

YOGA

NATURAL LIVING

THE 5 TIBETANS:

the ancient himilayan health secret

INTERVIEW - TARA LEE

EXPLORING PRANIC ENERGY

LIVING TOXIC

THE IMPORTANCE OF *feet*



ISSN 1478-9671



94

9 771478 967010

October 2010

UK £3.20

yogamagazine.org

TALK

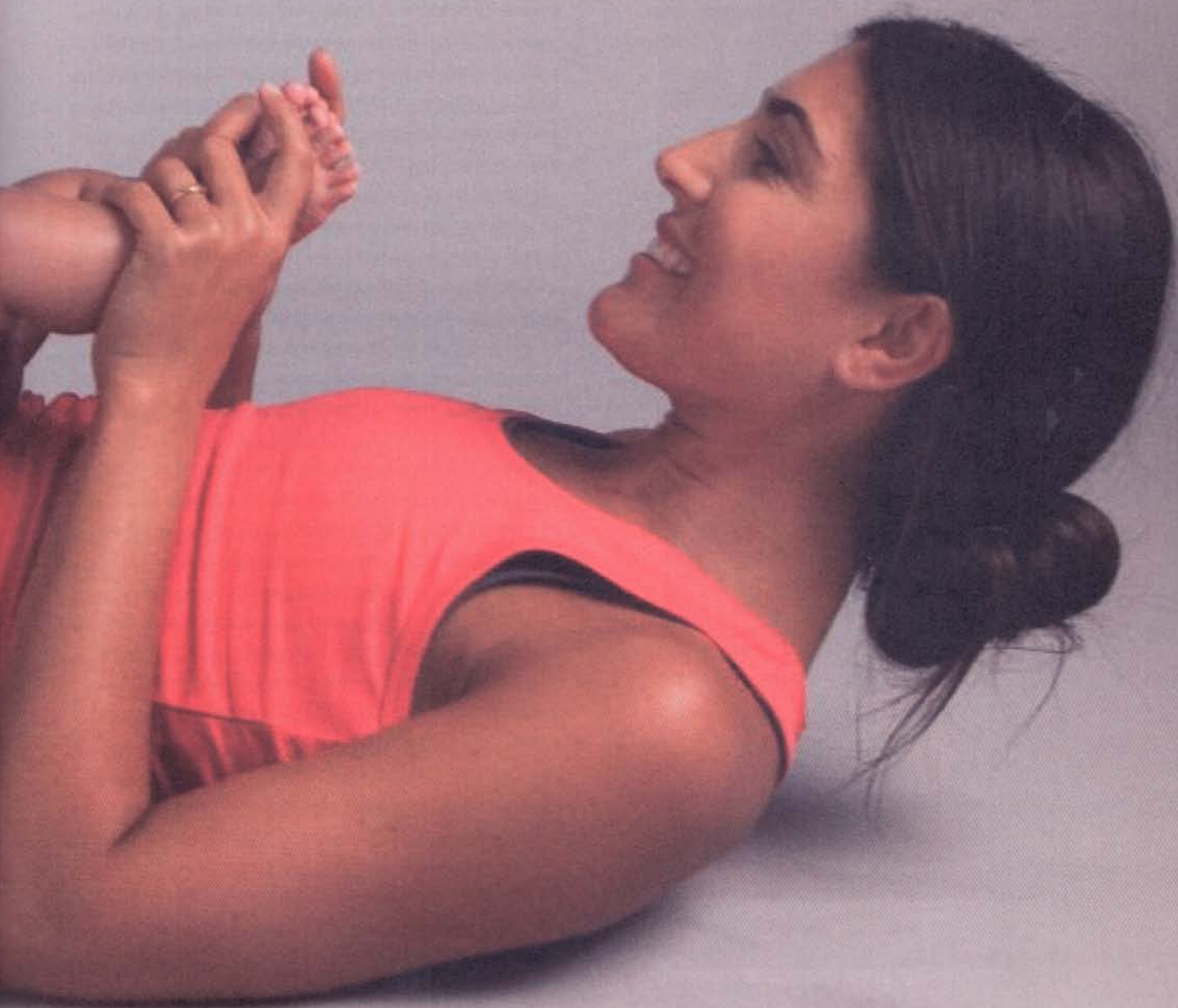
TARA LEE, RENOWNED YOGA INSTRUCTOR IN THE UK, ESPECIALLY AMONGST THE PREGNANCY CIRCUIT, TALKS TO EMMA SHARMA ABOUT HER YOGIC PATH AND HOW HER PREGNANCY HEALTH YOGA DVD HAS BECOME A BEST SELLER IN THE UK.

