Danger, perhaps is the necessary concomitant of safety. (And danger has its own rewards: crossing the jungle at night may be a fearsome experience, but it gets you to keep your eyes open, your ears flapping, your senses alert. Corb, cunning as he is, has probably observed this.)

The use of contrast, then, to heighten meaning, is an essential technique of Corb's, and it results in an architecture of great flexibility, making many simultaneous statements, thus covering a wide spectrum of human emotions. Mies—who may himself be brought in at this point to provide contrast—is an architect who plays a very limited range of the spectrum; and if he may, for the purpose of analogy, be described as an artist who can take a potato and boil it perfectly, then Corb is certainly the man for a really first-class curry. A Miesian plan brings the simplest elements together in an atmosphere of Olympian calm; it is a space at rest, devoid of any too particular orientation (unfortunately, through vulgarization, this has popularized an effete symmetry that has swept America like diarrhoea). But Corb's elements are seldom simple and crystal-clear; they are usually ambiguous with a myriad overtones; and his buildings, like those of Wright, are never non-directional; they always emphasize their sense of orientation and therefore their sense of life. (The exception perhaps is the museum at Ahmedabad which is his blandest, and weakest, building.)

The Chandigarh Assembly has, in a very large measure, this sense of life. It is an exuberant building, and its impact—its decibel level—is perfectly gauged in scale to its size. In fact, throughout the building, the sense of spatial control is so masterful that it is perplexing that at the climax of the composition, the Assembly chamber itself, Corb falters.

One enters this chamber and one is at the bottom of a gigantic well. The walls swerve upward to a height of over 100 ft. In an attempt to kill this height Corb has painted the walls in three horizontal bands—red, yellow and white. In an attempt to increase the amount of light reaching the floor (the natural light in the chamber is painfully inadequate), he has used yellow wool carpets, and further, to break up the monumental space, he has installed green and brown seats alternately in a sort of checker-board pattern. But to what avail? Even what Mumford has called the 'overingenious' mind of Corb cannot gainsay these facts: the Assembly chamber is an unhappy place to step into, and it is a near impossible Parliament to deliberate in.

What is the reason for this seeming failure? The fluid shape of the hyperboloid is hardly to blame. On the contrary it is a surprisingly sensible choice and perhaps the only static space which could climax the dynamic images of the forum areas. Instead, a likely reason for the unhappy state of affairs is the light; Corb has inserted only three openings in the circular roof, and they are supposed to let in direct sunlight only on particular days—i.e., the equinox, the solstice, etc. While this surely will make a charming story for a guidebook a hundred years hence, it makes impossible conditions for those using the chamber right here and now. One thinks of Steen Eiler Rasmussen saying that Corb's buildings are sometimes like games children play with chairs and boxes. The children set these up in a certain way, then they cry: Look at the motor car! If you say: How can it be a motor car? Does it move? They do not understand. To them it is a motor car.

This analogy becomes even more pertinent if we consider Corb's buildings and their relevance to the Indian climate. In spite of the double roofs and brise-soleil and umbrellas, Corb's buildings in India are particularly ill-ventilated (the exception is the Sarabhai house in Ahmedabad). Yet an architect of Corb's inventiveness could have made considerable progress in developing a modern vocabulary that could deal with India's climate (as was done by the great architects of the past), if only he had wanted to actually solve the problem of climate rather than play at solving it.

So Corb has his failures; yet somehow, in so glorious an architecture, they do not seem to matter. Like any major artist, his idiosyncrasies and his mistakes are part of his character. Thus one derives as much pleasure from the minor houses of Wright, the lesser plays of Shakespeare and the earlier quartets of Beethoven as one does from any of their masterworks. It is a curious point, worth a text of its own, that in art at this level a certain amount of ambiguity and error makes for reality—reality being the antithesis of slickness. The great buildings (and cities) of the past were a collection of a good many decisions—some right and some wrong; this is what makes them so human. And in India there is a saying: 'An architect should complete only 60 per cent of his building and leave 40 per cent to God.'

The museums of architecture ride the centuries on a pendulum. In the West the pendulum swung all the way to functionalism and now it is swinging back. This puts it exactly 100 per cent out of phase with the state of events in India. Here the majority of older architects practise an architecture that seems a cross between the Beaux-Arts and Ajanta. Yet Corb, who should have come along loaded with twentieth-century-type logic (like the domes of Buckminster Fuller), can actually be used to vindicate them all the way down the line. The younger architects are not much better. Many of them imitate Corb as though his visual language was an entity in itself, like General Motors styling. These architects are perhaps more dangerous, for they exploit Corb's photogenic mannerisms without even beginning to understand either his sense of space or his control of light.

The result of all this is that the public is antagonistic to Corb. They dislike his lack of climate control. They dislike his concrete. But more than anything else, they dislike his aesthetics. Recently a New Delhi housewife said to me: 'Those buildings in Chandigarh! They are huge, clumsy, awful athletes.' And an American photographer cried angrily of the Assembly: 'It's just a very fancy jungle gym.' (Of course these are both, unwittingly, compliments.) More important, perhaps, is the fact that the Governor's Palace will never be built—the Governor having rejected the design. He says he would rather stay on in his Jeanneret-designed bungalow.

Yet, in spite of these antagonisms and misunderstandings, there is no doubt that Corb's work has been of considerable benefit to India. It has stimulated a whole generation of architects. And it has given them a sense of their past, because in some inexplicable way Corb is tuned to this country. It is alleged that Edward Stone's embassy in Delhi is 'Indian'—if it is, then it is the fake India of the Taj Mahal and Hollywood. Corb has evoked a much deeper image. His is a more real India, an India of the bazaars, sprawling, cruel, raucous in colour, with a grandeur all its own. His aesthetic evokes our history, and Chandigarh finds echoes in Fatehpur Sikri, in Jaipur, in Mandu. Surely this is why a building of Corb's sits so well on Indian soil, whereas at Harvard it seems an affectation.

Perhaps Chandigarh is the last great work of Corb. In some of his other projects since, as for instance that at Harvard, one cannot avoid feeling that he is straining his visual language without extending it. Yet again at other times, as in the Unité at Berlin, he seems merely to have produced a work of 'applied Corb.' Is the great period, the golden age, over? There will, for sure, be those who do not agree, those eyes that will not see. In Boston, in Berlin, in Tokyo, they will continue to search the sky, stubbornly seeking the tension-wire and the lonely figure of the balancing acrobat. Where has he gone? Perhaps he is old; perhaps his act is over; perhaps he is on earth again, among us.