>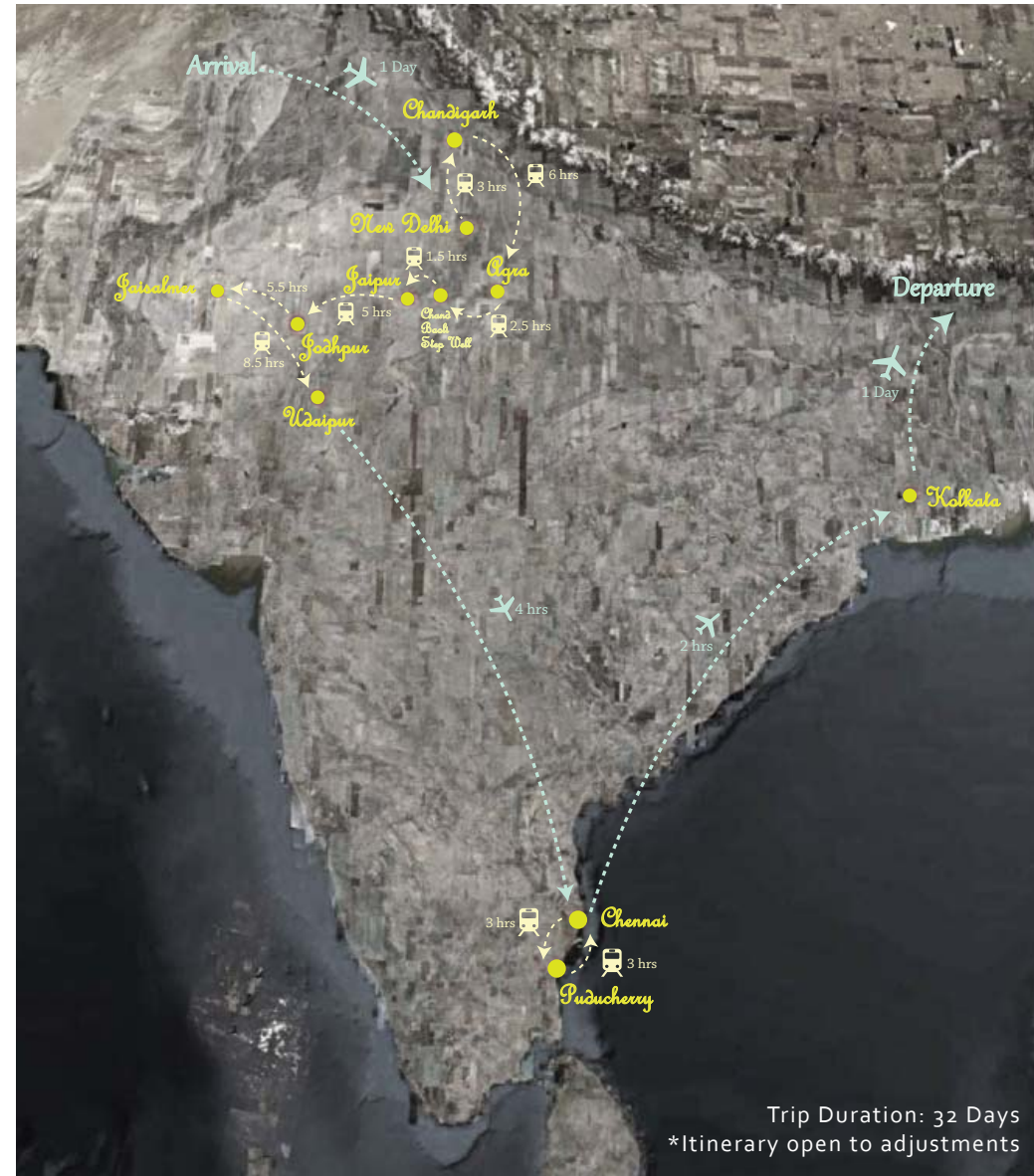 **"…culture is the outcome of an effort of selection. Selection means discarding, pruning, cleansing, and making the Essential stand out anew stripped and clear."**
>
> — Le Corbusier, in *Vers une Architecture*

Shortly after India gained its independence in the summer of 1947, the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called for a new vision of a modern India, one that would be "… unfettered by the traditions of the past, and a symbol of the nation's faith in the future." The sudden transformation of a diverse fabric of ethnicities into a nation state brought about severe political tensions, and the ensuing solution was to avoid the expression of any endemic identity altogether. India launched plans to build new cities that monumentally embodied 'modern' concerns of a new 'pruned', 'essential' culture. Ironically, post-colonial India would look toward the west for measures of progress. Le Corbusier would look east for a tabula rasa opportunity to construct his modernist vision.

That a new country would avoid its own expressive history nevertheless lends compelling insights into the ideological workings of Modernist claims. In Le Corbusier's Vers une Architecture, it is evident that he is interested in Darwinism and mechanical science. Both concepts are realistically incomparable on intellectual and scientific grounds, but deviously effective when conflated. When mechanical purity is presented as a constituent of Natural Selection—of Evolution— the resulting misrepresentation nevertheless frames modernism as an incontrovertible direction of natural progress. As mechanical essentialism acts for both architectural pragmatism and meaning, architecture encapsulates nothing other than its own reproducibility as a technical form, driven more by market than by man. The architectural outcome of this world is one that Michael Graves would no longer see as being "…sensitive to the figurative, associative, and anthropomorphic attitudes of a culture."