UPON MEETING TARA ONE IS IMMEDIATELY STRUCK BY HER CALMING, INVITING AURA. SHE HAS BEEN NAMED THE 'POCAHONTAS OF YOGA' AND THIS IS AN ADEPT ANALOGY. FRESH AND OPEN-FACED, SHE RADIATES WARMTH AND APPROACHABILITY. A REAL 'PERSON'S PERSON'. AS A MOTHER OF TWO, SHE HAS PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE TO RELATE TO MOTHERS-TO-BE AND POST-NATAL MOTHERS ALIKE.

BY EMMA SHARMA
PHOTOGRAPH CARLOTTE BROMLEY
DAVENPORT



tara lee



Yoga entered her life, and in some ways has become her life, but with no set plan or goals. Fate, hard work and determination have resulted in the status she has earned today. Tara has been practicing yoga for half of her life. Her yogic journey began at 18 years of age. Whilst studying Psychology and Sociology at Bristol University a friend of hers invited her to attend a yoga class at her student union. Always eager to try something new Tara participated but sadly came away with a rather negative view on yoga. Not one to give up she attended another class but this time at an Osho Centre. She found this experience much more positive and left feeling relaxed and centred and so continued with this practice.

After her degree Tara returned to London and began work as a production assistant on travel documentaries. At the same time she was pursuing another passion of hers, photography. Tara loves to "capture the essence of things". She feels that photography and yoga often go hand in hand, keeping one very present. Her photographs are abstract and striking (taralephoto.com).

She continued her yoga practice in London, at a Sivananda centre twice a week. Tara wanted to try a dynamic yoga class and so went to her first class at The Life Centre, Notting Hill, but initially did not take to it. Having practiced yoga for 5 years, she was shocked to attend a class where things seemed entirely new and more challenging to her. In Tara's words "I think my ego got in the way." However she decided to go to another dynamic class and this time regarded the process as somewhat of a challenge. She continued attending dynamic yoga classes until a friend of hers invited her to go to an Ashtanga Mysore style practice with Hamish Hendry, about 10 years ago. A very tough challenge, she really wanted to push herself and her boundaries at that stage of her life. Embracing the challenge, Tara undertook an Ashtanga training with David Swenson in Cornwall. Shortly afterwards she began teaching one or two evenings a week while continuing with her day job. Word spread and her client base started to grow.

During this time Tara discovered Liz Lark which resulted in her abandoning the rigidity of the Ashtanga series, instead using it as a foundation in her practice. She loved the creativity and freedom that Liz introduces in her dynamic classes and she became a huge influence on Tara. She began taking private classes from Liz Lark

along with a small group of other budding yoga teachers. Tara always had a "dream" of teaching at The Life Centre. Having always admired the teachers there, she regarded the Centre as the pinnacle of yoga training and practice. This resulted in her applying for their teacher's training course. Although she was already teaching by now, she became concerned that at some stage, centres may require a certificate to teach if the industry became more regulated, which it was not at the time. During the second weekend of her training she found out she was pregnant. She persisted with the course and got her qualification regardless but no-one wanted to partner with her during her latter months because they were too nervous to!

Prior to becoming pregnant she undertook a pregnancy yoga training, but it was not until she had been through pregnancy herself that she felt confident enough to teach it. During her pregnancy she began teaching small groups of pregnant friends. She then participated in Janet Balaska's active birth training and a birth preparation weekend with Lolly Stirk. During Stirk's weekend she met a lady that became a pregnancy yoga teacher at the Life Centre and Tara mentioned to her that she would be happy to cover her classes if she was ever away. An opportunity soon arose for Tara to cover; she did so with trepidation, having never taught a class of that size before. The Life Centre received positive feedback after a couple of classes she covered and so when one of their permanent pregnancy yoga teachers went on maternity leave Tara was asked to replace her.

Further to that she was asked to teach Mummy and Baby classes at the Centre too. These postnatal classes focus on mother's strengthening abdominals and opening their chests and shoulders, after spending hours tightening these muscles while breastfeeding and carrying their babies. The first half of the class focuses on the mothers and the second half is on the mother and child. The babies love the class and also get their own 5 minute stretching session included in the 75 minute class. Mothers are taught how to handle their baby's safely and confidently. The class includes a mummy and baby dance, usually to Bob Marley or U2, which encourages a lot of laughter for all. Nursery rhymes finish the class and babies are known to sleep well afterwards. The sessions are aimed at women who are 6 weeks postnatal, up until the baby is of crawling age. Tara explains that mummy and baby yoga does not offer the same tranquillity as pregnancy yoga since the

babies take it in turn to scream and shout. However it is still an invaluable practice for women who want some exercise and time to mingle with like-minded mums.

