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.

**Line II. 34. Meaning of the sutras**: Do no harm. Law of cause and effect. Karma

From II. 34 “Every vicious thought will rebound, every thought of hatred which you have thought, in a cave even, is stored up, and will one day come back to you with tremendous power in the form of some misery here.”

This line reminds me of one of the Universal Principles- the law of cause and effect, ie. Karma. This law of cause and effect explains that every thought, intent, emotion, word and action is stored in the form of energy, and it will have a corresponding effect on a person’s physical, emotional and spiritual well-being in the present or future moments.

According to the energy scale of emotions, negative or heavy emotions such as hatred, fear, guilt and shame emit lower vibrational energies. These negative energies that one emits to people and situations around him/her accumulate and according to the law of cause and effect, naturally those negative energies will return to the person.

On the contrary, when a person emits high vibrational energies such as joy, happiness, love and kindness, those energies will eventually simply return to the person, bringing more love and abundance to his/her life.

This teaching from the sutra’s along with the understanding of the Universal Principle helps me evaluate my intent, word, thought and emotion from a grander perspective.

That one phrase that can hurt someone, that one greedy action, that one selfish act is to be recorded and remembered by the God/Universe/Spirit at all times. Even though it may seem harmless to make a single dishonest decision, in the long run there are consequences.

I have experienced this personally; to share my honest story, several years ago when I had just started working after finishing school, I was being greedy over a few dollars. My front desk staff would occasionally make mistakes by up-charging the patient, or forgetting to charge certain procedures. When the patients were up-charged, I did not necessarily bring it up to the staff to make proper corrections unless it was a significant amount. When patients were not charged for certain things, then I would bring it up to the staff to make the corrections. At the time, I thought “well, technically it’s the staff’s mistakes for up-charging, and let’s pretend that I didn’t notice that.”

I eventually quit that job just before covid-19 and I was still supposed to get a paycheck from the funds coming in from the delayed insurance pays. Several months after leaving the office, instead of a check, I received a letter from the company saying that they will deduct $6000 from my paycheck due to uncertain expenses. I was looking forward to receiving this check as it was during covid and I was not working. This was a very dishonest act from the owner of the company and very unfair as they wanted to keep more for themselves during difficult times. I was very upset and frustrated thinking ‘how can they be so greedy and dishonest?’ Several days later I remembered the days when I “knew” the front desk staff accidentally up-charging and I didn’t mention anything so I can get a few more dollars.

As it says in the sutra’s, that every vicious thought will rebound and will one day come back with tremendous power in the form of some misery. In retrospect I know and I feel that my experience is exactly what was mentioned in the sutra’s and in the law of cause and effect (karma) and it was a very important lesson to be learned.

Having had such an impactful experience myself, now I am constantly reminded how every thought, action and emotion counts and that it is important to practice goodwill, love and kindness at each and every moment.

In life when I am faced with challenges of working with people who do not have a good intent, this teaching allows me to take a step back and instead of getting personally involved and either try to prove them wrong, or being offended, I can have compassion for them for not foreseeing the consequences of their actions, and for not knowing any better yet.

Same goes for my yoga practice and teaching students. Being a human, there will be times when I am frustrated with myself, with my practice, with fellow yogis or with my students for any reasons. The more challenging the circumstances are, the more I can remind myself to continue to stay in the light and spread love, kindness and compassion as this is the only way that more positivity will come into my life, and others, ultimately contributing to uplift the humanity as a whole.

**Line II. 35 Meaning of the sutra’s**: practice self-love first and love others.

“If a man gets the idea of non-injuring others, before him even animals which are by their nature ferocious will become peaceful. The tiger and the lamb will pay together before that Yogi and will not hurt each other.”

The first thing that comes to my mind when I read this phrase is the word “love.” In my understanding, hurting others come from a place of a lack of love, especially lack of self-love. We would not want to hurt ourselves whether physically, emotionally or mentally when we have unconditional love for ourselves. By loving ourselves we learn to love and respect others, and it would be impossible to want to hurt someone when love is the basis.

Afterall love is the most powerful energy that exists in the Universe and that connects us all through our heart center. Love does not discriminate; love is what connects us all whether it be plants, human beings, animals and all other beings.

Let’s say a man murdered his friend. The murderer hurt not only his friend but also his family, friends, and potentially all of the people around him that knew and loved him. This murderer was not capable of thinking and feeling what kind of pain and suffering he will cause to so many others.

“How can he be so cruel? So heartless?” Many would say. The cause behind his atrocious action would lie in his lack of ability to feel emotions, his own emotions and consequently emotions of others. The root cause of this inability to feel would typically go back to certain events in his early stage life that caused him to believe that he’s not safe, he’s not loved, and it is okay to be hurt and hurt others. One could say that he did not know any better; if he knew better, he would not have caused such pain and suffering.

Therefore, in order to teach non-killing and non-injuring, we must start from a place of love. And most importantly, forgiving ourselves and loving ourselves. Then love for others will come naturally, and non-killing and non-injuring will also come naturally.

Given this teaching, I am to constantly remind myself to love myself first. Treat myself with so much love and tenderness, despite what I have been told, and how I have been treated in the past. Then naturally I will care for others and share the unconditional love with them. I would like to share this with my students not necessarily by teaching through the books, but by being the example of unconditional love, through actions, through my conscious choice of words, and through the loving and positive energy that I give out.

Namaste