In our increasingly ubiquitous world of gleaming towers clean in form but cleansed of details, looking to century old traditions might be a means toward re-establishing human attachment to our everyday surroundings. Notions about color, ornament, and surface as they relate to space have become dogmatically accepted over time as unnecessary distractions, as signs of 'primitive' habits, or as functionally unnecessary. As a former student in printmaking and sculpture, I am intrigued by these dogmas as they can tacitly dictate creative impulses at large. Consequently, I want to investigate a spatial language that sees visual intensity as a necessary means for understanding architecture as a powerful proponent for anthropocentric values. My research would take me through India's diverse architectural landscape, where through drawing as a means of documentation and creation I would study the plethora of poetic architectural languages (spatial color theory, ornamentation, cultural symbolism, building typologies) and their social relevance to traditions of craft, historical expression, and political distortion. Research would include the figurative languages of the Mughal and Hindu empires, colonial assertions of identity, and analyses on how modern cities like Chandigarh have since been reinterpreted or adapted by their inhabitants. The efforts of my trip would culminate in a book of drawings and text that attempts to chart a path to a more balanced architecture—one which does not forsake cultural expression for a shallow conception of political order. Formal purity, as conceived by a mechanically and technologically obsessed age, cannot lead the way to a more refined culture when it circumvents the issue of culture altogether. To be relevant to the humanist project, architecture must genuinely engage with a palimpsest of identities, values, and thoughts.

Arrival
1 Day
Chandigarh
6 hrs
3 hrs
New Delhi
1.5 hrs
Jaipur   Agra
5 hrs   Chand
Jaisalmer   Baori   2.5 hrs
5.5 hrs   Step Well
8.5 hrs   Jodhpur
Udaipur   Departure
Kolkata
1 Day
4 hrs
2 hrs
Chennai
3 hrs   3 hrs
Puducherry

Trip Duration: 32 Days
*Itinerary open to adjustments

Reading List

Pattern and Ornament in the Arts of India, Henry Wilson

Dialectic of Enlightenment, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno

Chandigarh's Le Corbusier: The Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India, Vikramaditya Prakash

Vers une Architecture, Le Corbusier

Abstraction and Empathy, Wilhelm Worringer

A Case for Figurative Architecture, Michael Graves

The Life of Forms in Art, Henri Focillon

Architecture in India Since 1990, Rahul Mehrotra

A Concise History of Modern Architecture in India, Jon Lang

Architecture and Independence: The Search for Identity —India 1880 to 1990
Jon Lang, Madhavi Desai, Miki Desai

US > New Delhi, India	*20hrs*	*Flight*

A Multiplicity of Identities

New Delhi — 4 Days
Capital of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

Jantar Mantar
The Red Fort
Qutb Minar
Akshardham
Humayun's Tomb
Rashtrapati Bhavan
Lotus Temple

New Delhi > Chandigarh	*3 hrs*	*Train*

Chandigarh — 2 Days
Le Corbusier's India, Past and Present

Palace of Assembly
The High Court
Tower of Shadows

Chandigarh > Agra	*6 hrs*	*Train*

Agra — 4 Days
Mughal Decadence

Red Fort
Taj Mahal
Sikandra
Fatehpur Sikri
Kahjuraho

Agra > Bandikui Junction	*2.5hrs*	*Train*

Brief Trip: Chand Baori Step Well

Bandikui Junction > Jaipur	*1.5 hrs*	*Train*

Colors of Rajasthan

Jaipur Pink City — 4 Days
Pink City

Amber Fort
Jal Mahal
City Palace
Hawa Mahal
Jantar Mantar

Jaipur > Jodhpur	*5 hrs*	*Train*

Jodhpur — 2 Days
Blue City

Mehrangarh Fort
Jaswant Thada

Jodhpur > Jaisalmer	*5.5 hrs*	*Train*

Jaisalmer — 2 Days
The Golden City

Jaisalmer Fort
Patwon ki haveli
Nathmaljiki haveli
Gadi Sagar Lake

Jaisalmer > Jodhpur	*5.5hrs*	*Train*
Jodhpur > Udaipur	*3hrs*	*Train*

Udaipur — 3 Days
White City

City Palace
Lake Palace
Ranakpur (tentative)

Udaipur > Chennai	*4 hrs*	*Flight*

Southern India: Tamil Nadu

Chennai — 4 Days
Hindu and Portugeuse Influences

Kapaleeshwarar Temple –temple for Shiva
Vadapalani Andavar Temple
brihadeeswarar temple
Annamalaiyar Temple
Ekambareswarar Temple
Shore Temple
San Thome Basilica

Chennai > Puducherry	*3hr*	*Train*

Pondicherry — 2 Days
Utopic City

Auroville

Puducherry > Chennai	*3hr*	*Train*
Chennai > Kolkata	*2hr*	*Flight*

Cultural Capital
Victorian Assertion of Identity

Kolkata — 3 Days

Belur Math Shrine
Victoria Memorial Hall
Birla Temple
St. Paul's Cathedral

Kolkata, India > US	*20hrs*	*Flight*