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.

In Sutra II.34, Patanjali explains that negative thoughts — such as those rooted in violence, dishonesty, or greed — create internal suffering, not just for others but for ourselves. These thoughts may arise from our own mind, or be influenced by others. Whether they are acted upon directly, encouraged, or even witnessed, they still carry consequences. When we dwell in such mental states, we fuel the cycle of pain and disturbance.

Sutra II.35 follows with a powerful teaching: when someone is truly established in ahimsa (non-violence), those around them drop their hostility. This means that inner peace is not only personal but contagious. When our presence radiates safety and compassion, others instinctively soften.

These teachings resonate in my personal life — especially when dealing with people I find challenging. Instead of reacting to their negativity, I try to pause and reflect: Am I fueling the tension with my own inner judgments? How can I shift my state first? This helps me respond rather than react.

In practice, these sutras remind me that yoga is not just about physical alignment but mental clarity. When difficult emotions arise on the mat — frustration, impatience, even self-criticism — I now have a tool to pause, recognize the root of the thought, and gently replace it with kindness.

As a teacher, these sutras shape how I guide my students. Beyond cues and adjustments, I aim to create a space where each person feels safe to show up as they are. If I embody calm and non-judgment, the room shifts too — that's the real power of ahimsa.

Leya Zheng