

# Singing Bowls

## Intro

Singing bowls are made by many people. However, there are few people making the singing bowls who practice the sacred chanting to infuse the bowls with healing intention. Singing bowls are made in many countries. There are singing bowls from Japan known as Rin Gong, which are both machine made and handmade of metal alloy and are used mainly by Zen Buddhists for meditation. In Asia these bowls are often used for ritual purposes.

I want to clarify the name Tibetan singing bowls. The term is well known in western countries even though the bowls are native to the Himalayas, especially Nepal or India. In 1959, there was a large exodus of Tibetan monks to the west when the Dalai Lama left, and some brought their singing bowls with them, which they shared. I mention it here because it's widely understood that Tibetan singing bowls describes a type of hand hammered bowl from the Himalayas.

The knowledge of how to heal with Tibetan singing bowls is as old as the knowledge of how to make them. It has been handed down by the same verbal tradition and the same caste system that preserves the integrity of what is known through selection of one generational knowledge holder to the next, of which there may be many. This body of knowledge is a gathering of practices from my many teachers, and according to all my teachers, you can integrate these methods into any therapeutically healing modality as long as the healing intention is present.

## History

The making of traditional singing bowls goes back some 2,400 years to the time of Buddha and has been handed down from generation to generation in India, Nepal, and Tibet through verbal teaching within a highly structured family clan or caste system. Today, craftsmen in Nepal in the Kathmandu Valley work to revive the ancient techniques for making the bowls.

The Shakyamuni clan today still makes healing bowls, chanting with mantras while they make the bowls. This is the same method that goes back to the time of Buddha. The oral history tells us that the bowls came to Tibet from India at the same time that Buddhism was introduced to Tibet by the great Buddhist master, Padmasambhava. Therefore, the history of Tibetan singing bowls goes back to the 8th century A.D.

These bowls are traditionally made of a special seven metal alloy of **gold, silver, iron, mercury, tin, copper, and lead**. Each of the sacred metals is aligned with the seven heavenly bodies in our solar system and the seven chakras of our body. Additionally, each bowl is fine tuned to the specific note that affects an individual chakra. Each bowl begins as a molten mixture of the special seven sacred metals. It takes three to four people to hammer each bowl. One holds the hot metal with blacksmith tongs while two or three others alternate hammering and chanting,

infusing the bowl with healing intentions even as it's being created. Bowls typically range in size from three inches to fourteen inches in diameter, but can also be larger or smaller.

## The Vedic and Tibetan Chakra Systems

Singing bowls can open chakras, but this takes time. Chakras are energy centers in the body, corresponding to neural networks branching out from the spinal cord and glands in the endocrine system. When these centers are balanced, one's life becomes more balanced both physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Each chakra is associated with a note, color, seed mantra, body center, and various human qualities.

In the following charts, I give the Tibetan and Vedic systems for matching the chakras to notes, heavenly bodies, and metals. The two systems have evolved differently, you may choose which you prefer to use, or if you have a strong affinity to using a particular bowl for healing in a particular way, you can ignore both systems and use your intuition! If you feel, for instance, that the A bowl resonates with your heart, then perhaps you should use it for healing your heart. If you have only one bowl, you can certainly use it anywhere on the body.

### Tibetan System

Chakra	Note	Heavenly Body	Metal
Crown	B	Moon	Silver
Third Eye	E	Mercury	Mercury
Throat	A	Venus	Copper
Heart	D	Sun	Gold
Solar Plexus	G	Mars	Iron
Sacral	C	Jupiter	Tin
Root	F	Saturn	Lead

## Vedic System

Chakra	Note	Heavenly Body	Metal
Crown	B	Jupiter	Tin
Third Eye	A	Saturn	Lead
Throat	G	Mercury	Mercury
Heart	F	Sun	Gold
Solar Plexus	E	Mars	Iron
Sacral	D	Venus	Copper
Root	C	Moon	Silver

The Tibetan order of planets corresponds to how fast they appear to move from the point of view of an observer on earth, with the moon as the fastest and Saturn the slowest, and the sun in the middle. This is an ancient system used by astrologers and alchemists, and of course, it doesn't include the planets that had not yet been discovered-Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.

### The System of Fifths

The sound of the scale interval of a fifth is relaxing, soothing, and centering to listen to. Teachers of Tibetan singing bowl therapy from ancient times set up their singing bowls in a patter where they strike the bowls in intervals of fifths because they feel this sound is beautiful to hear, and the vibrations of the fifth are especially good for balancing the heart chakra. To arrange a set of singing bowls in fifths we simply set them up starting with F at the root chakra and go up five notes for each chakra.

