

The role of Sound Healing in Ayahuasca Ceremonies

The primary aim of this work is to identify the benefits of using sound in plant ceremonies, more specifically Ayahuasca ceremonies. An exploration into the theme is undertaken by means of an investigation into the combination of bringing sound healing into modern day Ayahuasca ceremonies, offering an account of possible benefits.

Information was collected from facilitators and participants of ceremonies by means of a questionnaire to gain further understanding of the use of sound in Ayahuasca ceremonies in the present time in Europe. This was recorded and analyzed to highlight relevant areas of discussion.

It was found that sound healing per se is not commonly used in modern Ayahuasca ceremonies in Europe, mainly due to lack of knowledge and familiarity with sound healing, but this is changing.

This work also aims to create an understanding of sound and using it for healing purposes, readers are invited to develop a greater awareness of sound and its healing qualities.

By considering both traditional and modern ways of using sound when facilitating plant ceremonies, the strengths of sound healing will be highlighted which can be applied to give a greater understanding for future use of sound healing in Ayahuasca ceremony in modern days.

What is sound healing?

Sound in general moves things around and can affect people. Sound, music and rhythm activates the brain in multiple levels simultaneously and can have a deep affect on people.

Some people respond well to different things. Sound Healing has no side effects; it is safe and is a very powerful tool. If sound can re-arrange a molecular structure into beautiful balanced patterns, it can balance anything, especially if the sound is sent with healing intent from the person facilitating the work.

Sound is caused by anything that vibrates. Sound frequencies and vibration are all there in every level.

Sound can make, break or re-arrange molecular structure, that means it can re-arrange the molecular structure of your body.

Pleasant sounds make beauty and balance. Frequency is how fast things are vibrating. Amplitude is how forceful it is vibrating so we have soft sounds or loud sounds.

Certain sounds create certain patterns that have healing properties. The structure in sound is very important to human cells. If we make harmonious sounds, there is a beautiful pattern that occurs in every cell in our body. Certain sounds create certain obvious patterns that have high beneficial effects on the cells themselves. These beautiful patterns that emerges at the surface of the cell, opens on channels and allow the cells to communicate.

Stress is what is causing a lot of imbalance in people so we can use sound to bring balance and harmony back.

Very often in a person who is sick, the cells shut down in a spasm state not doing what they should be doing. By playing certain sounds to the cells that are in this kind of spasm state, we can re-energise them, kind of super charge them and getting them to be working to be healthy again, healing the person.

Sounds can heal our physical, emotional and mental bodies. People have an inherent ability to heal themselves and sound can support us to do that more rapidly.

Sound has been used for thousands of years by shamans, sound healers, Egyptian priests and priestesses as a healing modality.

Sound changes the vibration of that which is putting you out of balance and it puts you into a state of balance and harmony again.

Physical benefit: the body relaxes however, what is more important is what people are looking for: great peace of mind, holiness.

We can also self create sound to reduce stress. With sound we can alleviate a lot of the stresses that causes a lot of imbalances in the body.

When we are more self conscious, we are masters of our own life and also masters of our own health. We are more empowered.

In our emotional body, there are places that energy gets stuck, sound can clear up those emotional stresses or blockages and people can begin to move forward in their lives and feel better about their self.

Humans are mediators between cosmic energies and earth energies. Sounds opens up the pathway in our vortex points, by working in one thing we can sometimes help with other problems.

With sound travelling 4 times faster in water, and because we have so much water in our body, we can really see how sound can really help with changes in the physical body.

People with back pain and so many other conditions have been helped by sound.¹

How does sound healing works?

Each organism has its own vibratory rate. Every object in the universe has its own unique resonant frequency.

In air sound travels at 340 metres per second (760mph).
In water sound travels at 1,500 metres per second (3,350mph).
In glass sound travels at 5,600 metres per second (12,500mph).

The human body is made up of 70% water; this makes it a very good conductor of sound.

Modern medicine now uses sound waves to break up kidney and gallstones in the body. The machine used is called a Lithotripter. This machine bombards the stones with a specific sound frequency for one to two hours. The patient is admitted in the morning and discharged in the evening. Generally no anaesthetic is needed. With most patients only one treatment is necessary to break the stones down. The pulverised stone is passed out of the body through the urine.

