**Gabrielle Valevicius – Philosophy 101 Assignment**

**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.**

34. “Since the perverted thoughts like violence, whether done caused to be done, or approved whether preceded by greed, anger or ignorance whether mild, moderate or strong, find their unending consequences in pain and lack of knowledge, there should therefore be a cultivation of contrary feelings.”

35. “(If the habit of) non-violence is firmly established, all hostilities are given up in his presence.”

**Response**

These sutras, to me, are about the cultivation of non-harmful thoughts and reactions, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. The way I read Sutra II 34, is that we should not react with adversity, even when we feel that harm has been caused to us. We should not justify our violent actions, words, or thoughts under the precedence that harm was targeted towards us. To react with adversity, under whichever form (i.e. physical, verbal, emotional or psychological), will not bring us peace or joy. I think that to assume that causing harm to those who harmed us is justifiable, emerges out of the “lack of knowledge” that the sutra mentions. Even if we feel violence is targeted at us or surrounds us, we should recognize that non-harmful thoughts will bring us more healing than the opposite. Sutra II 35, to me, signifies that we can work through, even the hardest and darkest circumstances, when we cultivate non-violence as we are faced with challenging events. Practicing non-violence can help us find peace amid hardship and adversity.

In my general life, these sutras remind me to be conscious of my reactions and of the energy I want to put in the world. It reminds me that reacting with adversity will only cause more harm to myself and to the people around me. If we choose to respond to situations with adversity, we cannot be truly liberated from disappointment.

When it comes to people I find difficult, these sutras remind me to look *beyond* conflict as much as I can. If I decide to engage in conflict with a person, I may be doing myself no service (even if I may think I am). The adverse thoughts that I channel into a conflict cannot heal the other person nor myself. If I choose to cause harm to someone who has harmed me, I am putting more adverse thoughts into the world. I am also ignoring the fact that the other person may be suffering or going through something that led them to act a certain way. All conflicts are different, and I believe that we may not always know what the best immediate way to react is. However, in the long run, non-violence will always liberate us from hard feelings, even if a pacifist approach may seem impossible in the early stage of a specific conflict. The more we practice non-violence, the more we will understand how much more healing that approach is.

In my practice, I can apply these sutras, especially in moments when I am judging myself. Judging myself can happen in situations when, for instance, I feel like don’t make it to my mat often enough, that I lost flexibility, or when I feel impatient during my practice. These kinds of thoughts distract me from the present moment and therefore distance me from the essence of yoga. Yoga is not about working towards an end goal, such as a “perfect” asana or a “perfect” body. Yoga allows us to tune into the present moment and to sit with what *is*. Hence, in moment where I would typically judge myself, I should practice being more compassionate towards myself. A more positive and accepting attitude, with practice, can help me tamper the harmful judging voice in my head.

In teaching my students, these sutras remind me to accept students as they are and where they are in their practice. I should not hold hard feelings towards a student that does not seem to practice “the way that I might expect them to.” It could happen for a teacher to become impatient if they feel like, despite their instructions, students are doing the postures “wrong” or do not seem to understand alignment cues. In such situations, the teacher might be taking it personally, and feel upset that their teachings are not being respected or listened to. I think that as teachers, we need to understand that every student is processing the yoga course differently. We should not feel discouraged by students who do not, for instance, keep up with a class’s sequence. Instead, we should be understanding and compassionate towards our students and ensure that they feel welcomed in the course, no matter the pace at which they process the information we present them with.