

## Yoga Philosophy 101 Final Assignment

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 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

**वितर्का हिंसादयः कृतकारिता नुमोदिता लोभक्रोधमोहपूर्वका मृदुमध्याधिमात्रा दुःखाज्ञानानन्तफला इति प्रतिपक्षभावनम् ।**

**vitarkā-hiṁsā-ādayaḥ-kṛta-kārita-anumoditāḥ-lobha-krodha-moha-pūrvakāḥ mṛdu-madhya-adhimātrāḥ duḥkha-ajñāna-ananta-phalāḥ iti pratipakṣa-bhāvanam**

This sutra talks about the unwholesome thoughts that we can have and how having those can lead us to act upon them. We can think of causing harm to others, or asking someone to cause harm to others or approving of harm being done to others. The interaction and influence between our thoughts and our actions. Having unwholesome thoughts will also affect how we behave and interact with others.

This sutra can be used in our life to reflect on the chain reactions that start from our thoughts, then our words and our actions. We can have unwholesome thoughts, influenced by greed, anger and delusion. Greed when we think we want more (love, money, time, etc), delusion when we think that if we had more then we would be or feel different. Finally, unwholesome thoughts influenced by anger when we perceive we don't have enough to be happy or satisfied.

This sutra is important to understand that when we act upon our emotions, without taking a step back, then our actions can be clouded and irrational. We are shaped or rather how we experience the world is shaped by our thoughts. I think that this sutra teaches us to become more mindful of our thoughts and to not be overwhelmed by them.

This sutra highlights the importance of what kind of thoughts we have, making it clear that if you start by having unwholesome thoughts, it can then easily lead to unwholesome actions. By recognizing and knowing our thoughts we can free ourselves from bad patterns, we are no longer reacting only to them, letting them override us. We can take control and take a step back.

In science there is a concept called the « *nocebo effect* » which occurs when negative expectations regarding a treatment cause the treatment to have a more negative effect than it would otherwise have. I think that having bad thoughts about a situation or someone will lead to a similar impact than the *nocebo effect*. It also makes me reflect that when we have negative thoughts about someone or something, the person being hurt is ourself since we are thinking about those bad things.

With people we find difficult, if we focus our energy on the bad thoughts we have regarding them, then those thoughts take more space and energy in our mind and life, making it harder for us to have other thoughts. When we entertain negative thoughts about ourself or others then we will perceive negatively the world and in turn those negative feelings will take more place in our life. It will also prevent us from being able to perceive those people in another light, when we keep label on someone it influence how we react to every action they take or not.

In our practice, we can let negative thoughts take over and discourage us from being present in our practice. Having unwholesome thoughts can prevent us from achieving a good practice, from giving our best. In our practice and when teaching students, we can work on identifying those unwholesome thoughts, those negative words we sometime tell ourselves for exemple. When we are able to identify them, we can make sure to not become overwhelmed by them and we can deconstruct those thoughts. When teaching, we can also let negative thoughts keep us from being attentive and present. When we can identify a negative thought, we can take a step away from it and not take action based on it. We can actively work on having positive thoughts that will help us.

**II.35.**

**अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः ।**

**ahimsā-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ tat-sannidhau vairatyāgaḥ**

This sutra talks about being grounded in non-violence, it is helping me being kind with myself, learning to let the self-critics go.

This sutra says that by having non-violent thoughts and attitude, we can have an impact or rather an influence on others. We welcome them to do the same if they don't feel threatened. We are creating a safe space where people do not have to come with defenses. The more we work on ourselves, having introspection, the more we become aware of the energy we give out, to ourselves and other. We can then act without greed, delusion and anger, becoming more selfless. When we do, this has a powerful impact on people around us, on people being on the receiving end of our selfless actions.

In our practice, this means being kind and compassionate to ourself, we can then go deeper in our practice. We learn to become aware of our thoughts, our current mind. Unwholesome thoughts can unsteady ourself and our focus. We learn to keep them away so we can be fully present in our practice.

When dealing with difficult people, by not having unwholesome thoughts about them it help us keep our equanimity or our emotional balance. We can also welcome them without apprehension and this might in return let them show a different side of themselves. When we give a chance to someone, when we do not label them and expect them to act a certain way, there is a higher chance that they will also feel comfortable behaving in a more respectful way.

With difficult people, this helps because we can focus on not letting their thoughts or actions affect ours. We also do not have to take their emotions and thoughts as our own, they cannot make us carry it. It helps us focus back that if someone is difficult, it belongs to them, we do not have to take the feelings of the person as our own. If we welcome them with non violent attitude, we can defuse their own difficulty, because we are not feeding it.

I think this sutra reminds us that the process has to start from us before we can expect other to do so, just like Mahatma Gandhi professed, that we have to be the change we want to see in the world. For me this sutra, when teaching student, is a good reminder to be actively taking a non-violent attitude. This helps create a safe space for the students to enjoy their yoga practice.