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 a functional 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 attributes 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... to the humanist project, architecture must genuinely engage with a palimpsest of identities, values, and thoughts.

“...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

Reading List

Pattern and Ornament in the Arts of India, Henry Wilson
Dialectic of Enlightenment, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno
A Concise History of Modern Architecture in India, Jon Lang

| Trip Duration: 32 Days | Itinerary open to adjustments |

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
Humayun’s Tomb
Rashtrapati Bhavan
Lotus Temple
New Delhi > Chandigarh  3 hrs  Train

Chandigarh  4 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 > Ranakpur Junction  2.5 hrs  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
Nathmalji haveli
Gadi Sagar Lake
Jaisalmer > Jodhpur  5.5 hrs  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 Portuguese Influences
Kapaleeshwar Temple—temple for Shiva
Vadapalani Andavar Temple
Brihadiswarar Temple
Ekambareswarar Temple
Shore Temple
San Thome Basilica
Chennai > Pondicherry  3 hrs  Train

Pondicherry  2 Days  Utopic City
Pondicherry > Chennai  3 hrs  Train

Cultural Capital
Kolkata  3 Days  Victorian Assertion of Identity
Belur Math Shrine
Victoria Memorial Hall
Birla Temple
St. Paul’s Cathedral
Kolkata, India > US  20hrs  Flight

Trip Duration: 32 Days  Itinerary open to adjustments

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