

## 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.

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### **II.34 (negative thoughts)**

Within us, there are unwholesome/negative thoughts, regardless of who we are or where we were raised or by whom - this is normal. There is a duality within ourselves, where opposite thoughts interact with each other. This does not mean that we have to "solve" or "restrain" these thoughts; simply taking notice of them as a whole and letting them be, should enable us to find balance within ourselves.

Negative thoughts don't have to be externalized. Just realizing that the thoughts are there and want to burst out of your body is an act of consciousness in itself; so, this is about recognizing the unwholesome thoughts, without giving them the full space they want to take. They are a part of our own human nature - nevertheless, they should not be forced shut either. If they are recognized (your mind acknowledging the fact that these thoughts exist), then you can act upon them and integrate them within your own personal thinking system in order to transform them into positive (empathy, comprehension) thinking towards yourself and others.

You can also be a victim of delusion (illusion) by projecting upon others your own negative thinking in order to convince yourself this thinking is only outside of yourself. This delusion is a wrong cognitive belief since you are not recognizing the very existence of these thoughts within yourself, all the while, unwholesome thinking is a part of the psychic reality within any human being. Anger, greed (as negative emotions), once recognized, can be positively integrated within your own self. And these emotions are not necessarily extreme - they can be mild or moderate and each individual will handle them differently based on their environment, education, culture, upbringing or self-knowledge. If these ideas are forsaken, they will ripen into more suffering and ignorance. This is why it is important to moderate these negative thoughts by cultivating good thoughts like a gardener cultivates

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his/her garden with care and diligence, dealing with bad seeds/thoughts as they arise without deluding him/her-self. Projections of your own unwholesome thoughts is troublesome and should be dealt with on a continuous basis by recognizing them and thus, bringing them into conscious mindfulness.

### **II.35** (non-violence)

Non-violence is a wholesome thought that should be anchored not only in spiritual reality but also in actions and physical reality. Thus, it should be an externalisation of the inner knowledge that you have found and which transforms into an outer form of integrity. So, not only is it important to cultivate it within yourself, but it is also very important that you direct this non-violence towards others. Once you embody non-violence, this state of being will necessarily also be felt by others. Because you are not being judgmental and because it is a ceaseless endeavor you are thriving for, it can be felt by people surrounding you. Then, individuals will have a tendency to stick around you since your attitude exposes them to wholesome changes and grounds them both into a spiritual and practical reality of non-violence.

We have a tendency to see non-violence as mostly a physical act (or non-act) but, as a vector of change, it should also encompass broader aspects such as psychological behaviors and attitudes. Non-violence is not about being passive. It is actually an active behavior sustaining changes that an individual, a community or a society wish to realize in a pragmatic way. However, these active behaviors that sustain external changes, can also generate powerful, yet non-violent, internal individual changes, with multiplying effects to the surroundings because the evolution that occurs within yourself is potentially a powerful catalyst of changes within others.

But, an individual concept of non-violence, in its application, can also be felt as a relatively violent act by another person, ex: the gesture of a physical touch could be seen as an act of caring by the giver but could be felt as an intrusion by the receiver. So, this refers back to the notion of personal and individual belief - personal and individual beliefs become your subjective integrity, and this subjectivity can

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therefore be sometimes detrimental to surrounding beings and therefore can be seen as relatively "violent". But the power of integrity (own personal beliefs) can also be an inspiration for changes in others and as such, can be a non-violent "detonator" bringing forth positive actions, anchored in the other person's reality and thoughts.

Both sutras represent the essence of what yoga is for me, both as a practitioner and a teacher. We are overwhelmed by negative thoughts and violence in our every day life, and similarly in our yoga practice. We let these nagging voices talk inside our head; we lean toward potentially violent internal talking, to try to counter these thoughts. We have an instinctive tendency to fight and we should not. We should acknowledge these voices, as part of our whole self and then, learn to let them go by focusing our mind on more positive thoughts. Without seeing our life, our yoga practice or our teaching practice with overly positive thoughts, we should nevertheless firmly maintain a true and kind attitude towards ourselves and others to preserve the wholeness of being.