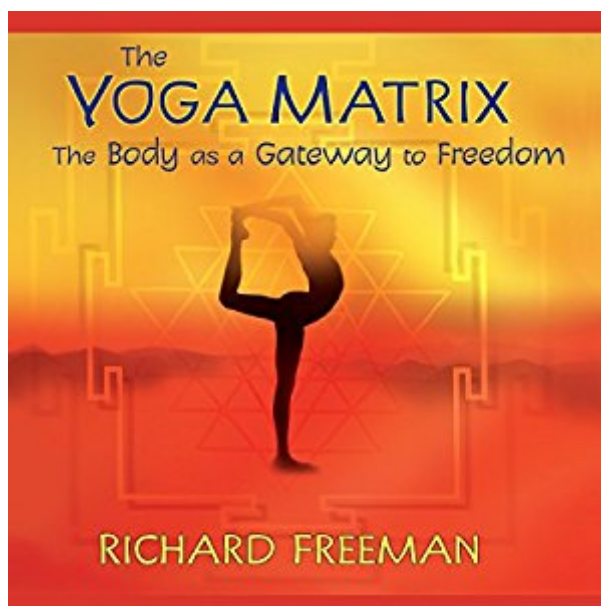


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# The Yoga Matrix: The Body As A Gateway To Freedom



## Synopsis

Within the Yoga Sutra, an ancient text about the practice of yoga, only two verses mention asanas, or the postures we commonly associate with yoga in the West. Patanjali, the legendary sage and author of this 2,250-year-old work, was concerned not solely with physical development or even mental development. In fact the original purpose of yoga was - and remains - to function as a complete spiritual path where the body serves as a gateway to enlightenment. In *The Yoga Matrix*, the renowned instructor Richard Freeman immerses us in the rich teachings and sutras that inform the many schools of yoga and reveals how the body can serve as the ultimate laboratory, temple, and place of pilgrimage for spiritual inquiry. Looking back 5,000 years, Freeman uncovers the living roots of yoga philosophy and observes how they have grown into many schools, techniques, and philosophies that are united by a vast, interpenetrating matrix that holds the key to understanding yoga's full depth and greater purpose. Freeman first traveled to India in 1968, where he began a lifetime of study with the living masters of yoga and its mysteries. Now he teaches these authentic lessons and their original subtleties, with the questions and concerns of the serious Western student in mind. What is the yogic view of reality? Why was yoga first developed? How is progress traditionally measured? What are the principles of working with the body's subtle energy? Where do I start? From profound concepts at the center of this ancient cosmic philosophy to the cherished teaching stories and chants that enrich its daily practice, here is a complete audio curriculum with the power to catalyze your daily yoga practice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I LOVE this audiobook. Richard Freeman talks about all of the aspects of yoga, from its ancient roots in the Samhkyā religion, to the Vedas, the Gita, the Gunas, and on and on ---- and relates it to our practice in everyday life simply and beautifully. As a new yoga teacher, I found this book to be an excellent tool for thinking about yoga and absorbing the teachings into my life in a different way, that I can keep coming back to. His voice is very smooth and soothing, and some listeners may be so soothed that the message slips right over them and puts them into a trance. I found it quite lovely but it does take some focus to keep on track.

I have been working on my yoga practice for over 30 years. I have read many books on the subject over the years. I found this CD set to be a great addition to my library. Mr. Freeman does a wonderful job of distilling the many threads of yogic philosophy into a very digestible form. I have loaded it onto my iPod, and listen to it as I am out and about. If you are interested in what goes on behind Yoga. This is for you. I could not recommend it more.

A clear and comprehensive overview of yoga.

This is an outstanding purchase, without artifice and jargon. Highly recommended for the ever-expanding Yoga community and other seekers as well.

Leads you into understanding the Yoga Matrix of Life.

