Remembering Mr Iyengar the qualities that immediately come to mind are his kindness and his sense of humour. This is rather a surprise as one would expect to think of his knowledge of yoga and his teaching. In both areas he was outstanding but his teaching was marked by his sense of humour. In my very first class I answered back as I was unused to being pushed to work harder. His response was to smile. From then on I just went with everything he asked me to do. I soon learned that he never asked more than I could give. It was exhilarating to be taught by him. I was one of the fortunate people who attended the 1989 intensive yoga course that, because of Prashant’s accident, was taught by him. I had never before worked as I did for those three weeks. Sadly I never again managed to work in the same way though I always kept it in my mind both in classes I attended and my own practice and tried to reach the same level of experience.

His kindness to me was exceptional. When I was seriously injured in the late 1990’s he gave up his own practice time to help me and continued to do so until my last visit in 2007. He pointed out to others that I was a serious case and that he could not help others less in need.

His knowledge was not just on yoga but on human anatomy. When I said the doctor had said I could have a hip replacement his response was, “Why would you do that? It is your tail bone that is the problem.” The X ray showed that was indeed the case – “minimal damage in the hip, they said”. People were often confounded by his pointing out operations they had had or problems that no one else would have seen.

Twice, in 1990 and 1992, I had the privilege of staying in the Pune Institute. It was while staying there that I saw how simply the whole family lived despite the wealth that they could have had to spend. Mr Iyengar gave away much of the money he earned by his hard work. He was a true yogi. But he also enjoyed life. I remember sitting in the kitchen of the old Maida Vale Institute in London while he tried to explain to me how the ankle should be in Virasana. I was perched on a stool and almost overturned the stool in my concentration on what he was showing me. I now suspect that he was seeing how far I would go in following his words while ignoring my own perilous perch on the edge of the stool. I have never forgotten what he told me that day.

I remember also the class he gave at the Porchester Hall in London. He came up behind me and said my name though I was a junior student and he hadn’t seen me often or for years. He proceeded to make a correction that took me a long way further into Trikonasana. He then said to the teacher beside him, “and she didn’t get what I did”. I hadn’t, but there was humour in his voice. I had learned a valuable lesson. When he was teaching I had to concentrate exclusively on what he was teaching.

He had a powerful personality. I remember being in a class in South London. We were all sitting in Dandasana. As he walked along the line each student in turn grew about an inch. I stretched to my utmost, determined not to repeat the growth of the others. As he approached me I felt myself extend upwards. There was a laugh from the watching benches. I think my face had shown my determination and my failure.

Of course there are many yoga explanations he gave that I also remember but his knowledge was so far beyond mine that I was a poor student. I worked full time so never had the opportunity to practice in the way that many others did. This never affected how I was treated by him in class. I will always be grateful that I knew him. He was an extraordinary influence on my life.

Lorna Walker