classes attended by local students and an array of international students, usually there for a month. Geeta was our primary teacher and we experienced Prashant’s classes twice weekly.

The daily classes were challenging, not just the asanas, but being able to find (and keep) a spot and hang on to one’s equipment. December proved to be a very busy month as the constant parade of students up the stairwell revealed. At one Saturday women’s class I was told the count reached 115



people. But somehow it all worked. Yes it was “cozy”, but we learned to work with speed, efficiency, and acceptance of each other.

What I experienced from both Geeta’s and Prashant’s teachings was how they commanded every ounce of one’s attention. Ears were sharply tuned in; it was nearly impossible to wander off in thought. Geeta’s timing and sequencing were so sharp and methodical, yet an element of the unknown kept one alert and taking nothing for granted.

She would adapt the class to the needs of the people if necessary. One pranayama and one asana class addressed all of us that were rattling away with coughs and colds. Her ability to be in one corner of the room and see what was happening in the opposite corner never ceased to amaze me. As she said during class one day “don’t think I don’t know your nature; I can read your minds.” I had absolutely no doubt.

Most often the classes felt nothing short of brilliant. It was during Geeta’s pranayama classes that I felt truly transported. Her instructions came from such depth and the words felt so tender.

Prashant’s plays on words kept us constantly stimulated and got us through some very long holdings. When re-reading my notes from his class, I came across some of the phrases which he so passionately imparted to us: “practice to learn; practice to mature; practice to consolidate; practice to stabilize; practice for freedom.” Or, “never can there be alignment of the body - ultimately it’s about alignment of the mind.” He had us examine the poses from some of these aspects, which kept one digging into their deepest reserve.

Practice time was quite amazing. There was a rhythm, a flow, as people did their practice, exchanged props, hung from ropes etc. It frequently had a serene quality to it and was such a contrast to the hustle/bustle of daily classes. I think I can speak for all of us when stating that the highlight was being able to steal glances of Mr. Iyengar doing his

extraordinary practice. One could not help but think, “This man is 84 years old.” His ability, strength and sheer determination were such a privilege to behold. And here we were in the room all doing our yoga together with the Iyengars. I remember thinking that there is no other room in the world quite like this.

On December 14th, Mr. Iyengar’s birthday, we began with a morning class and there tucked silently away in a corner was Guruji, doing a 30 minute sirsasana. In the evening hundreds of us piled into the studio to listen to chanting, a fine talk from Prashant and a remarkable speech from Mr. Iyengar. What was also outstanding was to witness a couple (American I believe) stand and recite the entire 196 yoga sutras - in unison. Everyone present was deeply moved. We eventually filed down to the courtyard where we were fed a sumptuous Indian buffet. A pleasant end to a very pleasant day.

Quite unexpectedly it turned out that eight Canadians were at the Institute during December 2002. Amongst the daily classes, practice sessions and observing beginners and medical classes we did manage to fit in some sights, shopping and much laughter. The weeks sailed by and before long we were bestowing our farewells upon each other.

On my way home with Lori Johnson we stopped over in Bangkok for a few days. Although this city has an exciting pulse to it, the heart of our journey resided in Pune and we were now yearning to return home to our families.

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*By Maureen Malanchuk*

The first time I saw Mr. Iyengar, he walked into the lobby of the institute looking like a vision dressed completely in white. I had heard so much about him and had seen his face so often that I felt totally in awe to finally see him in person. It was like seeing a member of royalty or a famous celebrity. As he joked with another student about the Iyengar yoga t-shirt she was wearing, what struck me were his beatific smile - it lit up his whole face - and his laugh - it lit up the entire room. Over the course of the month I was there, I did see a flash or two of the ferocity and focus he is famous for but I saw that smile and heard that laugh much more often.

One of the highlights of my trip was hearing Guruji speak during his 84th birthday celebrations in mid-December. He was so eloquent and humble. His passion for yoga shone through his words, and he talked candidly about the challenges he now faces as he works to clear fibres from his lungs after inhaling them from the blankets used during a huge public class a few years ago.

This was the first time I had worked with Prashant Iyengar and he lived up to his reputation as a philosophical teacher. He talked about integrating our entire body into the pose; about doing headstand and working to open our chest and then lengthening our legs to help open our chest and grounding through our arms to help open our chest.

He also encouraged us to play with the sequence of the poses so our practice becomes more mature and sophisticated. And I felt what that was like in the class where we did an hour of viparita dandasana and urdhva dhanurasana, then did dhanurasana. By the time I grasped my ankles with my hands, pulled my legs towards my head and raised my chest, my head and feet felt as if they were touching the sky.

Prashant also asked rhetorical questions, like “What’s the difference between an adjustment and a correction?” Like a true riddler, he left us to discover the answer for ourselves. A student from the States gave the answer we liked best: “An adjustment is done internally; a correction is done from the outside.”