High-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) is now used in some NHS hospitals and private clinics to treat prostate cancer. The therapy closely targets tumours, causing much less damage to healthy tissue than conventional surgery or radiotherapy. Every organ, every bone, every cell in the body has its own resonant frequency. Together they make up a composite frequency like the instruments of an orchestra. When one organ in the body is out of tune it will affect the whole body. Through the principle of resonance it is possible to use sound to bring the body back into harmony hence avoiding the need for drugs or surgery ³.

Both intent and frequency create the transformation experience.

In Jonathan Goldman's book "Healing Sounds" he focus a lot of energy and thought on the importance of intention: the energy behind the sound. He points out how important intention is in the healing process. This could be one of many reasons why Ayahuasca ceremonies facilitated by Shamans seem to have a deep affect in people. They hold healing intent in their ceremonies and in all work they do.

Shamans work is deeply rooted in mastering energy. They also have done or life has made them do a lot of healing work on themselves before they were ready to work with others, so because of that they are more able to navigate this terrain using clear intent, project divine intention and create healing. However, we have to remember that Shamans do not do it on their own. They usually count with many helpers and allies, and sound is one of them.

According to Goldman:

Frequency + Intent = Healing .

Intentionality is extremely important and something that needs to be worked on consciously and consistently by sound healing practitioners.

Frequency is equally important and not to be ignored. We need to be aware of the psychophysiology of sound, how we use sound, and how sounds affects us. We are vibratory beings and different sounds will resonate and influence us, unless we get to a level of attunement practiced by certain masters.

Few of us have achieved this vibratory level or the clearness of intent inherent in it. Usually, we are working at a level where we still need to clear ourselves when we're working with projecting intention. Just having a desire to be clear doesn't mean we're there yet. Probably when one has reached a mastership of clarity, where one can truly project divine intention—(the difference between “Thy will” and “My will”) —one can make any sound and have a desired effect.

It's important, as we go through our spiritual evolutionary process when working with sound, to become aware of the effects of the sounds that we are projecting, as well as our proposed intentionality. ²

So why go for Sound Healing journeys?

There are thousands of known healing practices around the world, many with different philosophies and systems.

As Sound Healing facilitators we work with sound in a holistic way with the person, we therefore consider all aspects of healing of mind, body and spirit.

In a Sound Healing group session we can create an environment both internally and externally to enhance healing with a holistic approach which has the potential to bring deeper healing.

During a Sound Healing session, the sounds and words (if used) are always positive, encouraging and comforting.

By creating the space for sound, the Sound Healing group facilitator can support people to find their own way to healing, which is the most powerful and effective way possible for healing.

So what is the reason why sound is present in ayahuasca ceremonies? How much of it is the sound doing the healing and how much of it is the plant doing the healing?

Ayahuasca is a psychoactive brew from the Amazon, used by the indigenous peoples of South and Central America for thousands of years. Its healing property is very powerful, well known and have been studied by scholars and scientists extensively recently due to the fact that it has become a phenomena worldwide.

Ayahuasca has been adopted, modified, and reinvented in urban context around the Globe ⁴.

Ayahuasca has appeared as a sect of ritual practices fully capable of leaving behind its strictly ethnic usage, one that can be readily adapted to the needs of a more urban, mixed-blood population. ⁵.

Interview with participants of ceremonies both in Europe and in South America.

“Live music helps the ceremony a lot more. It becomes the heart of the healing ceremony and it guides the whole thing.

In a ceremony in South America a Shaman was chanting, he came out of the jungle and brought the jungle with him into the ceremony with his voice.

Other times when you are in ceremony and there is no songs, just instruments, the instruments helps to guide the ceremony but it feels as if something is missing. When someone is singing and the song is coming from the heart, you can feel that Spirit is coming from that person’s voice and soul. There is another quality to it and using only instruments does not have the same strength and power as the voice does.

Sometimes you can have a musician playing an instrument, very knowledgeable and very gifted musician, however, it seems that Shamans know how to sing and when to sing. Because they are channelling the energy that comes out as songs, it seems that their voice also helps you to bring your own voice out into the world.

Music played from computer does not have the same impact. Recorded music was something played at the background while live music becomes part of the ceremony.

Certain icaros can be distracting if repetitive or translated and sang in English. Also music with random words which are not connected to what is happening can be very distracting.

Improvised music coming from the Peruvian Shaman, sound with no structure but with a melody, was transformed into the sound of the jungle.