Richard's well well rounded, broad based, super grounded presentation is invaluable to anyone interested in a deeper understanding and meaning of yoga. The material is spiritual without new age fluff or ego getting in the way. Priceless.

The Yoga Matrix is an excellent and in depth study of yoga from many different angles. It is an invaluable aid for serious students of yoga of all traditions. I will listen to it again and again as each time one discovers more subtle aspects of this fascinating discipline.

I am posting here an extensive review of The Yoga Matrix to help any person sincerely seeking accurate knowledge on yoga and spirituality. In areas of my review, I may be blunt and direct. In no way is this meant to be disrespectful of the author or the reader. It is only meant to be clear, concise and helpful. I do understand that I may offend some people who already have preconceived ideas of

what yoga is. The mind is like a bull (a Zen analogy) and when prodded can become quite aggressive and blind by its own ideas. It takes skill and years of practice to tame our own minds and end our own reactivity. With this said, I hope that my review helps you in some way, as you search to understand your inner self and what the gift of life offers to you. Namaste (the Light in me recognizes and honors the Light in you). The Yoga Matrix is advertised as offering a complete overview of the system of yoga. While it does address many key points, the information is often inaccurate and in some instances completely wrong. For some aiming to understand genuine Yoga, there are much better sources elsewhere. This CD by SoundsTrue is not a look into India's 5,000+ years old system of yoga. It is an extension of the American spiritual marketplace version of yoga as sold by Kripalu, Gaiam and many other fitness-oriented teachers. If a person were to visit India, the home of yoga (where I have visited), or even speak to a genuine yogi from India (which I have done) he/she would find that physical fitness and beauty are blockages on the yogic path and not goals. In America, yoga has lost nearly all of its spiritual roots and become a glorified version of stretching and aerobics, anti-aging and beauty contests. Visit India and you'll see yogis wrapped in loin cloths sitting on river banks meditating on the Divine, not wearing leotards touching their toes in a health club. Richard Freeman tries to offer a branch to the spiritual yoga of India in "The Yoga Matrix", however he falls short due to lack of knowledge, clear misinformation, incorrect definitions of Sanskrit terms and an very idealistic romance about what yoga means to him - not what yoga is defined and taught as in the Upanishads and Sutras. The entire first CD is dedicated to Richard's own romance with yoga as he paints an emotionally-vivid picture, projecting his own fantasy onto an ancient practice of rigorous self-purification. I listened for over 30 minutes waiting to hear a single sentence that had historical accuracy or relevance to self-cultivation and mental discipline. Patanjali, the father of Yoga, began his famous Sutra with "Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodha", meaning "Yoga is the cessation of the activities of the mind". Plain language; a simple, clear and direct definition of what yoga is, stated over 1,500 years ago. Where was this most famous sentence of yoga? Where was a definition of yoga anywhere close to this sentence? Not on this CD, unfortunately. On many occasions I wanted to turn off the CD. However I resisted, hoping that once the honey moon was over, some accurate and genuine information would be presented. On CD 2, the tone did change as actual information about yoga began. I was genuine pleased to see that after 30+ minutes, the author started talking about yoga, Sanskrit terms, and no longer his own romantic idealism and artistic reverie. As I listened on, I found nothing new or extraordinary; only very basic information aimed at a general audience very new to yoga. Still missing however was the goal of yoga - spiritual union, removal of ego, self purification, mind control, vital energy cultivation. How could teachings

