Nota Bene

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1. ਸ਼ਬਦ ਪਹੇਲੀ *a word riddle for school children by* ਹਰਦੇਵ ਚੌਹਾਨ *appears every Sunday in the* **Punjabi Tribune** (we started PT on Sunday, April 21, 2013) *but I have still to get it a* 100 % *right.* Not for lack of trying though! As evidence thereof here are my answers to ਸ਼ਬਦ ਪਹੇਲੀ–**42** of Sunday, October 27, 2013. Today it is Sunday, November 3, 2013, but the solution of no. 42 shall appear in PT only next Sunday. I'll let you know how I fared then. Meanwhile, note that there are some departures from the British crossword grid in this Punjabi puzzle : the size is even, 8 by 8, and it has no central symmetry; besides its words are not inter-connected, in no. 42 they split into as many as five components. But those rules are not written in stone – by the way the *mots croisés* that I met during my *IHES* days also had funny grids – and I think Hardev Chauhan is making a very commendable effort week after week. Congratulations are due also to the many school children who do solve his puzzle every week, with five even winning Rs. 100 each, which this daily so very sportingly gives away as prizes. Being no longer a school kid, I am not eligible for this booty, but nevertheless, *you can all rest assured that – like King Bruce! – I shall keep on trying to solve this puzzle ...*

2. *The* **New York Times** *crossword comes with the name of its long-time editor displayed much more prominently than the composer of that day's puzzle!* If at all we need to be reminded of this worthy every day, should it not be the other way around, with the composer's name more prominent? I've much more experience of NYT's puzzle, so I'm much better at it than at PT's puzzle. Here, for example, are the **2^4 solutions (!)** of the last NYT puzzle I did, on Thursday, September 5, 2013. I finished this puzzle just in the nick of time on U.S. soil itself : moments afterwards our aircaft was taking off from SFO towards Hong Kong! Of course it is an unwritten rule that a crossword should have one and only one solution, but on Thursdays the NYT puzzle takes some unspecified liberty with the sacred cows. Which makes these puzzles more interesting : you also need to figure out the liberty! I note also that in the U.S. crossword grid, as against the British grid, there may be four white squares with a common corner, which means that *the first Betti number of the crossword* should now perhaps be computed somewhat differently ...
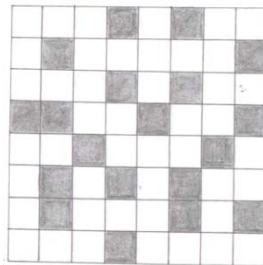
3. *The* **Hindu** *on the other hand lets the composer take all the glory!* For the cryptic in its issue of September 5, 2013, which I picked up in Hong Kong airport, but which I finished only after we were outside the inappropriately named airport in New Delhi, it is a gentleman who uses the pen-name **Sankalak**. You'll note that his grid is British, as were all those in *Fly, getting sad ...* (2008) and *Plagiarism?* (2011), but then we were looking at daily crosswords in the northern reaches of this sub-continent : in these parts it is okay to run crosswords without attribution, and apparently without any editor either, because they often appear with wrong grids, wrong solutions, etc.

---: four months later :---

4. Life is what happens while we are making plans ... the plan was to show how *crossword grids are intimately related*—no kidding!—*to Alexander duality, Poincaré's method of triangulating smooth manifolds, and Fermat's last theorem* ... but this has languished ... while **Mirror Relativity Continued** leap-frogged over all this to my website seven days ago ... and today—March 13, 2014—my mind is still aswim with memories that were stirred when I wrote its last paragraph ... in particular how, *the mitochondrial DNA of this orb's human population suggests that all women alive today are the iterated daughters of one and the same woman who lived in Africa 150,000 years ago!* I was so fascinated by Bryan Sykes' popular book on all this that I had made, long ago, a long **summary** of the same, and since it may be helpful to others, I'll soon scan and post this too. (If the direct links in this paper act up, click **List,** from where you can go to, and download if need be, each and every item posted on my site.) However, *the mitochondrial* **African Eve** *seems to be just one manifestation of a general law which many things that propagate follow!* If my memory serves me right some time during the 1800's an aristocratic Briton—the exact title of this duke or lord I forget—had observed that, *all noble titles seem to wither away into extinction after just a very few generations.* Before you jump to the conclusion

that that abnormally **blue blood** of theirs is to blame, let me hasten to add that `noble' is a **red herring**.  All patriarchal surnames—likewise many other unique predecessor relations—are ephemeral too : only, since such surname-bearers are more, the said withering takes more time.  Even `patriarchal' is a red herring : *the eventual withering away of numerous branches from the human matriarchal tree is the reason why, if we go back enough generations, all women alive on this planet today have a common iterated mother.* It seems likely that there exist animate—possibly even inanimate—microscopic things too, whose propagation obeys the same law, but is so quick that their genealogical tree's changes are observable **in vitro** in real time? These time-dependent trees have all a similar appearance : *an arc with a brush-head of fuzz in the front* (from that African Eve to all of today's women) *which fuzz, after some time, will itself be replaced by an arc, but now in **its** forefront there has grown a new brush-head of fuzz ...* So 150,000 years from now in the very distant future, if there are still some women extant, their *first* common iterated mother may not be someone in Africa : she might, for all we know, be someone who lived in the Punjab!

5. *This* **glossary** *of Shabd Paheli words, together with their definitions as provided by Hardev Chauhan's clues, will hopefully help me get this Punjabi puzzle 100% right one of these days!*   But I've come within a whisker many times, for example, for the puzzle whose answers appeared today—March 15, 2014—and once again, for the next puzzle, whose answers will be printed only 14 days from now, *I think* I have all the answers … However, here we need to focus on crossword **grids**, so I'll show you just the grid of the Paheli on which all my hopes are pinned now :-

(to be continued)