The old singing bowls from Tibet were made before modern tempered tuning entered into the stream of world music. The old bowls from Tibet often sound mysterious and multiphonic. Newer bowls made in Nepal in the last forty years are often more easily calibrated on an electronic tuner than the old bowls are. Here is what a researcher in the field of harmonic

vibrational theory-Dr. Harold Grandstaff Moses, director of the Institute of Harmonic Science in Phoenix, Arizona- has to say about the interval of a fifth:

We have run numerous experiments with sound frequencies, harmonics, chord progressions, tempos, color, lighting and visual imaging in order to gain insight on ways to influence emotions and feelings, while facilitating healing, reducing stress and generating a heightened state of spiritual awareness. Our research indicates that the musical interval of the perfect fifth (a mathematical relationship of 3:2) and the resulting harmonic overtones have the ability to favorably influence the parasympathetic nervous system while modifying the listener's state of consciousness.

- Playing Bowls
  - Mallet Types
  - Hand placements
- Analyzing and choosing Bowls
  - Oscilloscopes
  - Frequencies
- Adding water or crystals to them
- Potential layouts - on/off body
- Storing and transporting

## **Crystal Singing Bowls**

Pure Quartz Crystal Singing Bowls have a strong, clear resonance, which has become a very effective aid in personal wellness, meditation practices, and healing in the medical and complementary medicine communities. Pure Quartz Crystal Singing Bowls are available in frosted, clear, colored, mineral fusion, and handle bowl styles. Each has different resonant properties, available in many sizes and pitches for various wellness practices and intentions.

Crystal bowls have been used in healing modalities since the 1980's. While some people speculate on the use of crystal singing bowls in ancient cultures, I am aware of no direct evidence of their use. However, interestingly enough, in a merger of new and ancient technologies, the computer industry made very high quality, pure silicon quartz crystal bowls utilized to grow pure silicon chips for their computers. If the bowls were not precise enough, they were thrown out. Apparently, someone on the way to the trash bin discovered they have incredible pure sounds, also, and decided to stop discarding them! This birthed the singing crystal bowl industry.

Since this time, they have become a vehicle of enormous potential for those working with sounds in both ancient and new healing technologies. Much like the ancient Tibetan Bowls, the crystal bowls can be used as sound tools. Coupling awareness and intent in their use can demonstrably increase their effectiveness. By simply listening to the rich, pure, vibrant tone of a bowl, most sound recipients find them deeply relaxing, rejuvenating, even stirring of deep

emotions and states of well-being. By utilizing awareness techniques, a practitioner can guide the recipient into states of clarity, balancing of chakra centers, and much more. They can be used to transport the recipient into deep meditative states, even shamanic journeys into other dimensional states, or, realms of wisdom and understanding.

Dr. Mitchell Gaynor, MD, a cancer specialist of Cornell Medical Center, NY, has found using the bowls, especially with simple chant and meditative practices, assists his clients to come into better states of wellness with recovery rates over those using just standard allopathic treatment. Many other practitioners are offering both studies and anecdotal testimony in their use. I find them to be an extraordinary tool for simply bathing the client in rich sounds, which generate deep feeling states of wellness and relaxation. This can lead the body into a place of homeostasis, which assists the body in self-generative healing. From this place of relaxation or restoration, one can, also, easily guide a recipient into meditative states to explore deeper aspects of emotional release and resolution, or journeying into the inner dimensional awareness of one's greater being, and the greater Cosmos.

The bowls are easily struck and 'sung' by rubbing the outside of the bowl with rubber or suede mallets which accompany the bowls. Any novice can usually be proficient in a matter of moments, one of the unique and lovely aspects of the bowl. They do not take much training. One can easily use one's own intuitive guidance as to how to enter deeper states. The rare, pure tone of the bowl is extraordinary, and allows for rapid 'attunement' to a clear state of awareness, or consciousness. Such states allow for deepening meditative states, or touching into unresolved emotions awaiting clarity or release. Just breathing the feeling states that arise, from simple use of the bowl, one can easily access clarity, release, deep feeling states of spaciousness or coherence, which bring essential wellness. With a skilled practitioner, again, one can, also, enter heightened states of awareness, to peer into the greater dimensional aspects of cosmos, or the Greater Self, or journey into deeper mechanisms of release and healing of specific memory or trauma, etc.

I highly recommend the bowls for use in simple meditative or healing practice, with or without the use of voice. But, again, they greatly enhance voice practices of all kind, as a pure and coherent tone generator, or drone instrument. And, the use of awareness and voice, properly utilized, can offer extraordinary capacity to deepen one's experience over the bowl alone. This is one of my primary choices as a vehicle for healing, and other worldly experiences as a sound practitioner.