I attended the 5-day conference with Geeta when she was in Vancouver

about two years ago, and I still remember how present I felt in her classes. The same thing happened in Pune. Half an hour into my first class with her, I reached a point that usually comes several days into an intensive workshop: I did not consider whether or not I wanted to do a pose. I did not think about whether or not I could do it. I did not negotiate with myself saying I would use half of my energy for adho mukha Vrksasana because I knew Sirsansa would come later and I'd need more energy for that. All internal dialogue ceased. I simply did the poses she asked us to do, and I did each one to my maximum ability. After her first class, I felt as though I'd gone through one of those old wringer washing machines. I was dripping with sweat and sore all over but could already feel the glow that comes with cleaning out the cobwebs and bad habits.

I found Geeta's tips more anatomical and detailed than Prashant's. She said things like: move your tailbone in to your body and thighs back when you're in headstand. Move your tailbone and sacrum in sharply when you're doing seated forward bends.

One of the things that surprised me about Geeta is how gentle her adjustments could be. When she moved my tailbone into my body in headstand, her touch was as light as a feather. I couldn't believe she had done it, until she did it again a few minutes later when my tailbone had popped back and my legs had fallen forward. After both of her adjustments, my tailbone moved in, my legs moved back and the pose felt lighter. Another time, she moved my shoulders back in Virasana and then waited with hands hovering near my shoulders for several heartbeats. My shoulders began returning to their forward position until I took my awareness to that area and adjusted my shoulders to her correction.

When attending the daily two-to-three hour practice sessions, I felt like I was in a large yoga playground. It was prop heaven. There were ropes and swings, back benders and chest openers, Halasana benches and shoulderstand benches. I loved going to practices to play with all of the equipment. I also got lots of great ideas as I watched other students doing their practices and

using props in innovative ways. Some of the ideas I picked up include:

Do shoulderstand in front of the wooden "horse" with your knees bent back over the top of the horse. Do Uttanasana with the back of your legs against a wall and a plank behind your upper thighs. Do Trikonasana with a belt looped around the back foot and the front hip crease, belt loop at the front outer hip moving it back and down towards the ground.

One of the funniest, and most embarrassing moments for me was when I attended my first practice and the institute and rolled out my mat in an empty spot in front of the stage, right in front of where Mr. Iyengar was practicing his backbends. Last time I had checked, he was working at the ropes at the far side of the room. Not wanting to be rude and move my mat right away, I started my practice in front of him with legs shaking, wondering if he was wondering what that goofy girl in front of him with the shaking legs was doing at his institute. After a few poses, I forgot he was there and soon moved to other parts of the room to use the different props.

The classes were challenging but the poses were not the most difficult thing I encountered. There were usually more than a hundred students in the classes so our mats were often touching, there wasn't always enough equipment for everyone and, when you went to go get equipment, you often came back to find your mat gone. I found that these experiences tested the equanimity and poise I had built up with my work on the mat. I had to learn to become comfortable working in such close quarters by focusing inwards. And I learned to work with my neighbor so one of us could go get equipment while the other one "saved" our mats.

Sometimes these strategies worked for me; sometimes they didn't.

In one pranayama class, I had no bolster and no blankets but I simply lay down on my mat and thought "to do pranayama, all I really need are my lungs and I have those." A few seconds later, one of the teacher students came by and gave me a bolster and a few blankets. Another time, I was standing at the back of my mat and had turned around to pick up a blanket, when

another student jumped on the front of my mat and shouted, "I've got this mat." I turned back to her and snarled, "I've already got it." Not very yogic I immediately realized, but it was a good lesson for me.

Since I've returned from the institute, friends ask whether I feel my poses have improved. I don't know if my poses look like they have improved but my work with them feels like it has "evolved."

I feel like I've begun working on a deeper level. The poses feel different and I feel different when I'm in them. There's been a subtle but significant shift. It's as if the cells of my body and my energy are now involved in the work, not just my muscles, ligaments and bones. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, in their interpretation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, say that spiritual teachers do not "teach" the way one teaches history or mathematics but by transmitting understanding like light or heat.

It feels like Geeta and Prashant transmitted a little flicker of light or a little flame of heat to me that is still with me when I practice.

*Maureen Malanchuk teaches in Burnaby at Burnaby South Fitness Centre. She can be reached at 604 526-3903 or homespa@shaw.ca.*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2002 Annual General Meeting for the BKS Iyengar Yoga Association was held Sunday, November 18, at the newly opened Yoga Tree Centres studio in New Westminster.

Before the meeting, Ingelise Nherlan shared some highlights of her recent trip to Pune, leading a practice for teachers and teacher-trainees. Chai and snacks were offered and the meeting commenced at 11:44 am.

After reviewing last year's minutes, committee reports were given and a new board was elected.

The board for 2003 consists of:

Sarah Godfrey	- President
Heather Graham	- Vice President
Marilyn Shepherd	- Treasurer
Bridget Donald	- Membership & Recording Secretary
Eve Johnson	- Newsletter editor
Claudia MacDonald	- Teacher's Representative
Louie Ettlting	- Member-at-Large
Anita Webster	- Member-at-Large

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the 2002 AGM minutes, contact Sarah Godfrey at sarahgt@shaw.ca or 604 985-1786.

