
Egyptian Yoga: a millenary practice for modern man

(Adapted from Babacar and Geneviève Khane's writings ¹⁾



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Egyptian Yoga is slowly being recognized in North America and one can hope for an ever larger recognition.

The rediscovery and reactivation of this jewel of the Egyptian tradition, also known as Pharaonic Yoga, must be credited to **Yogi Babacar Khane** who taught it first in Europe before introducing it lately to North America.

Egyptian Yoga features several of the best known postures of traditional Indian Yoga, such as the Lotus, the Cobra, the Bridge, the Plough. However, it also features a complete set of original postures with a strong emphasis on verticality, spinal axis correction and concentration development.

It therefore constitutes a perfect complement to Hatha Yoga and can be used as a preamble to regular yoga sessions. The ongoing seminars and courses at the *Institut International de yoga* use it that way.

Ancient Egypt can be considered as the cradle of our contemporary sciences and technologies in a number of scientific domains. Egyptians had a thorough knowledge of human anatomy, especially of the spine.

As explained by Master Khane in a book entitled *Le yoga des pharaons*, chiropraxy and osteopathy are the offspring of the ancient vertebral therapeutic techniques underlying Egyptian medicine.



Djed Pillar

Egyptian iconography often depicts Osiris' spinal column and the four pillars of the universe as the Djed Pillar, also known as "the marrow of resurrection".

The two **Uraei** snakes emerging from the top of the pillar represent the two pranic energy centres known in India as Ida nadi and Pingala nadi. The crossing of two sceptres on the chest symbolizes the harmonization of these two energy currents in the Heart Chakra.



The various figures decorating the pillar are traditionally represented in profile, thus illustrating the effects of spinal torsion on the vital nodes of the spine as studied in Vertebral Therapy and in Energy Medicine. One can only be impressed and surprised by the radiant sacredness of the various pharaonic figures and colossi represented in the perfect vertical postures of Egyptian art. Our reaction is surely triggered by the austerity, assertiveness, precision and perfection such figures radiate, in stark contrast with our usual slouching, bending forward and slacking in soft armchairs, a much less demanding and thus more common posture causing numerous deformations, energy blockages and losses of physical as well as mental vitality. Egyptian Yoga is therefore revealed as a discipline of dynamic self-manipulation of the spine facilitating the progressive straightening of the spinal column and of the shoulders. As a result, optimal pulmonary capacity is retrieved, which, in turn, leads to improved internal organ function. The pharaonic postures usually relate to everyday life and can be practiced by anyone, anywhere, in any attire, standing, kneeling, sitting on the ground or on a chair. A few poses in sequence can, in minutes, eliminate the fatigue accumulated in hours of work. The level of mental focus required by some movements fosters mental concentration and what Ch'an Buddhism calls the "practice of presence".

Egyptian Yoga influences the locomotor system and the body-scheme, thus inducing physical and psychological self-correction and stimulating day to day awareness.

While being accurate and precise, the postures of Egyptian Yoga have an inherent simplicity that surprises anyone who associates yoga with contortionism and acrobatics. As stated by B. & G. Khane in *Le Yoga de la verticalité* (p. 21): "External factors are of little importance. The true temple is inside, the true posture is the inner-posture. The yogi remains a yogi whether sitting on a chair or in a lotus or diamond pose."

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The value of Egyptian Yoga stems not only from the fact that it constitutes a discipline of spiritual enlightenment but also from its concurrent effects on the physical, subtle and mental levels. Each posture uses deep breathing and breath retention techniques to harmonize the various energy flows. This millenary yoga thus relies on a holistic vision of the human being, allowing the subtle energy to rise and a spiritual opening to take place. Today's men, women and children need a yoga that reaches out to them in an accessible language and does not require any particular suppleness, lifestyle or religion. The only requirement is a complete presence during each movement.

The Eaglewings and the KA postures (Candlestick posture)



Goddess Nout
in the Ka posture
Soter Sarcophagus

One of the basic postures of Egyptian Yoga is called the Candlestick, derived from the esoteric concept of KA and from solar symbolism. It was practiced in Egypt as early as 3000 to 4000 years before our era. The Candlestick is the quintessential initiation posture, the three-prong candlestick being a symbol, not of suffering and duality, but of victory and reunification. Numerous cultures use it. The concept of KA is also related to the subtle body and to the seven divine qualities (Kaou), all of which have a masculine and a feminine polarity. One is immediately reminded of the seven chakras with their double polarity. As one stands in the Candlestick posture, one touches the human vertical dimension pointing toward Heaven like a pyramid or an obelisk. The two feet are firmly grounded while the two hands point upwards like two antennas deployed as receivers of cosmic energy.

The Eaglewings movements and the KA posture form a basic cycle, as illustrated hereafter. Combined with a flexion forwards, backwards or sideways or with torsions during an Egyptian Walk, whatever the posture (leaning, sitting, kneeling, the Warrior, the Split, etc.), such a cycle allows multiple variations ranging from the intermediate to the most advanced level.

