

WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY

- Curset Patel

Many a times one often hears, whilst explaining the "Tarikats" of the Zarthushti Din, or the life procedure, as to how a Zarthoshti should lead his day to day life, - Oh! how is it possible; who will do that in todays time; where is the time; family will not allow it; such things are impossible in todays world etc. but as the heading says, where there is a will..... Not only that but there are people, who at present also, in one of the most advanced countries of the world, are following the way of life worth emulating, especially by the Parsees. They are the AMISH of the world, who even in this Atomic Age are the members of a unique religious sect, who have been able to prosper and flourish, while steadfastly adhering to a way of life handed down by their forefathers several centuries ago.

The life of the Amish seems strange by to-days standard, for they are forbidden the use of cosmetics, jewellery, wall paper and curtains, and there is a ban on electricity, radio, television, telephone, inside plumbing and many other modern devices. They speak a strange language, and are opposed to higher education. (In a place like America where education is compulsory, they had to face prosecution by the Government in the court, for not permitting higher education - but they have won the case.)

The Amish have settled down in Pennsylvania, and Lancaster country is thought of as the capital of the Amish world.

The Amish wear specially prescribed clothing and unusual hair style, the men sport a beard, women cover their heads with a white prayer cap at all times. (Parsees. Please note) (.....every women that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her Dini - Avaz

head;.....For if the woman be not covered, let her head be shorn or shaven, let her be covered".)

The Amish have a simple Christian faith, in which the Scriptures guide their very way of life. Over the centuries they have been able to maintain a close relationship between their everyday activities and their religious beliefs and the Bible is the handbook to everyday living, seven-days a week and twenty-four hours a day. (When will our Parsees think and act according to "Khordeh-Avesta" in the same fashion)

Amish remain separate from the world, for the Scriptures say come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you". Amish must marry a member of the sect only, for Bible says "Be ye not unequally Yoked together with unbelievers.....".

Horse is the most important animal in the life of each Amish person, and a major means of transportation. Boys are trained to take special care of these animals in which they take considerable pride. Children treat the horses as pets and friends, and everybody longs for the day when he will have a horse and buggy of his own, which he can hitch up and proudly drive through the nearby village.

Amish farmers are hard-working and put in a "full-day" of work in the fields. Lancaster Country ranks first in farming in the nation, and has acquired a reputation as "The Garden spot of America", a title earned through perseverance, old-fashioned hard work, and rural way of life as a part of their religious tradition. Their farm land often sells for more than \$ 1,000.00 per acre. The Amish are diversified farmers, producing tobacco, poultry, dairy products, in

addition to grains. The traditional water wheel is a famous Amish farm device which uses the stream as a source of power. Although the Amish leaders frown upon smoking, tobacco is one of the major cash crops upon which many Amish farmers depend. All the members of the family become involved with tobacco crop at some time during the year.

A unique example of cooperation in our present competitive world is the raising of barn. When someone loses a barn by fire, all his friends, neighbours and relatives join together to rebuild the structure. This tradition is an example of applying Christianity to the practical affairs of every-day life, for mutual aid is a characteristic of brother-hood among the Amish.

Amish believe that the upgraded one room school offers superior form of education for its members, they do not attend high-school, for after all the Bible says, "..... the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God."

The Amish focus attention on faith, family and farming, as the three main essentials in life. The home is of primary importance, which is usually a spacious farmhouse, it is not only the centre of family work but is a place for group worship as well. Their home is without electricity and those facilities that are dependent upon electric power, such as the refrigerator, television, radio, telephone, heater and other similar appliances. The kitchen is often the largest room and warmest in the house and is the center of Amish family activity, where Amishman can be found reading the Bible or dozing on the couch, children play games or do school work, and mother sews or bakes a pie. Pies are their favourites, and are of apple, cherry, peach, apricot, raisin, vanilla and the well known shoo fly pie. The families preserve many hundreds of quarts of cherries, peaches, pears and other fruits and vegetables as well as jams and jellies.

Corner Ball is the most popular Amish game, rather than football or basketball. Their other play activities include simple pleasures like skipping rope, running, tug-of-war, roller skating. Men enjoy hunting, fishing and wrestling. Battling one another with riddles is their good pass-time.

Public-sales and auctions is like a social event enjoyed by the young and old, male and female Amish alike.

Some Amish still make regular trips to sell farm products direct to the retail customer, they also sell vegetables, fruits, home-baked pies, cakes, bread, cookies. The Pennsylvania Dutch country has become famous for its markets, as well as its food, and those located in Lancaster, Reading, York draw thousands of people from distant places.

Amish believe they are a "chosen people", hence death is a door way to Salvation for those who have remained true to the faith. An Amish funeral is the essence of simplicity, being without flowers or decorated headstones. The deceased is clothed in a white shroud, (".... and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." Revelation 3:4.5) in a hand-made unlined coffin without handles or other decoration. A funeral feast, served at noon, is prepared by friends and neighbours. The number of people attending an average Amish funeral is astounding, first because it is a custom for friends and neighbours to pay last respect. In recent years one woman passed away leaving 343 direct living descendants including nine children, eighty-four grandchildren, two hundred and forty-seven great-grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren. Amish birth rate is considerably higher than the death rate, and the group has actually been growing in population over the past several centuries.

(Adopted from the book
"Among The Amish" by Mel Horst)