**Essay Question:** **Read Lines II.34 and II.35 from chapter two of the Yoga Sutra’s of Patanjali. Summarize, 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.**

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**II.34:**

I interpret the II.34 of the Yoga Sutra’s of the Patanjali to mean that there are Yamas, things we should not do, and Niyamas, things we should do, to live an honorable life. Specifically, II.34 stresses the importance of banishing negative thoughts towards the self and others. It suggests that when faced with negative thoughts arising from mild to intense anger, greed, or delusion, that may lead to negative actions, that we instead remind ourselves that such negative actions, speech, or thoughts are going in the “wrong/opposite direction” of the Yamas and Niyamas. If not, our actions or thoughts will result in 2 undesirable consequences, 1) infinite misery: a cycle of karma that will only end when the cycle is recognized, and 2) unending ignorance: stemming from a clouded mind.

A simple practice suggested to purify and train our minds to handle these negative thoughts when faced with difficult people in life, is to silently repeat to oneself, "mind, this is not useful; this is going to bring me nothing but more suffering, and lead me into greater ignorance of truth”. This is what I will do, not only when faced with difficult people in my life or yogis in my class, but also when I find myself thinking negatively towards myself throughout my practice when a pose or meditation becomes difficult for me.

I will aim to maintain a level of gentleness, acceptance, and love (as opposed to guilt, or self-condemnation) towards myself and others while moving towards a place of self-awareness that will prevent me from reacting in any way, through action, speech or thought resembling the 27 different types of negativity that exist, throughout daily life. For instance, when dealing with difficult people, I will remind myself of the uselessness of thinking or acting negatively towards them, as mentioned previously. In my yoga classes, I will behave with compassion towards my students, knowing that not everyone is aware of their own negative behaviors and their consequences.

If ever deemed necessary or helpful, in an un-offensive manner, I will attempt to share knowledge about this aspect of life with my students. I’ll express how their actions have such consequences and how this belief system, or at least the belief that our actions have consequential and even karmic reactions, can help them to live a more conscious life.

**II.35**

My interpretation of II.35 of the Yoga Sutra’s of Patanjali is that when yogis transcend, or let go, of their feelings of hostility, towards themselves and others, people who encounter them will consequently lose their feelings of hostility as well.

‘Ahimsa’, the Sanskrit word meaning “respect for all living things and avoidance of violence towards others” is believed to bring peace from others and your surroundings. I believe this to be true as I have witnessed such situations in my own life. For instance, when I was dealing with a ‘difficult’ person, I kept in mind that they must be suffering in a way unbeknownst to me, and so communicated to them in a pleasant, peaceful way as opposed to an equally hostile one and as a result, they almost immediately calmed down and seemed to realize how unreasonable they were acting, even to the point of apology.

As such, I plan to bring this way of living into my practice and in teaching students as I believe in it fervently. To successfully do so, I realize I must find peace within myself, “be the change I wish to see in the world”, as Dalai Lama would say, to have a peaceful, harmonious environment wherever I go -be it in my personal or professional life. In this way, I will be able to respond in a more compassionate way to trying circumstances, such as when faced with difficult, or disrespectful people, inside and outside of the yoga classroom. In my own practice, I will also give compassion to myself. For example, when having difficulty accomplishing a given yoga pose, which often leads to negative thoughts, I’ll remind myself that such thinking will only bring personal misery and suffering, and not in any way contribute to accomplishing my goals.

I will do my best to convey this message to future yogi students, that whenever they’re dealing with difficult people, situations or negative thoughts of their own, to pause, take a deep breath, and readjust, just as they would for a difficult yoga pose.

**References**

*Traditional Yoga and Meditation of the Himalayan Masters*, www.swamij.com/yoga-sutras-23545.htm.