Physical benefits:

- Back and shoulders correction: perfect back posture, strengthening of shoulders (shoulders and elbows must be stretched backwards).
- Prevention and treatment of back and shoulder rheumatism.
- Breaktime exercises in factories, offices and schools.
- Respiratory rehabilitation by progressive opening of the scapular belt during the rising phase. Restores maximum volume and flexibility of the thoracic cage. Usually underused because of the pressure resulting from dropped shoulders and a slouched back, the upper regions of the lungs are restored to their optimal level of ventilation which, in turn, regenerates the entire body.
- When practiced slowly and with concentration, Egyptian Yoga becomes a Pranayama exercise involving the various phases of integral yogic breathing: abdominal breathing (sequence 1), rib breathing (sequences 2 and 3), collarbone breathing (sequences 4 to 7).

Spiritual benefits:

- The arms reproduce the configuration of the two nadis, Ida and Pingala. As one progressively gets into the KA posture, the seven main chakras (subtle energy centres) open in succession.
- The first three sequences control the opening of the lower chakras [Mulhadara (coccyx region), Svadhishthana (sacral region), Manipura (lumbar region)]
- The following four sequences control the opening of the superior chakras and open access to deepening levels of consciousness: Anahata (heart area), Visuddhi (cervical vertebrae), Ajna (center of the forehead which, in ancient Egypt, was symbolized by the **Uraeus** [cobra] used as a pharaonic headdress adornment), sahasra (top of skullcap, represented in ancient Egypt as a fragrant cone often decorated with lotus flowers). The connection between the KA posture and the opening of the 7th Chakra is clearly illustrated, in the hieroglyphic representation of KA at the top of the pharaohs' skulls, by two arms in the candlestick posture.
- The KA posture is a gesture of openness toward the upper spheres of the universe, i.e. welcoming of and surrendering to the infinite inside and outside.
- The rising phase corresponds to the sequential opening of the 7th chakras whereas the decreasing phase corresponds to their closure and to the progressive integration of cosmic consciousness into each of the spheres controlled by the chakras.



King Hor's KA

Basic practice: Joined Eaglewings movement and Lifting the Sky posture

The Lifting the Sky posture is a movement of spiritual opening related to the creation of the world.

It is often represented in temples like in Denderah where the twelve gods hold the sky vault in that posture.

Often associated with the " Union of the two Lands " symbol (with a similar meaning to Hatha-Yoga: " Union of Sun and Moon polarities ") it illustrates the duality of mankind and the unification of the two poles of our inner-being.



Denderah Zodiac

The Lifting the Sky posture is one of the chief postures of Egyptian yoga.



Lifting the Sky posture
with trunk lateral bending

The sequence ends with the Joined Eaglewings posture which, beyond having the same benefits as those of the Eaglewings in the KA posture, loosens the shoulders, opens the scapular belt and releases strength and flexibility in the wrists.

¹ Geneviève et Babacar KHANE, *Le Yoga des Pharaons*, Éditions Dervy-Livres, Paris 1983, 1984

Geneviève et Babacar KHANE, *Le Yoga de la verticalité, Pédagogie et Pratique du Yoga des Pharaons*, Institut International de Yoga

Step by Step Guide

The rising phase of the Eaglewings movements and the Ka posture (the decreasing phase is not illustrated as it is the reverse of the rising phase).



1. Starting position



2. Inhale – Make a relaxed fist with your hands.



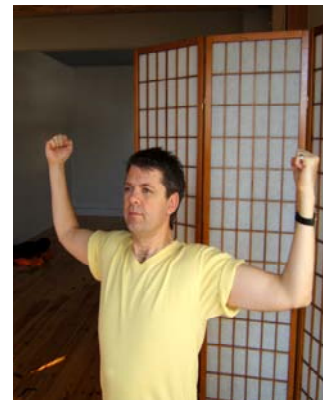
3. Exhale – Bring your fists to your shoulders and tuck your elbows into your ribs.



4. Inhale – Raise your elbows to form a horizontal line with your shoulders.



5. Exhale – While bringing your fists forward, forearms at 90° to your upper arms, pull your elbows back, making sure they stay on the same plane as your shoulders and pull your shoulder blades together.



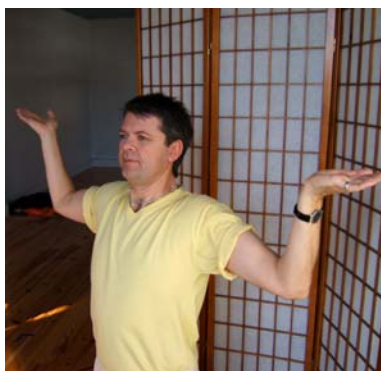
6. Inhale – Raise your fists skyward and bring your forearms to a vertical position, your upper arms must stay in a horizontal position.

Ka Posture



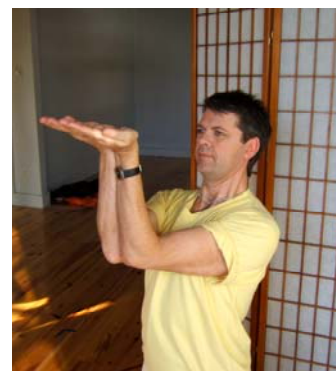
7. Exhale – Open your hands, palms face to face, fingers pointing skyward like antenna.

Lifting the Sky Posture



8. Inhale – With wrists bent back, palms up, point your fingers out to either side.

Joined Eaglewings Posture



9. Exhale – Bring your elbows together in front of your sternum, fingers pointing out, with your forearms vertical and your upper arms horizontal.



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