Differences between ceremonies taking place in Europe and South America

When you do ceremonies in Europe, you go straight back to your life, the city, your work, and there is no time for integration. In South America you have nature around you so integration is easier. There you are held by Mother Nature, here if you are not near nature, it is a struggle.

Sound is essential for healing, it cuts through the blockages. Even by just using singing bowls and chimes, the sound cuts right through the blockage.

Depending on the sound, sometimes no sound is better.

If there is a laptop, it is not organic. If you are in the jungle and there are animal sounds in there, the sound becomes alive. The Sacred medicine needs sound to kick in, it needs that vibration of sound to begin to heal. Sometimes it is also important to allow each person to make their own sound.

In ceremonies facilitated by women there was a flow, there was a balance and mindfulness of when sound was good to have or not so good to have. Woman's energy was like "flow to what you feel" while men's energy was like, "be quiet, I do the sound".

Sound has to be organic, not just the same repetitive Icaros, it needs to be improvised, channelled.

I have experience with one woman in South America doing ceremony, but she was from North America. Her ceremony was gentler, while ceremonies facilitated by male there, there was no rest, we had to stay awake and working all the time. Male energy is more warrior energy.

For the facilitator, making his or her own sound is good, tuning into the medicine song of what is going on at that moment.

The shaman prepares you and guides the energies and holds space with his/her voice like a teacher guiding a class and you take what you need from those sounds. The sound and voice become catalysts for healing. There is a call and a response, a relationship going on with participants, shaman, sound and the medicine. How you respond changes with the expansion of consciousness. ”

Interview with ceremony facilitators who brings Shaman's from Central America to Europe

“There are two important aspects to music in ceremonies: First, where the music comes from is very important. The frequency being close to 432 hertz is very healing. Music that has been tuned to much higher vibration system, like 432 hertz has healing frequency. There are frequencies that are already here for thousands of years.

The second important aspect is about being totally in the moment, bringing a song that everyone knows related to the feelings that are around in that moment.

Sometimes you need to tune in with the energy, always tuning to that moment. For example if we want to bring people back for breakfast time after a ceremony, you go to higher energy music while in the ceremony, if you want to take people deep, you need to bring in sounds that will allow people to go deep.

There is also the time of changing energy. One needs to tune in to change and direct the energy, directed by the purpose of that moment.

It is really good when there is a connection between the people and the person making music, if you know where it comes from, what is the purpose of that music, etc, all of this makes it easier in a ceremony context.

Differences between ceremonies taking place in Europe and Central America:

In Central America is the clarity of the sound the songs have a clear sound, much more in harmony. Even the insects at night make clearer sounds and so all the animals in the jungle.

In ceremony, indigenous people will sing songs that are in tune with their surroundings, with nature. When indigenous people come to do ceremony in Europe, they seem to bring this energy with them, but it is harder for them to work here.

Also for a non indigenous person who is facilitating ceremony, they find it much harder to work in Europe, their sound does not sound as natural. However, for shamans, singing here or singing there in the Americas, there are not many differences. They carry it inside them.

It is as if the Shamans load their system with the energy of the jungle, the energy of nature and they take it with them and that creates an essence for the ceremony. The energy of the jungle or nature is important to be present because that helps the medicine to feel at home in Europe. The medicine needs to feel at home to work better and more efficiently. The medicine needs to feel good too in order to work more powerfully and with more depth.

Also opening the self to channel the music is really an important thing in ceremonies.”

Conclusion

By presenting how effective sound is in the healing process, this essay has established that organic sound is extremely important in the healing process of participants in Ayahuasca ceremonies. Although not all ceremony facilitators in Europe use their own voice with live instruments or sound healing work in their ceremonies, that quality of sound with the intent of healing is shown to definitely take a big part in the healing process for participants.

There are hundreds of icaros on YouTube. They are recorded during ceremonies with shamans from Central and South America and they are used all over the world. Some of them are very famous and respected. It is my view that the most powerful sounds are not the most famous Icaros presented in Youtube, the most powerful sounds are the ones coming through the facilitator during the ceremony itself. Because it carries the energy of that moment and is related to the people present in the ceremony it has a lot more power in it and the healing effect is much deeper.

I also would like to conclude saying that it is my view that one of the reasons why plant ceremonies are so powerful for participants is due to the powerful alliance formed between the healing properties of sound and the innate healing properties of the plant medicine. The sound opens the pathway, removing the blockages out of the way so the medicine can come forth and do her cleansing and her consciousness expansion healing work.

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