For those mothers that cannot make it to a yoga class when pregnant or after birth Tara has created three dynamic yoga DVDs for them to follow at home. Pregnancy Health Yoga was a nine month creation between Tara and former business manager of the Life Centre, Mary Attwood. The DVDs follow yoga through pregnancy and after birth. The bumper box set is adeptly named "Bump, birth and beyond" and can be purchased from Tara's website taraleeyoga.com.

Again in conjunction with Mary Attwood, Tara formed The London Yoga Company (thelondonyogacompany.co.uk) with the vision of creating products "that would reflect yoga and health in the UK."

As well as pregnancy and mummy and baby yoga, Tara teaches a popular dynamic vinyasa yoga class at the Life Centre once a week which is very physically demanding. After having two children Tara began to feel that an Ashtanga practice was no longer suitable for her lifestyle, and as a result discovered the joys of a more creative, less rigid practice, which is reflected in her current teaching style. One of Tara's main pleasures of teaching is the real sense of continuity in being able to follow women's journeys from pregnancy (or sometimes before if they previously attended her dynamic class) through to after birth when mothers attend her mummy and baby class. She gets to meet their babies after birth and hear about their birthing experience and then often continues to follow them as they gradually return to her dynamic class.

During her pregnancies Tara attended a vast array of pregnancy yoga classes and also swam and walked as part of her exercise routine. For her first born Tara had to have a planned caesarean because the baby was in breech. This was quite distressing for her at the time since she had meticulously prepared herself for a natural birth. However she has since turned it into a positive, realising that it has helped her to relate to those women that attend her classes and find themselves in the same situation. The single best piece of advice Tara said she could give women in preparation for birth is not to be fearful. Fear in itself can slow down labour due to the release of adrenalin. In addition the birthing environment should be as much like home as possible...low-lighting, soothing music and so on.

Without intending to pursue a lifetime of yoga Tara has found herself firmly on this path and is enjoying each moment and opportunity that comes her way, as a result of her openness and

justified popularity. Tara has recently been approached by Yoga Alliance UK to create a teacher's training syllabus for pregnancy yoga and asked to hold some workshops in conjunction with this, so pregnancy yoga and Tara Lee enthusiasts alike watch this space...

Emma Sharma is a freelance writer and qualified yoga instructor who lives in London (emmasharma@hotmail.co.uk).

PHOTO JOHN FREEMAN

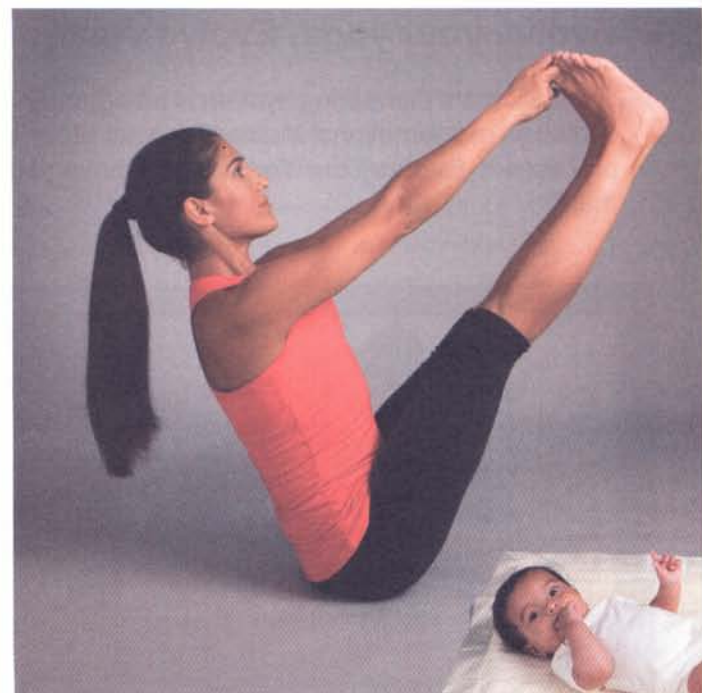


PHOTO CARLOTTE BROMLEY DAVENPORT