

Chülen – Taking in the Essence of the Elements

Date : June 8, 2020

At the beginning of the Mandarava retreat held at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife in February-March 2020, Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, head of the [Shang Shung School of Tibetan Medicine](#), explained about the *chülen* (taking in the essence of elements) that is frequently used during this retreat.



I would like to share with you what *chülen* is according to Tibetan medicine. *Chü* means essence. Essence has two meanings: one meaning refers to the essence of the five elements that our body is composed of. Our body is made up of bones, blood, muscles, skin, and also the lymph system that are tangible. But we also have many elements that are not, and each of them has an essence. In Tibetan medicine we consider that there are seven body constituents that make up our life. The loss of one of these body constituents may eventually cause us to lose our life and for that reason we need to resupply what has been lost. A doctor may tell a patient suffering from anemia to take iron. That means that healthy red bloodcells or hemoglobin are missing and that the patient needs a new supply. So the *chü* of the body refers to the essence of our bodily constituents.

Len means to take, to get. When we lose our body essence then we take certain supplements to try to resupply that which has been lost. For instance, if we have problems with our teeth that are not caused by age or external reasons, it means that our calcium level is low. We can understand that because the impure substance coming from the bones is teeth and nails. Although we cannot see what is happening to our bones on a daily basis because they are covered by muscle and skin,

we can observe our hair and nails. If our hair or nails change color or form, that lets us know that our calcium level is insufficient and that we need to take some supplements. This is the *len*, getting the essence externally to resupply what we are missing internally because the inner nature and the outer nature are the same element. For that reason the outer nature is very important for the inner condition and vice versa as we are living in an interdependent way. When we are lacking an element in our body we try to resupply it from external material sources. This is the meaning of *chülen*.

There are a huge number of different types of *chülen*, from medicine, from certain teachings, and from different *terma* teachings. The *chülen* that we use in the Dzogchen Community is one of the greatest *terma* teachings from our dear Master. Back in the 1980s Chögyal Namkhai Norbu received the treasure teachings and from that time it has been available.

Chülen comes from many sources and there are two main reasons for using it. One of these is in the field of medicine to resupply constituents that are lacking in the body. For example, if we have difficulty sleeping it indicates an absence or lack of the earth or wind element. What we experience physically is similar to what happened with the weather yesterday when the strong Calima wind was blowing. Sometimes wind is good and we feel refreshed, but when it is excessive we don't like it. At times the wind can also be out of control. The same thing can happen in our body and there are many levels to the rising wind or *lung* element: in a minor case we will not sleep well; with a medium case we may find those around us annoying. However a major case can be a problem for which we need professional help. The problem is the imbalance of an element for which there may be many reasons. In this particular case we take the essence of garlic to try to calm down the *lung* element. This is a simple type of *chülen* that shows how it is used in the field of medicine.

Then there is another type of *chülen* that a high level practitioner living on a mountain would use: a subtle type of *chülen*. A practitioner of lower capacity uses empowered *chülen* to resupply his/her missing elements, while a person of higher capacity does not need to take any food. This is not a fairy tale. Great practitioners such as Longchenpa and Milarepa actually did this, but it is not easy.

The common *chülen* that we use in the Dzogchen Community to protect our health and clarify our mental capacities has as its final goal extending our life. What is the purpose of extending our life? We will be able to accomplish our goals and for this reason this kind of *chülen* is very useful.

This type of *chülen* can be explained in a simple way: if we have any problems with our sense organs there is a special *chülen* extracted from flowers. If we have bone problems, there is *chülen* that comes from calcite. If we have something lacking in our blood system, *chülen* comes from shilajit, which is abstracted from minerals. These different substances have different functions. The common ingredients for all these kinds of *chülen* as well as the precious *chülen* that we use are called the four essences and five pure ingredients or ?????????? *dwangs ma' i bcud len*.

The pure essence from earth minerals is shilajit, ?????????? *brag zhun*. Its function is to strengthen

our muscles and blood. When we have problems with our organs such as liver and gall bladder, shilajit is very good, on the one hand to resupply elements, on the other to cure.

The pure ingredient from minerals is calcite, which is very good for bones, nerves, cartilage etc. The essence from the trees is molasses or *bu ram*. Molasses restores our general strength, physical and particularly mental strength and is beneficial if we have memory loss, nerve problems, or are not able to calm down. It is like the strong wind we had yesterday: when it calms down we can see everything very clearly and logically.

The pure ingredient from flowers is honey *sbrang rtsi*. It is good to restore our complexion. This could be our external complexion, our skin, but it also refers to all our *mdangs*, the shine or glow of our capacities, both mental and physical, everything coming from our bodily constituents *lus zungs*. If our energy is very weak, if it's difficult to get up, we always feel tired, and everything becomes very heavy and dull, honey is very good for giving energy and strength. It is particularly good for cleaning and removing impurities from the lungs.



Then we have *mar*, butter, the pure essence from plants and herbs *rtsi yi dwangs ma mar*; molasses
Everything on this planet is medicine. There is not a single thing that is not medicine if you know how to use it. Purified cow butter is very important in medicine. That is the essence or *chülen* to generally strengthen your body. If you are young it is good for growing, if you are elderly it is good to restore your declining energy while in middle age it is good for keeping your energy level. So butter is good for all ages.
So these five: butter, the essence of plants *rtsi yi dwangs ma mar*; molasses

or the essence of trees, ?????????????????????? *shing gi dwangs ma bu ram*; shilajit, the essence of earth ?????????????????????? *sa yi dwangs ma brag zhun*; calcite, the essence of minerals ?????????????????????? *rdo yi dwangs ma cong zhi* are called the five pure essences. However even though they are very beneficial, they should be taken in moderation. We do not need to measure these substances every day but simply use them in a proper way.

Then there are the four essences. They could be considered the essence of smell, in Tibetan medicine we call it ?????????? *rtsi bzhi* which means that the plant has a smell but also functions through its smell. Smell also has healing properties. There are four plants that have very good smells and that are also medicinal. The first is juniper of which we use just the berries, ??????? *shug pa*. The second is the white flower of the rhododendron ?????? *ba lu*. The next is ephedra ?????? *mtshe*, and the last is artemisia ??????? *mkhan pa*.....

Chülen is wonderful and easy to apply. It is not difficult to make but the ingredients need to be detoxified so it is not something that you can prepare in your kitchen. To get the real function of *chülen* there are many aspects including the materials, and the function of the *chülen*: the practice and the main or mother pills. In addition the *chülen* should be empowered well and when we take it we should try to change our diet and behavior in order to have results. *Chülen* can be taken during a retreat or at home. At the moment we are doing a retreat so it is more beneficial.

Dietary requirements are that you eat light food, not too much meat, or heavy food. If you are young and strong, you can diet for one or two weeks on rice, ghee, and honey. However, if you have difficulty sleeping, or are short tempered, or have a tendency towards trembling, or if you are older, or just recovering from heavy medications, when you take *chülen* you should eat good food. Another important thing is to combine it with practice.

In conclusion, *chülen* is a huge topic. Today's talk is just to give an idea of what *chülen* is. In this Mandarava *chülen* that is Rinpoche's *terma* teaching there are seven different types of *chülen* for seven different conditions. The sixth and seventh are more common so that is the *chülen* that we take. It is one of the best.

Some time next year I will try to give a *chülen* class, a whole day talk. I've been working with *chülen* for the last 15 years and I'm very interested in it.

Thank you.

Dzamling Gar, Tuesday February 25, 2020
Transcribed and edited by L. Granger

