The Higher Order of Life: The Experience of Yoga in Artistic Expression

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This project began in January of 2011. During that time I had just begun a two month poetry writing seminar. All of first semester I had been looking forward to it, yet in the midst of the class I found myself agitated. I realized that I had no framework with which to look at poetry or to understand my process of writing. Suddenly, the study abroad program I was applying to, a creative writing based curriculum, seemed absurd. How could I go sit in a classroom for 5 months talking about poetry? That seemed counterproductive. No, what I needed was to experience myself in the world, before I could begin to experience my poetry. Thus, I decided to come to India. A place I knew would be utterly foreign and bend my normal manner of thinking, acting and doing. A drastic shift in perspective was needed to appropriate new ways of thinking of myself and consequently, new ways of imagining writing. Furthermore, the drive to acquire a deeper understanding of yogic philosophy spurred me forward. As my creative writing seminar continued alongside of a daily yoga practice at a local studio, I realized that I was beginning to mesh my new ideas of creative expression with my ideas of yoga. And so now I intend this Independent Study Project to begin a discourse that relates the two. My focus is mostly on a modern reading of yoga, not it’s strict classical interpretations and its image as a strict ascetic, world renouncing text. The text of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra has much to say about individual person as well as the transcendent Self. The aim of this paper is to explore my manifesto of creative expression in terms of yogic philosophy. My conclusions are not general statements about all creative expression and forms of art, but are case specific to those whom I was fortunate enough to interview.