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** 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, or delusion; and they may be slight, moderate, or extreme in intensity. One should cultivate counteracting thoughts, namely, that the end results [of negative thoughts] are ongoing suffering and ignorance.

**II.35** In the presence of one who is established in nonviolence, enmity (the state or feeling of being actively opposed or hostile to someone or something) is abandoned.

***Excerpt from “The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary” by Edwin F. Bryant***

These lines allude to the ‘Yamas’ in the eight limbs of Patanjali, particularly ‘Ahimsa’ that underlines non-harming and non-violence. These lines convey how we find and exacerbate suffering by producing negative thoughts towards ourselves and others. How is it that we also cause harm to others with these thoughts? ‘Asmita’ from Patanjali’s five Kleshas explains this: “self-orientation”, the idea of “I, Me, Mine”and seeing ourselves as separate and divided from the rest of the world, is the misunderstanding that there is division between ourselves and others, or ourselves and the world around us. There is an interconnectedness between us and our environment. Therefore, for instance, when we speak ill about another, this type of behavior says more about possible insecurities we may be experiencing ourselves than the other way around. No matter the extent to which we experience these thoughts ‘triggered by greed or delusion’ it ultimately causes harm and contributes to the “wheel of samsara”: cyclical existence/struggle/stress.

Once we find ourselves in this cycle, it is important to find a center where we are no longer the subject of our thoughts nor the observer but somewhere in between. Many ways we can achieve this is by focusing our attention on something that is constant like our breath (pranayama) which ties in more closely with line 35. We need to find a moment in our practice where those thoughts, feelings and attachments are left behind and where we can truly free ourselves from judgement. From there, we are building a foundation and a practice of being in the present moment and, thus inching ourselves closer to “stilling the fluctuations of [our] consciousness”. These teachings can be practiced in our everyday lives by inspiring us not to dwell on the past or stress about the future but to be fully immersed in the present.