**Applying Yoga Philosophy: Practical Applications of Sutras 11.34 and 11.35**

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This essay will explore the meaning of lines II.34 and II.35 from chapter two of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. I will summarize my understanding of these sutras, and briefly explore their meaning for my own life, my relationships and my yoga practice.

Part One: Sutra 11.34

Sutra 11.34 states that we must be aware of the power of our thoughts, and the chain of causes and consequences that arise from them. When our thoughts are clouded by anger, greed and delusion the actions resulting from such mental states cause suffering and ignorance, whether we committed an act ourselves, caused the act, or approved of it. To break such cycles and negative influences flowing from our mental states, we must strive for an unclouded mind free from the disturbance of anger, infatuation and delusion.

In my own life this sutra is a powerful lesson that I apply to the way that I parent my son. If I allow my thoughts to be clouded by anger, for example, I am more likely to speak or act out in anger towards him, inflicting suffering in him. Such moments also promote ignorance, as his attention then becomes focussed on my anger, not on the source of it (the behaviour that displeased me in the first place). He may internalize negative ideas about himself, about me, or about our relationship, igniting a chain of causes and consequences that are on beneficial to us both.

However if I use my own powers of awareness to calm my mind, and speak to him from an emotionally balanced state about why the behaviour was inappropriate, he will receive the message that was needed in order not to repeat the problematic behaviour. This concerted application of this yoga sutra results in a stronger sense of self for my son (and less shame), a less clouded sense of who I am as his mother, and a stronger more loving relationship between the two of us.

In my practice of yoga Asana I also focus on the power of my thoughts and perspective. I’ve had to limit the Asana I practice due to an injury. If I allow the desire for a more complete yoga practice to overwhelm my mind I may act recklessly and push myself into postures I’m not ready for, or reject Asana practice altogether due to frustration with my own limitations. Instead, if I calm my mind by reframing and practice gratitude for what I am still able to do, it will lead to fully experiencing the benefits of an appropriate practice.

In teaching yoga the thoughts of the teacher are similarly powerful. If I allow my thoughts to be clouded by anger or judgement when students are late, for example, or either unable or unwilling to try the practises I suggest in my course, they will likely feel the energetic quality of my anger, whether or not it leads to actions on my part. They may interpret my demeanour in a negative way, assuming I am judging them. This would likely influence their experience of the yoga practice and perhaps even their willingness to practice in the future.

So it is that your own thoughts have the power to initiate a cycle of cause and effect which may further suffering and lead away from the path of yoga. A calm smile from a teacher can relax students and improve their experience of a class. Yet get it is only possible to give these nurturing social cues when you’ve managed to maintain an unclouded mind free from resentment, anger and delusion.

Part Two: Sutra 11.35

Sutra 2.35 seems to be saying that when we fully embrace nonviolence and principles of doing no harm, the people around us are affected. When we practice the art of kindness and nonaggression those around us will feel it and become more peaceful.

In my life with people I find it difficult the sutra has proven to be very effective. In my work in addictions and mental health I was sometimes in session with clients who were verbally aggressive and emotionally distraught. I tended to have a calming affect on such clients so they were often assigned to me. Part of my de-escalation strategy was to remain as calm and kind of possible. I would establish a connection by seeing the person as a human in distress, and try to meet them where they were with soothing validating words that showed them they were not being judged. Colleagues who witnessed me in such situations said that I seem to establish an aura of calm around us. I believe that was this yoga sutra in practice.

In yoga practice, I have sometimes achieved a state of mind where I am free of harmful thoughts towards others or myself, in tune with nourishing breath and a sense of calm; a feeling of being deeply at ease. This feeling is what brings me back to my practice. The practice of yoga Asana seems to make it easier for me to have a peaceful outlook towards myself and others.

In teaching students, achieving a peaceful, non-violent inner state is perhaps a teacher’s most important first step. This is both because our energy and state of mind will affect our students, and because leading by example is more effective than instructing. Experiencing your own peacefulness, students will find inspiration to look within and find it for themselves.

As a yoga teacher, you create the atmosphere within which your students will learn and grow. As these yoga sutras make clear, that atmosphere is grown from the seeds of your thoughts.