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### Yoga Sutras II.34 & II.35

Based on the texts of *The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali* - Edwin Bryant (2009)

These sutras explain the consequence of negative thoughts on our wellbeing but also on the wellbeing of others. These negative thoughts are forms of violence (Himsa) which we inflict on ourselves, on another's behalf or by permitting this violence to co-exist in our presence. These forms of violence all lead to suffering and unhappiness. This suffering can be experienced to various degrees in intensity, but whether minimal, medium or high in intensity they can all have an effect on ourselves and the environment around us. Finding ways to divert these thoughts and transform them into life-giving non-violent thoughts can steer one way from the path of negative thoughts and violence. Negativity or violence is brought on mainly by greed, anger and delusion. Greed leads us to believe that the more we have the more fulfilled and happier we will be. This false illusion of happiness can lead one on a neverending vicious circle of always trying to acquire more, achieve more, need more while never being able to reach the desired state of fulfillment. Anger arises when we feel frustrated or threatened. These emotions are rooted in fear. The fear of not feeling secure in oneself or in one's surroundings. Delusion would be a false interpretation of ourselves and our reality and that for example acquiring more things can take away any pain or suffering. All these negative thoughts lead us in the opposite direction from what is expressed in the yamas, niyamas and ultimately, a path of non-violence (ahimsa). Whatever we choose to do whether positive or negative will have an effect on those around us. Becoming aware of this allows us to take responsibility for our thoughts, our words, our actions and with whom and how we chose to live our life. Tools such as yoga and meditation help us to stay centered and to let go of violent thoughts. ***“The quieter you become, the more you can hear.”*** - Ram Dass

### **How this sutra can be used in my life:**

Personally, I can use this sutra as a reminder to be kind and loving with myself. Having studied in a professional ballet school I learnt from an early age that I was never enough and to strive for perfection. This perception of myself has made my life difficult at times not only with my physical body but on my self-esteem as well as the fear of how I am perceived by others. Fear of judgement. Fear of not being enough. Fear of not being the best etc... This sutra speaks to me and tells me that loving and cherishing myself will ease my life, allow me to grow and flourish and ease the lives of those around me. ***“How we treat ourselves is in truth how we treat those around us.”*** (Deborah Adele)

### **How this sutra can be used with people I find difficult:**

After reading these sutras I know that some steps to bringing peace or ease into situations involving difficult people can be to truly listen as a witness to what this person is saying. Rather than being reactive to try listening to their needs that are masked behind perhaps a difficult tone of voice or harsh words. To distinguish ***“feelings, thoughts, needs, strategies, requests, demands”***(Marshall Rosenberg). This but to also remain loving and empathetic to oneself during these moments of dealing with difficult people. ***“All violence is the result of people tricking themselves into believing that their pain derives from other people and that consequently those people deserve to be punished.”***(Marshall Rosenberg)

### **How this sutra can be used in my practice and in teaching my students:**

We live in a digital age where everything is much faster and easier than it was before. When you take a picture you can delete it, edit it, completely transform it if you want. Years ago, you only had your roll of film which you did not want to waste. Before taking a picture you would reflect on the lighting, the angle, the way it was centered, the content...the thought process was much more intense for the amateur photographer. This goes the same way with our thoughts. Having an awareness of the effect of negative thoughts on ourselves and others can help us go about life in a more mindful way. As teachers we can help spread the message of mindfulness and help bring awareness to others about how they can love and appreciate themselves and others more. In the western world, there is much focus on physical appearance and goals of reaching a certain physical aesthetic. This can lead one to use yoga as a way to shape one's body. The inner thought process during classes can often lead one to compare with others while putting oneself down. Comparing flexibility, physical form, strength....even the ability to be in a meditative state! This self talk is unfortunately so destructive and far from how yoga is meant to be used. As teachers it is our responsibility to help students let go of violent thoughts towards themselves and others and to remind them to bring compassion to their practice. To do this the teacher must also strive to live a life in unity with the message he or she is teaching. A life devoted to non-violence, compassion and inner peace.

***“Remember, we are all affecting the world every moment, whether we mean to or not. Our actions and states of mind matter, because we’re so deeply interconnected with one another. Working on our own consciousness is the most important thing that we are doing at any moment, and being love is the supreme creative act.”*** (Ram Dass)