**Carolyn Fascia**

**Philosophy 101**

**Naada Yoga Teacher Training**

**Essay Question:**

**Read Lines II.34 and II.35 from chapter two of the Yoga Sutra’s of Patanjali. Summerize, in your own words, the meaning of these sutra’s. Explain how they can be used in your life, with people you find difficult, in your practice and in teaching your students.**

**Translation from Chip Hartranft**

**ii.34**

**We ourselves may act upon unwholesome thoughts, such as wanting to harm someone, or we may cause or condone them in others; unwholesome thoughts may arise from greed, anger, or delusion; they may be mild, moderate or extreme; but they never cease to ripen into ignorance and suffering. This is why one must cultivate wholesome thoughts.**

**ii.35**

**Being firmly grounded in non-violence creates an atmosphere in which others can let go of their hostility.**

Strong emotions and misunderstandings may cloud one’s judgment causing one to have bad thoughts, behave badly or hurt someone. Encouraging any type of negative thoughts or behavior whether they are your own or someone else’s only causes more suffering and ignorance, so we should try to focus on more positive thoughts.

If you are calm, you can create a space for others to be less agitated.

**In your life…**

These 2 sutras can be really effective in one’s life. For me, the first step is to recognize when I’m having these “unwholesome thoughts”. I have to be aware of my thought pattern and that usually takes some time. Once I am aware that I’m having these unwholesome thoughts then I try to understand why I’m going down this path of negativity or anxiety. I have to ask myself where the source is coming from… am I angry? Am I jealous? Am I being greedy? Am I sad? Am I scared? Any of these emotions will definitely cloud my judgment and if I take action without pause or reflection, I know the outcome will usually be detrimental to me and/or others. Strong emotions will definitely cloud my judgment. If I am feeling anger towards someone because I believe they have caused me some kind of injustice, I may retaliate against them and further perpetuate this back and forth argument. However, if I take a moment to reflect and maybe have a conversation with this person, I might discover that they never meant to cause me any pain or injustice whatsoever. I think this is what is meant in the sutra when Patanjali talks about delusion. My strong reactions (anger, fear…) to situations might persuade me to believe something that isn’t necessarily true and holding onto this assumption will only make things worse. I agree that “cultivating wholesome thoughts” is better; however, before I can do so I need time to reflect and try to see things with an open-mind. It’s really only after this step of reflection that I can then begin to have wholesome thoughts and then move forward.

Furthermore, I think the part in the sutra that states “such as wanting to harm someone, or we may cause or condone them in others” is very important to address. When a friend or family member comes to me to vent or express their “unwholesome thoughts”, I really try to play the devil’s advocate with them. Instead of agreeing with them, I try to help them see other possibilities. I have an image I like to use in these types situations. I call it feeding the beast. The more you feed the beast with these negative thoughts or worries, the larger it grows. Here’s an example. A friend of mine’s brother, who she is very close to, is going through a terrible divorce. My friend and her family are vilifying the wife, who wants the divorce. They claim she is making everything more difficult for my friend’s brother. My friend wants to call the wife and tell her off. I explained to my friend that this is not the best course of action. I tried to explain to her to have some empathy for the wife, who is also angry and suffering. Everyone in this situation is angry and in pain, and so far everyone is reacting via their emotions. At this point, no one is able to think clearly or with “wholesome thoughts”; consequently, there is more suffering. I try to encourage my friend with positive thoughts through this time. I try to show her the positive in this divorce and that both people will eventually be happier apart. It’s very difficult to cultivate wholesome thoughts when the anger is so strong and suffering runs so deep. I try to employ sutra ii.35 in this type of situation. I try to be calm and open-minded, so I can create an environment where my friend can be less hostile.

**With people you find difficult…**

I’ve thought very long and hard about this question and sometimes the people you find “difficult” are your greatest teachers. They force you to look at yourself and really delve into why you are so bothered by them. Why is this person difficult? Why do they anger you? Why are intimidated by them? Why don’t you like them?

I went through post-partum depression when my daughter was born. I did not fall in love with her at first sight, like so many mothers’ describe; instead, I resented her existence. This was a defenseless baby and every time she cried I wanted to scream at her, and sometimes I did. She had turned my world upside down and at the time, I felt like my life was over. I often had unwholesome thoughts towards her that are too painful even now 4 years later for me to write down. I was angry, scared, exhausted, bewildered and on top of all of that hormonally imbalanced. I did act out my unwholesome thoughts due to all these factors and I did hurt my child, which in turn hurt me even more. I couldn’t just stop my thoughts and cultivate better ones. I had to stop and admit to myself what was going on. I confessed my thoughts and actions to my doctor and as a result, moved my daughter and myself out of my home and back with my parents, who would supervise and take care of us. I began seeing a psychiatrist and psychologist and taking medication. I wasn’t strong enough to cultivate wholesome thoughts on my own, but fortunately I was surrounded by people who would do it for me, my husband, mother, father, sister, family and friends. I surrounded myself with positivity. I began to battle myself every day to cultivate wholesome thoughts towards my child and eventually, towards myself too. Slowly, I began to build a relationship with my baby and embrace motherhood. But, I had to practice more than wholesome thoughts. I had to practice patience, compassion, empathy, and love. I had to learn how to accept and love someone I couldn’t even communicate with. I had to learn how to practice non-violence and calm myself down every time my baby was screaming, so I could calm her down. It was the most difficult time of my life, but my daughter has taught me so much. I was forced to deal with her because she was and still is dependent upon me. The bond I have with this child is that much stronger and precious to me because I had to fight so hard to create it. Sometimes we can be faced with people and situations that are too difficult for us to face on our own. It’s important to have a good support team to empower you when you haven’t the strength or will to go on.

**In your practice…**

My practice is where I cultivate my wholesome thoughts. When I am overwhelmed by anything, my yoga practice helps to ground me. My practice helps me to focus on what’s important. The breathing alone helps me to calm down. I always feel more relaxed and at peace after doing yoga.

Over the years, my practice has taught me how to cultivate non-violence towards myself; whether it’s not hurting myself physically trying to do a pose or mentally. Sometimes the ego gets in the way and I push myself physically beyond my limits only to hurt myself in the process because I *had* to get into “that pose”. I have now taken a more gentle approach in my at home practice, going slowly and with care and attention to what I am doing, which has allowed me to go even further in my practice. Furthermore, I have become aware of my inner voice and when I berate myself I can catch myself going back into old thought patterns and reflect on why I might be there and how I might change them. These sutras have played an important role in my life before I even knew they existed.

**Teaching your students…**

I recently began teaching, but the most important thing for me is non-violence with my students. I would never want to hurt them by pushing them into a pose they are not able to do or to touch them in a way they might not feel comfortable. I have realized that my intention is not to get students into a pose, but rather to allow them the time to reflect in their own bodies and feel at ease. I try to create an environment that is playful, compassionate and relaxing. My only hope is that my students feel and enjoy that environment.