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IN THAILAND

February/March 2021

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THE SOUND HEALER IN CHIANG MAI

by Kamalini Natesan

Early July, I was invited to attend a sound healing session in Chiang Mai, a city I had barely visited. It's a pretty place, and we had been living in isolation since mid-March. Living in Bangkok, such a variety of opportunities fly around, waiting to be caught in my net. Given that the lockdown had completely shut us up, in our own gilded cage, this was a first trip we'd make out of town. What better way to break free than by riding sound waves? We thought it a sign from the Gods themselves, and were all ears, so to speak. There was not a moment of regret thereafter. I'm thrilled to say, it was more than worth our while to have chosen to venture into unknown territory, unaware of the triggers that awaited us.

At first, the question I asked myself, can sound therapy heal? Am I not already overburdened by sounds that abound? What would expedite the healing of an open wound (many wounds in fact)? Who isn't wounded, and if you aren't, I salute you; you've not needed wounds inflicted by life – by family, by friends, by lovers, and by any human that has entered your sphere, and to whom you have opened your heart? You are blessed, because it simply signifies that you are at a stage where you've learnt what there was to learn and are in a safe and sound place.

We are sound, I was told. Our breath, our heartbeat, our blood flowing, our pulse, our vocal cords – all of these are us.



We are water, and we are flesh and bones.

I read: "The frequency of the sound synchronises with the brainwaves and activates distress responses in the body. Sound healing can help you clear energetic blockages and thus facilitate healing on a physical and mental level."

Sound healing

I listened: During our first session we observe a number of instruments on the floor, and our facilitator, a gentle soul named Santiago, asked us to close our eyes after choosing one single instrument to play.

None of these were familiar. I wondered, as I looked closely, choosing a prayer bowl.

A prayer bowl speaks to me, and the stick strikes the bowl at different angles, emitting different frequencies of sounds that strike my heart. It was miraculous. I felt my body react in an entirely different way to earlier, since I was enclosed in an arena which held a mere four participants and the healer. All we heard were the instruments, and birdsongs. An occasional motorbike passing by, but we were taken by internal sounds.

Santiago later informed us about an important fact: not all sounds work for each individual, and vibrations emanating from certain will either resonate with one's being, or not.

Turned out to be true. Some instruments weren't for me.

It is like Ayurveda – medicines prescribed must be customised to the individual, so is it with sound.

I remember a friend telling me that she heard strains of music blaring from a neighbouring car, at a crossroads. She was horrified by her bodily reaction to it. She told me her body rejected that particular brand of music immediately, and raced ahead, frightened. I was shocked by her reaction to music, no less! But there are certain vibrations, and frequencies that can be dissonant for an individual persona. I have come to grasp this as a fact.

The sounds that were later played, entered my sphere, my body, and enveloped my being in a gentle halo-like bubble. I turned into a foetus, allowing myself to



bathe in its amniotic fluid. I was bodiless, floating in liquid sound.

It was not easy to emerge, but when I did, I was fresh, rejuvenated and emptied of negative thoughts.

The experience itself needs to be lived, but words are, at the moment, all I have.

I absorbed: At dusk, I listened to sounds that another facilitator, Ali used as therapy – crystal bowls.

I had a similar experience, yet a lot stronger, fiercer and unrelenting. I absorbed all sounds, and wept copiously. So much cleansing was happening - and my way has always been to weep and sometimes cry out.

At a certain point of this particular experience of sound healing, I wanted to get out, run away, because the strength of the sounds that were piercing their way into my being, began to feel like hundreds of hands pressing upon me, albeit gentle, and they were squeezing and expressing the hurt I was holding tightly knotted within. I finally let go, and when I did, a quiet descended upon me. I then fell asleep with the crystalline sounds cradling me. When I awoke, I far lighter, renewed as it were. I've never slept better than that night.

I heard: healing with



sound happens and it can be made to occur both consciously and unconsciously. One can improvise musical acts, meditate, chant, and play musical instruments. There are other sounds one can focus on, and allow oneself to flow in it, go with it, and consciously listen.

It is no easy task, because our life is full of the noises we have created in our heads, and outside, we are constantly barraged and taken with it all.

I recall a field trip to a village in Germany. I was a bit dazed, and was rendered speechless by an unfamiliar sentiment – I call it a spurt of freedom. There was no one around. But for a breeze that rustled the leaves of tall trees, and an occasional whirring of a tractor far away, the sense of complete absence of noise, overwhelmed me quite suddenly.

It overpowered me so much so that I had to I ask our host, “Where are the noises, and the people?” He laughed sweetly, a twinkle in his eye, rather bemused, he said, “Welcome to the world of positive sounds.” His beautiful smile left me wondering, why it was that we must surround ourselves with so much noise. Is it to deafen those thoughts that might otherwise disturb us? Is it simply to fill our lives with something – especially an acute sense of loneliness? Why must we always look to fill. It is in emptiness that one finds real meaning. But it's not for everyone. I now listen out for sounds: I hear them, I listen, I absorb, and I heal.

Even as I sit at my desk, I hear the humming of the table fan, which rides over a musical note, and I hum along. I hear nothing else. I'm quiet. Then I hear the knockings of a wooden panel somewhere out there, perhaps a building site - and it joins the orchestral harmony that is being created, even as I tap away at my keyboard – the sweet sounds of my favourite creative activity.

Listening in is a process, and an ongoing one. As we learn to quieten our inner mechanism, we tune into sounds that can help foster a mind that listens, and ears that observe. Lookout for the sign that says, “Sound and Safe!”

