

Iyengar yoga is a worldwide phenomenon. In Pune, the living legend B.K.S. Iyengar is still running his institute and teaching his students. Well, in a way teaching his students. In an interesting twist on a yoga session, it is actually his granddaughter Abhijata who leads the class, while Guruji watches over the room, quietly giving instructions to Abhijata who then relays them to the students. Think of this as a living reincarnation of B.K.S. Iyengar and the slightly odd feeling will subside. The benefit of this approach to the institute is long-reaching, as Geeta (B.K.S. Iyengar's daughter) is regaining her health, and although B.K.S. himself is a sharp and extremely fit man, his long years may not prove to be infinite after all. This hands-on extension of Abhijata's training means that future generations of students will be learning Iyengar in a purely Iyengar way.

This is no touristic institute. New admissions are only taken from students who have studied Iyengar for years,

and even then a personal introduction from a senior Iyengar yoga teacher is needed. After this hurdle is jumped, there is still a two to three-year waiting list to finally begin the curriculum. This arduous admissions process is somewhat easier for locals however, and as well as finding it faster and cheaper to participate, there are also beginner's classes available for those who are fortunate enough to be an Indian living in India.

B.K.S. is well guarded by the lion lying in his path, Pandurang Rao, the institute's secretary. Rao is ruthlessly effective in his task of shielding the guru from the kind of adoration that can only come from being one of the world's best-known yogis.

B.K.S. Iyengar studied under the great Krishnamacharya, his brother-in-law. Although Iyengar was not the only notable name taught by Krishnamacharya, he was noted for being the most creative. His use of props like chairs



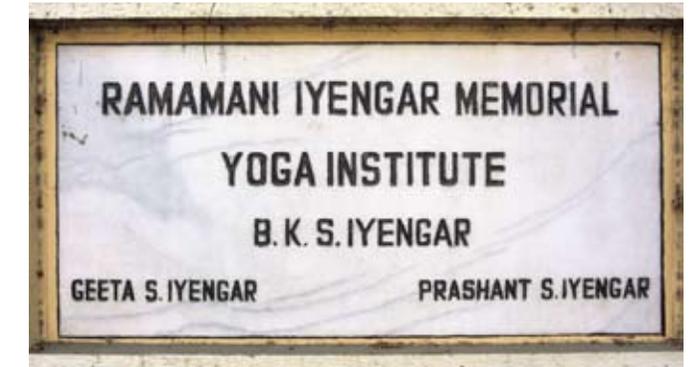
and ropes to help students achieve more accuracy in their poses is unique in the yoga world.

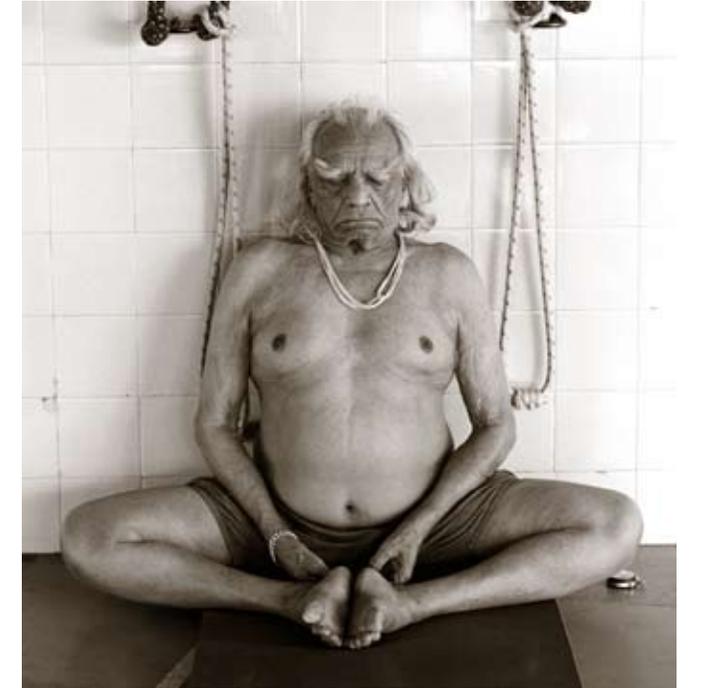
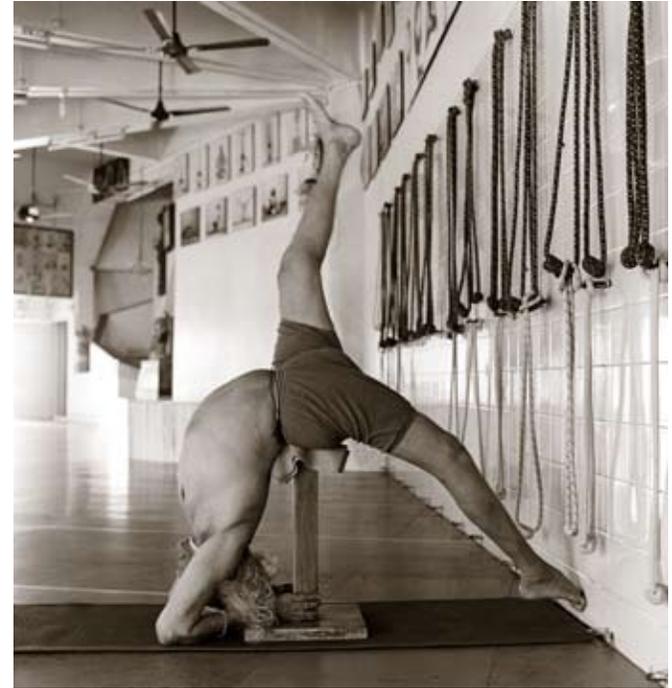
The institute itself is an architectural metaphor for the basic principles of yoga. Three floors, representing the mind, body and spirit, fronted by eight columns representing the eight limbs of yoga. The library is well-stocked and the *shalas* are high-ceilinged, airy places of tranquility mixed with a powerful devotion to practice.

Although there are many excellent teachers in the institute, teaching at the institute is also a family affair, with Abhijata, Prashant (Iyengar's son) and Geeta (the daughter of Iyengar, who has been called the heart of the institute and the best yoga teacher in the world) at the core of the teaching staff. Although her health has been poor in recent years, she is teaching again, much to the delight of the many former students who return – some year after year in a kind of pilgrimage – to compound and deepen their studies.

*About the area*

In many ways Pune could be any large city anywhere in the world. Despite its age, this is a major modern commercial and IT hub of the country, replete with shopping malls and high-rise buildings. Like Bangalore, the climate is fairly mild, sitting as it does on the plains beneath the Western Ghats.







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Website	www.bksiyengar.com
Open	All year (except May)
Yoga styles	Iyengar
Training types	Local classes (called 'General Class')
Levels	Beginner (only for Indians), intermediate, advanced
Accommodation	No
Food	No