## Workshop News:

The workshop schedule is filling up with an exciting roster of teachers. As workshop committee member Louie Ettling says: "we try to bring at least one senior international, one senior Canadian and one senior local teacher to Vancouver for workshops each year."

Remember that members receive a discount on workshops, and that as a member you'll be given a chance to register three weeks before registration is opened to the wider yoga community.

**SUSAN BULL** will teach a weekend workshop on "Yoga and Authentic Movement" with Terry Gregory, Sept. 12 - 14 at Thymeways on Galiano Island. For more information on the workshop and for accomodation, phone Susan Bull in Vancouver or Terry Gregory on Galiano Island at 250-539-5721.

Susan will also teach a Yoga intensive in Mexico on the island of Isla Mujeres, February, 2004. For more information phone Susan at 604-985-1994.

**MAUREEN CARRUTHERS** will conduct a weekend workshop at Yoga Tree Centres, September 19 to 21, 2003, on the theme "As we age, so we change."

Maureen has studied with B.K.S. Iyengar since the early 1970s, and has trained many Lower Mainland teachers.

Students are expected to have five years yoga experience in the Iyengar method. The workshop is limited to 20 participants.

For more information, call Heather Graham, 604-515-9209.

**GABRIELLA GIUBILARO**, who directs an Iyengar Yoga center in Florence, will bring her energy, wit and eye for detail to Vancouver March 17 to 21, 2004. The workshop will be held at The Yoga Space. For more information call Louie Ettling at 604-876-9600.

**MAHYAR RAZ-KHORZAD** comes to The Yoga Space September 10 - 12, 2004. Mahyar has studied with Mr. Iyengar and Geeta every year for many years and

has been awarded a Senior Intermediate III, by Mr. Iyengar.

Mayhar interprets the Iyengar's work with artistic flair in a charming and challenging manner. Her students describe her as a dedicated, committed and creative teacher.

Originally from Iran, Mahyar is the founder of the Iyengar Yoga Institute in Tehran. She now directs a yoga studio in Toronto.

For more information call Louie Ettling at 604-876-9600.

**AADIL PALKHIVALA** will teach a four-day workshop, November 25 to 27, 2004, on "Living the Eight Limbs of Yoga." Aadil is a senior Iyengar teacher, who holds an Advanced Certificate. He started studying with Guruji at the tender age of seven, and is the founder and director of Yoga Centers in Bellevue, Washington. The workshop will be held at The Yoga Space.

For more information, phone or email Susan Bull, [susansusanbull@hotmail.com](mailto:susansusanbull@hotmail.com), 604-985-1994.

## The Wandering Yogini:



**HEATHER GRAHAM** is pleased and proud that her teacher, **MAUREEN CARRUTHERS**, will join her to teach in Mexico in March, 2004 for a week-long workshop. Participants will enjoy a deep and enriching yoga experience with friends. Between yoga sessions, there will be time to swim, read by the pool, enjoy the ocean view and stroll to Puerto Vallarta's famous beach.

The emphasis for the week will be on restoration, awareness and enjoyment - a week of sun, excellent food, relaxation and yoga that will help students reach a

deeper level of body-mind awareness.

Heather Graham has studied yoga for 25 years. She began studying the Iyengar method with Maureen and Bruce Carruthers in 1989. She became their apprentice, and worked with them during many workshops at their home studio, Thymeways, on Galiano Island. She also worked with Dr. Bruce Carruthers as he taught restorative yoga to patients with chronic illnesses. Heather's other teachers include Donald Moyer, Father Joe Periera, Aadil Palkivala and Julie Gudmestad. Heather received her internationally recognized Iyengar Yoga certificate in 1999.

Heather inspires her students to incorporate yoga into their daily lives and to increase their self-awareness. During the workshop, Heather and Maureen will encourage you to deepen your understanding of asana (poses) and pranayama (breath). Through this practice, you will develop clearer body-mind awareness. They will emphasize poses that are specifically suited to your own needs and your unique body.

Maureen Carruthers is one of Canada's most respected yoga teachers. Her dedication, sensitivity, and long experience have earned her a special place in Canada's Iyengar Yoga Community. Her intuitive awareness and gentle methods have enlightened and inspired hundreds of students, many of whom are now Iyengar Yoga teachers.

Maureen Carruthers has been granted Senior Intermediate Instructor Certification by B.K.S. Iyengar.

The program will start in the afternoon of March 6 and end Saturday March 13 at noon. It will be held at Casa Dulce Vida, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

The Casa is situated in the heart of Puerto Vallarta's "Old Town." More information can be seen at [www.dulcevida.com](http://www.dulcevida.com). The cost is US \$825. This includes seven days of yoga instruction, meals prepared by a chef on-site, and accommodations. For more information, contact Heather Graham at (604) 515-9201 or Twila Pattyson at (604) 536-0835 or email [yogatrecenres@hotmail.com](mailto:yogatrecenres@hotmail.com).