**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.**

(Using the English translations of The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali by Edwin F. Bryant)

**11.34 Negative thoughts are violence, etc. They may be [personally] performed, performed on one’s behalf by another, or authorized by oneself; they may be triggered by greed, anger, or delusion; and they may be slight, moderate, or extreme in intensity. One should cultivate counteracting thoughts, namely, that end results [of negative thoughts] are ongoing suffering and ignorance.**

Following a negative feeling, the mind could harbour negative thoughts, and these are harmful to ourselves and others. This implies that at the onset of negative feelings, we should increase our awareness of the quality of our thoughts if we are to remain nonviolent. To help us refrain from pursuing negative thinking, we can understand and reaffirm that all violence can only result in further harm. If violence originates in the mind, then it must be resolved in the mind.

With a difficult co-worker, applying this *sūtra* is realizing that any form of retaliation, whether direct or indirect, is not a solution, but rather a continuation of the “initial” harm. A compassionate response coming from the understanding that we can all feel bad sometimes would be a powerful way to halt violence.

Within a personal practice, this same compassion should be turned towards the self, since negative self-talk(thought) is also violence. For instance, if frustration arises from the judgement of “poor” execution of a posture, we must let go of it quickly and be humbled by what we can learn about ourselves in that moment.

In teaching students, a safe environment must be set from the beginning of the class, so as to discourage a negative mindset in favour of a more constructive one. A gentle reminder that yoga is not specifically about perfectly replicating a posture, but rather that it has the greater objective of cultivating calmness of the mind (*Yoga Sūtra* 1.2), might help students rethink the utility of physical expectations and release comparisons on how they believe they should be executing a posture.

**11.35** **In the presence of one who is established in nonviolence, enmity is abandoned.**

When we release all negative thought processes and thus forego violence, our relations become harmonious. This implies that outer peace is entirely attainable through inner peace—through purification of the mind.

In our own life, when meeting people, we can expend the mental energy otherwise spent fretting over an uncomfortable situation towards inner focus on the quality of our thinking. Rather than wondering what might be wrong with another person, we can ask ourselves if we are approaching the interaction from a centered and peaceful mind. If the answer is no, we can pause and breathe through the discomfort. We can turn towards meditation practices to develop mental awareness and help heal our negative thinking patterns.

Essentially, this suggests that our personal practice should be rich in meditation and breathwork exercises, and similarly for the teachings we offer to our students, so that they realize that they can foster harmony within their communities.