Healing with Tibetan Singing Bowls

In this paper, I will provide general information about Tibetan Singing Bowls, various uses and their observed healing impact.

My interest in healing with sound started during a short voice practice. After toning the Sargam Notes approximately for 20 minutes, out of nowhere I remembered a guy I have never been able to forgive. Then, it felt as if a cloud was raising up from my chest towards my crown chakra. It go released. Before that class, every time I thought about this guy, I would feel anger in my heart. After these feelings were released, I was surprised to see that when I think about him, I was only neutral.

Last year, the day after I was let go from my job, I was in a difficult place with strong mixed emotions that kept me from sleeping for the past two days and I was looking for a way back into peace. I came across a training using Tibetan Singing Bowls with International Academy of Sound Healing. At that point, as Mitchell Gaynor, M.D. ("Gaynor") said in his book *The Healing Power of Sound*, "it was almost as if I did not have a choice in the matter, because I immediately intuited that playing the bowls would change my life."

During the demonstration for Aura Cleansing and Strengthening, with the first strong blow to the Unique Meditation Bowl 12 inches above my third eye, my head, chest and arms jumped and lifted off the floor. As the session continued, I initially felt my emotions getting more stirred up. Then, stressful work scenes started coming up in front my eyes and disappearing away like a movie. When the session ended, I felt very tired from the physical and emotional shake up but peaceful and hopeful. Like my anger, the emotional charge of those stressful memories never came back. They were also erased from my psyche and aura field permanently.

This is how I was introduced to the Singing Bowls. I completed two levels of training with the International Academy of Sound Healing and acquired two sets of bowls: New Age Healing Set consists of four bowls and can be used in multiple purposes such as Brain Wave Relaxation, Hand and Foot Reflexology, and General Physical Ailments (shoulder & neck tension, back pain). Master Chakra Set consists of seven bowls, tuned to the note of each chakra based on the Traditional pitches.

The original Singing Bowls are said to be made with seven metals (gold, silver, mercury, copper, iron, tin and antimony), representing seven planets. However, this is not proved. New Singing Bowls, which are abundant due to demand, are predominantly of tin and copper, similar to what bells have been made of worldwide for thousands of years. No bowls have been made in Tibet after the Chinese invasion in 1950. It is very difficult to identify original antique Singing Bowls from that region since antique looking bowls are also manufactured today.

There are two main ways to play the bowls. One is to strike with a mallet, which creates a soft, harmonious sound with soothing vibrations. The second way is rubbing a leather covered wand outside the rim. This technique creates a stronger sound some people explain as cutting and touching deep inside their body.

In a session, the client is asked to lie in Savasana, which can calm the nervous system and promote equanimity in the entire body. The bowls are placed around the head and to the side of each chakra, with the root bowl between the legs. This creates a total sound bath around the body and relaxes every part. The bowls are placed on the body for increased effect, hand and foot reflexology and pain relief.

Bowls' vibrations are felt throughout the body, occasionally like an electric current, especially in areas where the client has pain. In some sessions, clients reported that they felt a knee pain move up their leg or lower back pain move down the leg and finally dissolve when a bowl is placed directly on that area. I have observed the bowls to be especially effective in dissolving menstrual pain. The vibrations can also be felt as a cold wind hitting the body and cause a shivering sensation even in a warm environment.

In his book, The Music of Life, Hazrat Inayat Khan ("Khan") writes "The way in which man can find his own place is to tune his instrument to the keynote of the chord to which he belongs." As such, everyone reacts differently to each unique bowl and the reactions also differ in each session. Initially, each bowl is struck individually to observe the impact of the tone on the body. The facilitator looks for signs and subtle body movements to identify the tones the body needs. The obvious signs are the body shaking/shivering, sighing, swallowing, crying or heavy breathing that eventually leads to a release. The subtle signs are any small movements of the face muscles, the lips, the chin, the fingers or the toes. When any of the signs are observed, the impacting bowl is struck with higher intensity multiple times, placed on the body or rubbed with the rim technique until a release is observed. If the body does not need a certain tone, it lies completely still.

Frank Perry has the most comprehensive book on Tibetan Singing Bowls called *Himalayan Sound Revelations*. He states that "one of the effects users have commonly noted is that the tones from some bowls are found to balance the chakras." Before each session, I check the chakra energies of the client with a crystal pendulum. After an hour-long session, I always observe that the pendulum patterns are aligned, chakras are balanced and swirling with more energy. Some bowls are activating, as observed by the heart rate, some are calming, and specifically ones playing the A note have been reported to stop the thinking process abruptly. As summarized by Gaynor, "you can feel the vibrations resonating throughout your body, and when you stop, as the sound gradually dies away, you are likely to feel a lightness, a relief of pressure, in your head and body."

I observed the bowls to be especially effective in emotional release both for myself and my clients. I worked with a lady who was severely depressed for the past six months. During the session, I observed that she reacted strongly to one of the F bowls and started working with that bowl using both playing techniques. When I started the rim technique, she started sobbing with a strong discharge from her throat. After the session, there was a noticeable change in her expression with more light and hope in her face. The bowls made a turning point in her life and the depression lifted completely with repeating sessions.

The bowls create happy and hopeful feelings as well with their higher vibrations. Being touched by the same vibrations, I ended many sessions with complete trust and 'everything is ok' feeling.

Being taken to Alpha or Theta level, some clients also reported getting subconscious messages during a session. One man kept hearing "you need to trust people more" and said he is always skeptical and tends to interpret people's remarks as condescending. One lady saw herself on the organization chart of a large company during a period when she was stressed about being able to get a job that will satisfy her. This message gave her the strength to continue her search and she has recently been offered a similar position.

While paying the bowls with high intensity can be activating, striking them softly is usually very calming. I had a client who had severe insomnia fell asleep at the end of a session and sleep deeply for 20

minutes. Even if they do not fall asleep, clients all report being in a dream like state during the session and getting up as if from a deep, relaxing sleep at the end.

I also observed that people with high anxiety and inability to relax may find it hard to lay still for an hour. Their body may not be ready to receive the soothing vibrations of the bowls for too long. One needs to get used to receiving higher, happy, trustful vibrations.

It is best to try the Singing Bowls since the impact on each person is different. One person even reported she felt as if her arms and legs were separated from her body for a while during the session and came back when other tones were played.

The vibrations offer infinite possibilities for healing and body experiences.