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Singing bowls, body music

By Tamara Watson

Golden metal bowls are appearing in spa treatment rooms worldwide. Originating in Asian culture over three centuries ago, their evolution from ceremonial offering bowl to sound healing instrument is fairly recent. Winnie Rode, a Lama (teacher of Tibetan Buddhism), who has been playing them for over twelve years, explains how the bowls “are a direct mirror to the shape of the individual.”

Everything in the universe has a characteristic frequency. According to quantum physics, the interconnectedness of all things depends upon the transmission of information via frequencies. The energetic ‘shapes’ of our bodies are structurally created from over a hundred thousand different protein molecules, and are continually altered in response to the vibrations that surround us.

Winnie, originally from Germany, performs sound healing sessions and concerts regularly in Thailand and other international locations. He is careful to make the distinction between ‘singing bowls’ and Tibetan bowls. While singing bowls resemble traditional Tibetan bowls, these metal bowls were never used for sound healing. According to different opinions, they were commonly made with a mixture of precious metals, ranging from seven to twelve different ones. Winnie names seven: iron, copper, gold, silver, lead, zinc and mercury. The precious bowls were created and used solely for ceremonial offerings, with one exception: pregnant women could eat from them to benefit from their mineral rich composition. Today, Kathmandu in Nepal is probably the biggest producer of the bowls, where they are mostly made of brass.

Historic use of metal bowls to create sound is found in Japan, while in China ancient bowls were made mostly from stone and jade. The use of the Tibetan metal bowls for sound, and the origin of ‘singing bowls’, began with the new age movement and holistic awareness of the 1960s and 70s in California. Awareness of the interconnectedness of life forms created a wave of different healing modalities. While scientists were researching sound and vibrations in the brain, people began to play the bowls, exploring their healing effects.

Winnie was able to give me a unique understanding of the way singing bowls work. A Buddhist philosophy teacher and author of two books about Tibet, Bhutan and traditional Tibetan medicine, he has lifetimes of experience with Tibetan shamanism. His playing balances knowledge of vibrational healing with a natural aptitude for harmony and musical arrangement .

During a treatment session he uses eight different bowls. He often starts a session by playing three bowls, each in a different key. At the beginning they may be disharmonious, but then their sounds merge. He says. ‘it’s a law of the cosmos that every disharmony transforms into harmony.’ The way the bowls harmonize enables him to read a person’s underlying frequencies.

Everything has its own frequency, and makes its own sound. Each part of our body has a unique vibration of health. When tension is present, whether due to stress, physical injury, or chronic thought patterns, this causes disharmony in our natural rhythms of health. Sound healing, and singing bowls, help to rebalance and harmonize the frequencies of our bodies.

Chakras are energy centres in the body long recognized by Indian Ayurvedic medicine and now documented with modern technology. There are seven major chakras in the human body, beginning at the tip of the spine, and moving up to the top of the head. Each centre corresponds to specific physical and emotional processes, and each chakra has a fundamental vibration, or tone. During a session the corresponding singing bowls are played close to the body.

Initially an individual may experience sensations and emotions that can be uncomfortable, but they soon become relaxed as Winnie continues to play. When this stable vibration is reached, he plays for the next chakra. This elemental 'tuning' gives Winnie insight into the individual's inner music, where he is able to see or feel weaker parts of the body.

The unique concert of sounds played for each individual is determined from experience and intuition, and grounded by the intellect. He can often see a visible 'wind' or 'haze' rise from the body and dissipate as the internal frequencies are harmonized and internal tension is released.

Sometimes a person will feel an initial distrust towards the sounds, or dislike certain frequencies. Usually this is transformed fairly quickly into pleasure and an attraction to the harmonies. Winnie explains that aversion to a particular sound relates to a deeply held memory or emotion. He cites Dr. Emoto's research with water to explain how sound affects our bodies. According to Emoto, water molecules have the ability to retain information, including thoughts and emotions. In this sense, water has a 'memory'. During a sound healing session, the fluid in our body moves, bringing molecular information that may have been buried, or hidden, to our attention.

In the same way, sound vibrations can help release toxins and physical trauma. A session, or series of sessions, can treat conditions such as arthritis, impaired organ or system function, migraines, tinnitus, insomnia, and depression. Singing bowls also benefit pregnant women and infants.

My personal experience left me feeling cleansed, balanced, harmonized, and empowered. There were moments when I experienced brilliant colors and light flowing through my body, and pure happiness. I was also able to confront an old fear that surfaced. Winnie advised me to transform uncomfortable emotions into dark smoke and let them go, which they did.

With all healing treatments, the willingness to open, receive, and to let go affects the outcome. While a treatment can be strongly therapeutic, a singing bowl session can, and often is, a simple joyful experience of tuning into one's Self.

Winnie's self-expression occurs during his concerts, which are his personal joy. To quote him, "when I play, I am the bowl, I cry, weep, laugh and speak." During a concert he plays with twenty different bowls, and the harmonies he creates, ranging from deep gongs to subtle whispers of sounds, express what cannot be said by words. He says there are often two or three bowls during a concert that have a life and dialogue of their own, communicating with their sounds universal harmony. He has recently recorded a CD, *Brainwave Music Therapy*, whose concept is to stimulate positive frequencies in the brain, which in turn are able to renew and create neurons: healing sounds.

Winnie offers sound healing sessions at Kamalaya Koh Samui and Six Senses Spa Sila Evason Hideaways, Koh Samui Thailand. He also returns regularly to Germany, and can be reached at tel. +49 8807 5341, +49 163 772 11 35; wiwero@yahoo.de; www.singingbowlasia.com.

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