**Philosophy 101**

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**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 sutras. Explain how they can be used in your life, with people you find difficult, in your practice and in teaching your students.

Lines II.34 and II.35, chapter two of the Yoga Sutra Patanjali:

वितर्का हिंसादयः कृतकारितानुमोदिता लोभक्रोधमोहाअपूर्वका मृदुमध्य अधिमात्रा दुःखाज्ञानानन्तफला इति प्रतिप्रक्षभावनम्

*vitarkā hiṁsādayaḥ kr̥ta-kārita-anumoditā lobha-krodha-moha-āpūrvakā mr̥du-madhya adhimātrā duḥkha-ajñāna-ananta-phalā iti pratiprakṣa-bhāvanam ॥ 34॥*

Violent thoughts (himsa) induce unending suffering and ignorance. In such cases, it makes no difference whether you’re the perpetrator, the person who gives the orders, or the instigator; or whether the thoughts are provoked by greed, anger, or delusion; or whether small, medium or large-scale action is involved. This is why orienting yourself toward the reverse is helpful. ||34||

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायं तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्याघ

*ahiṁsā-pratiṣṭhāyaṁ tat-sannidhau vairatyāghaḥ ॥ 35॥*

Once a condition of durable non-violence (ahimsa) has been established, all enmity will be abandoned in your environs. ||35||

Pantajali laid the foundation for yogic practice far beyond the practice of yoga poses (*asanas*) that we know today. Described as the father of Yoga, Patanjali kindly broke down fundamental ways for yogis to remove ourselves from unbending ignorance and suffering from violent thoughts (*himsa*) and achieve a condition of durable non-violence (*ahimsa*), as mentioned in the Lines II.34 and II.35 of *Yoga Sutra Patanjali*.

Line II.34 encourages practitioners not to focus on the “why” of suffering and ignorance. How we start to inflict and justify suffering and ignorance, regardless of the scale, complexity and valid feelings behind our actions, simply does not matter. Like a rabid dog holding a stick, Patanjali’s *Yoga* *Sutra* teachings simply ask us to drop the stick altogether - which, as the dog would attest, is much harder than it seems and easier said than done.

I believe Patanjali encourages us to create a condition of non-durable violence (*ahimsa*), as described in Line II.35, through practicing the **eight (8) limbs of classica yoga** also known as *Ashtanga Yoga*. As *himsa* melts away during practice, the enmities - feelings of active hostility or opposition towards something - in your environment will melt away, too. To step away from violent thoughts and violence in your life (to a degree) *Ashtanga* *Yoga* creates the space necessary for - as Patanjali explains it - a balance between our nature and higher consciousness.

But how do we know when we’re acting with *himsa*, and how do we stop ourselves from doing it in the first place?

In terms of applying the aforementioned sutras in our lives, through *Ashtanga* *Yoga*, I would look first and foremost at the first limb of yoga, *Yamas* when dealing with bubbling *himsa*. The first limb deals with how we are with the world, our community and ourselves. *Ahimsa* - non-violence and non-harming - is a practice that falls within the first limb, and part of the path towards achieving our higher state.

This is why Patanjali - through his practice as a physician and moral and ethical philosopher - explains where *himsa* comes from. It thrives under the cyclical nature of ignorance/stress/suffering Pantajali describes as the **five (5) Kleshas**. These are behaviours that impede our capacity to attain spiritual awareness.

To drop our metaphorical stick, it’s helpful to know where one picks it up in the first place. I can think of examples of the Five Kleshas that I, as well as other yogis, have fallen victim to. Spending too much of my time creating an identity around intelligence that comes from good grades leaves us with a feeling of separation between the mind and the rest of the body (*Avidya*); TikTok and social media feeds a self-centered an individualistic mentality (*Asmita*); Not knowing whether, say, eating sweets is an attachment to pleasure (*Raga*) or a healthy coping mechanism to avoid unpleasant feelings (*Dvesha*). As well, a fear of death and of letting go of the idea of a future with an ex-partner is an aversion to changing the identity and story we’re so familiar with (*Abinivesha*).

To apply the lines from Patanjali’s *Yoga* *Sutra* towards a person I find difficult, I would examine whether I’m acting from a place of ignorance: maybe they’re expressing anger or indifference towards me because they weren’t raised with the awareness and empathy to treat others with kindness (avidya). As well, my personal belief is that we are all one being, the universe, experiencing itself. Have I been seeing myself separate from this person (asmita) and no longer empathize with them? Time to return to my *Ashtanga* practice!

Ultimately, one has to practice *Ashtanga* *Yoga* holistically to step towards *ahimsa*. Patanjali’s **five (5) Koshas**bridge the divide between mind and body by encouraging awareness of within. While practicing *Ashtanga Yoga*, a student brings awareness to the five Koshas and begins to remove the separation between nature and the higher state of consciousness.

If I were to talk to my students about lines II.34 and II.35 of the Yoga Sutra, I would start by realizing that many experience *himsa* towards themselves as much as towards others. This permeates into their practice: when they hold their asanas or find themselves incapable of relaxing their minds. As a teacher during a typical yoga class, help them work on the 3rd to 8th limb of *Ashtanga Yoga* during practice by encouraging bodily movement, internal awareness, awareness of the breath and stillness of the mind.

However, if they wanted to speak further about coming towards *ahimsa*, I would encourage them to read more about the first and second limb of *Ashtanga Yoga*. The second limb of *Ashtanga Yoga* *-* *Niyamas* supports a path towards understanding ourselves. Lastly, I would personally encourage them to treat their journey towards self betterment with *grace*, as it is no easy feat to work towards Patanjali’s ideal state of consciousness, and there will be setbacks and lessons.

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As a final note, I would like to say that part of what I like about Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras is that there is an emphasis on community in the path towards *ahimsa*. We don’t need to solely deal with “violentthoughts”quietly and within ourselves. Community and communication is the first limb of Ashtanga Yoga because at our core, we are social beings.