**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.**

**II.34** When our thoughts are clouded we often act while ‘drunk’ with greed, anger or infatuation. Regardless of whether our actions are mild, moderate or strong, and regardless of whether the act was done by us, or we caused it, or even approved of it, the consequences are unlimited suffering and ignorance. Therefore, we should cultivate a different mental attitude.

**II.35** That person who is deeply rooted in the art of kindness affects those around him/her by causing them to give up their aggressiveness.

I believe that these sutras highlight out tendencies to quickly react to stimuli without any significant reflection or introspection. It is very easy to give our emotions full reign over the way that we, in various situations, interpret other people’s behaviors. It is equally easy for us to react, guided by our evolutionary autopilot and by our socialization, in ways that are counterproductive.

These sutras are arguably guiding us away from such impulsive responses by encouraging us to overcome our evolutionary wiring and our unfavourable behaviour patterns. In other words, they encourage us to observe our mental processes as they become clouded by emotions that may not be situationally appropriate. They encourage us to increase the space between the stimuli and our responses so that we can observe the effect that the stimuli have on us and choose a constructive response instead of an impulsive one.

Aristotle once said:

“Anybody can become angry - that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

Developing this kind of awareness can be incredibly practical and fruitful. If we cultivate the habit of catching ourselves when we become “drunk” with greed, anger or infatuation, we can also question whether these passions serve us well before we act on them. A good way to cultivate a different mental attitude when we are flooded by unfavourable emotions is to adopt a kind and compassionate outlook on individuals.

We humans have a tragically unfortunate bias that social physiologists alled the Fundamental Attribution Error whereby we tend to attribute people’s unfavourable behaviours to fixed character traits as opposed to temporary situational reasons. If, for example, a student in our yoga class would not following simple instructions or would responds in a cold manner, we would have a tendency to see them as rude and disagreeable. However, if we were that student, we would attribute those behaviours to our situation as opposed to any fixed traits. “Of course I’m friendly and agreeable, I just had a bad morning and I am stressed about my presentation tomorrow”, we would justify. By cultivating kindness and compassion towards others, we can give those who find difficult the benefit of the doubt by considering that their behaviour is a consequence of a temporary situation as opposed to fixed traits. We would consequently, hold space for them to reduce any aggressiveness.