

Home > The Uprising of Ashura and Responses to Doubts > Crying > The Effects of Crying > 4. The effects of crying on man's health

The Effects of Crying

Religious scholars and academics have mentioned a number of beneficial effects derived from crying, some of which we will now mention.

1. Inner purification and refinement

People who shed tears as an instrument of devotion to their Lord benefit from numerous spiritual and intellectual rewards because every tear that is shed for Allah while grieving for His *awliya'* have extraordinary spiritual effects. That is why the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as), in the Prayer *al-Kumayl*, says,

«يا الهي وربّي وسيدي ومولاي، لأيّ الأمور اليك اشكوا ولما منها اضجّ
وأبكي.»

“O my Lord, Master and Protector! For which of my affairs should I complain to you! And for which of them should I lament and weep?”

And elsewhere, he says,

«ولأبكينّ عليك بكاء الفاقدين.»

“And (due to separation from you) I will weep before You with the weeping of the bereft.”

And in the last part of the prayer, he says,

«إرحم من رأس ماله الرجاء، وسلاحه البكاء.»

“Have mercy on one whose only capital is hope and whose weapon is tears.”

2. Tears are a means of self-building

Crying and shedding tears is a strong and cutting weapon that can help us tremendously along the way of self-knowledge and self-building. Again, this is why Imam ‘Ali (as) in the Prayer *al-Kumayl* says,

«إرحم من رأس ماله الرجاء وسلاحه البكاء.»

“Have mercy on one whose only capital is hope and whose weapon is tears.”

In the inner spiritual struggle against our internal enemy (egotism), that is to say the Greater Holy War [*Jihad Akbar*], crying is the weapon used, not the sword. That is to say, in the battlefield of self-building, shedding tears is the tool, not steel blades.

There are some people who attend gatherings where mourning over Imam al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali (as) takes place, but they do not possess that deep perception and discernment which is needed to bring about the flow of tears.

Assuming that they do possess the needed perception and discernment which is needed to cry, if they cannot cry it suggests that they are not blessed with the necessary compassion or softness of heart. Of course, acquiring softness of heart is not easy and is granted by Allah in accordance with our capacity.

From the viewpoint of scholars of ethics, the root cause of most crimes is hardheartedness. When man is afflicted by hardheartedness and lacks compassion, he loses a lot of his natural blessings and talents. The result is that neither will the sufferings of others affect him, nor will his heart beat in love and affection for others.

A heartless man finds no inclination in himself to pray silently and present his needs to Allah. He does not feel in himself the compassionate disposition to give and receive love and affection. Clearly, one of the best ways to prevent and treat the affliction of hardheartedness is shedding tears and crying.

3. Tears are a means of attaining love

Love literally means fond affection and devotion. The renowned traditionalist Muhaddith Qummi says, “Love is an excess of affection.”¹

After gaining knowledge and enlightenment, it is beyond doubt that crying or shedding tears is one of the best tools or means required for man to bond with true love—which is devotion to the Beloved of the Worlds, Allah the Most High.

It is for this reason that no matter how eager a person might be to reach out and find reality and truth, he will never bring about a successful and effective spiritual transformation within himself unless he seeks help from tears.

The tongue expresses wisdom and intellect while the eyes express the love that is felt in the heart and dwells in the soul. Love is always present where tears, arising from feelings of pain and heartache, are shed whereas the mind is the active agent wherever the tongue searches for orderly and logical sentences to express itself.

Therefore, just as logical and compelling discourses can show the unity that exists between the aims of the leaders of a particular school of thought and the speaker, a tear too can declare an emotional war against the enemies of a school of thought.

William Shakespeare, the erudite English writer and poet, says that thoughts, dreams, heartache, hopes, and tears are inseparable from love.

In another place, he says, “Love that is cleansed by tears will forever remain pure, clean and beautiful.”²

Victor Hugo, the famous western writer, says, “Happy and prosperous is he whom God has granted a heart that has the capacity for burning love and compassion.”³

4. The effects of crying on man’s health

Researchers of the empirical and medical sciences believe that tears possess special medical properties, some of which we will now mention:

1. As tears flow, an enzyme is released that disinfects the eyes and all the surrounding parts.
2. According to conducted medical tests, those who cry more suffer less from gastritis and ulcers.
3. Scholars are of the belief that crying has very beneficial and surprising effects in reducing inner pain and spiritual, mental or psychological pressures.
4. Some diseases can be identified through examination of tears because tears that flow from the eyes are a substance that has been filtered or sieved from the body’s blood, and therefore making use of this substance can help us identify different types of disorders. ⁴

1. Safinah al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 197.

2. Chekideh-ye Andisheh-ha (A Summary of Thoughts), p. 250.

3. Ibid.

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