

## Sample Student Paper

*This isn't perfect, but it does have a nice motive, a clear thesis statement and an interesting analysis.*

At first glance, Iyengar's system seems to involve merely a sequence of body postures. A closer reading of the text, however, shows that spiritual development comes from a complex discipline of shaping something he calls the "body-mind." **In Iyengar's system, reaching the ultimate spiritual experience involves cultivating awareness, avoiding pain and using the mind to channel energies to the body-mind.**

Motive

Thesis

To Iyengar, the first goal of yoga is complete awareness of your body. **In order to reach full awareness you must focus on your body as a whole. In his words, you need to move from concentration to meditation. Iyengar points out that "focusing on one point is concentration and focusing on all points at the same time is meditation."** Concentration is a useful skill, at least at a preliminary stage; but in order to cultivate real awareness you must shift from concentration on one thing to the ability to be aware of all things at all times (500). You accomplish this through mastering not one or two postures but by practicing all of them. When you become aware of all muscular groups while doing asanas your ultimate goal is to hold this state of awareness for longer periods. This is meditation.

Clear topic sentence

Evidence & Analysis

The second yoga goal is to avoid pain—because pain shows that you have lost your awareness. **For example, he suggests, "In concentration, you are likely to forget some parts of the body as you focus your attention on others. This is why you get pain in certain parts of the body because you have momentarily lost your awareness of these areas" (499).** Iyengar advises that holding your awareness without losing concentration on certain parts of your body is essential in order to avoid pain. Another suggestion is that when performing a pose you should maintain your focus on both your sense of direction and the centre of gravity. An overstretch in certain muscles may cause your center of gravity to shift, causing insensitivity because when a part of the body becomes dull it has no awareness. This is where pain will develop (499).

Clear topic sentence

Evidence & Analysis

Finally, Iyengar believes that when practicing yoga you must use your mind to channel energies to the body-mind. **Iyengar believes that there are no boundaries between body, mind and the soul, and he is interested in understanding energy flows across these categories of being. Iyengar argues that we move energy through and across these categories in different stages. The first stage is conative action, which is simply physical action at its most direct level. The second stage is cognitive action, which is when the skin recognizes the action of the flesh. In the third stage, which Iyengar calls communication or communion, "the mind comes into play and is drawn by the organs of perception towards the organs of action. The mind acts as a bridge between the muscular movement and the organs of perception, introduces the intellect and connects it to every part of the body-fibers, tissues, and cells, right through to the outer pores of the skin" (502). The final stage involves all of the previous stages and "forms a total awareness from the self to the skin and from the skin to the self, this is the spiritual practice in yoga" (503). In this way, Yoga unites the body and the mind, bringing nature and spirit, world and individual, together.**

Clear topic sentence

Evidence & Analysis

In conclusion, success in Iyengar's system is achieved by cultivating awareness, avoiding pain, and using the mind to channel energies to the body mind. In order to cultivate awareness you must concentrate on your body as a whole and be sure not to rupture this focus. Furthermore, in order to be successful you must avoid pain because pain comes from broken awareness. Finally, the mind channels energy to the body-mind in several stages, ending in the ultimate spiritual experience.

Conclusion