on a spiritual discipline like yoga not be focused on spirituality? Google the word yoga or visit Barnes and Noble and you'll see the same problem. In Sanskrit the word 'yoga' means union with the Divine or enlightenment. In America 'yoga' means stretching. As the CD set continued, the core of yoga did peak out here and there. I do give Richard Freeman credit for that. But the large majority of the information was very superficial with nearly no historical references. This is not unexpected considering that Richard Freeman's audience is the American fitness yoga crowd. So I do give him credit for trying to awaken the American public to more yoga. There are many wonderful health benefits to physical exercise and the stretching of tissue, along with relaxation. However yoga is truly so much more than this. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika, the 2nd most famous book on Yoga, states that the purpose of asanas (postures) is only to prepare the body for long periods of sitting meditation without discomfort. Asanas are the first step on an eight step path of awakening and human mastery. Body, then the energy system, then the senses, then the mind. I don't want my review to sound like I'm blasting the author, however there are too many inaccuracies to recommend this CD set as a tool of education. For me, the most surprising parts of this CD set came when Richard Freeman, whom the CD description calls an "authority on yoga", gave completely wrong definitions and descriptions of spiritual terms. Never have I heard some of the definitions he came up with... and I lived in India to study yoga and I also studied Sanskrit at with the head professor at University of Kerala. This made me wonder who the author studied with or where he learned these terms. I can understand and have compassion for someone who is unlearned of the deeper yogic practices and terminology and misuses words. We all do this from time to time when we speak about subject matter we haven't truly studied. However when someone is marketed as an authority, he/she should know what the words mean. Calling prana "an imaginary energy" is grossly inaccurate - especially considering that this energy has formed the core of Eastern spiritual and sciences for over 5,000 years. Today there are large amounts of science on chi, orgone, prana or whatever word it is called by. The authors devoted only 2 sentences to prana; this was shocking to me. Prana is the core of yoga; it should be emphasized, not minimized. Physical asanas open the prana pathways (nadhis); pranayama uses breathing, muscle locks (bandhas) and mental techniques to control and increase the prana; pratyahara gathers the prana to move it inward; concentration concentrates the prana in one location, and; samadhi is the union of consciousness and prana. In yoga, prana is the most important element and central to all of the 8 stages of yoga practice. How could prana be missing? To illustrate another incorrect definition, the author states that "amrita" is an emotional attitude. This is not correct. Amrita means "nectar" and is a physical substance that is produced by the pineal gland (soma chakra) as the kundalini energy increases in

the body. Advanced practices like pushing the tongue to the roof of the mouth or even stretching the tongue to enter the nasal passage at the start of the throat creates prana (energy) channel connections that awaken the pineal gland and start the production of this sacred "nectar", amrita. There is even an entire sutra in the Upanishads devoted to amrita and its cultivation. Nowhere have I ever seen amrita defined as an emotional attitude. Misinformation like this should not happen, especially in the digital age when someone can Google these terms and in 60 seconds have a more accurate understanding than taught on this CD. If you've followed me this far in the review, and are still searching for more information about genuine yoga, I can recommend studying those yogis who were famous in the 60s and 70s. These are the long-haired, wooly-bearded men who beamed light and love from their eyes. Ram Dass' book "Be Here Now" was one of the first books to introduce America to yoga. It's a great place to start. Look even further and you'll find history's most yogis like Ramana Maharshi, Ramankrishna, Dhyanyogi and Vivekananda. These men taught authentic yoga. They may not be well-sculpted like Rodney Yee or hyperactive like Shiva Rea, but they understood yoga and taught spiritual practices. In my studies of spirituality, I tried to focus myself on the most learned and reputed men and women I can find. I listened to and read lots of teachers, practiced their recommendations, and even traveled to India to study. I purposefully avoided reading books from those who reinterpreted the original teachers due to the unintentional but unavoidable misunderstandings and inaccuracies of secondary sources of information. I feel that The Yoga Matrix is one of these secondary sources written by someone who lacks well developed knowledge of yogi. I do have respect for Richard Freeman as a teacher of flexibility. I have owned his Ashtanga Yoga DVD for years and used it as part of my own exploration of yoga. However as a scholar of yoga theory, he did not fit who I was hoping to find. I hope that any student sincerely seeking to understand themselves and the nature of reality finds accurate guidance. We all deserve to know who we are, and we will know this when we practice correctly and work diligently. Namaste.

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