

**A Report on a Special Lecture on the India Hill Station-Shimla - delivered by
Dr. Siddharth Pandey on February 26, 2019.**

On February 26, 2018, Picwic, the Photography and Film Society of Aryabhata College, organized a special lecture by Dr. Siddharth Pandey, a landscape photographer and an academic on the topic 'On Knowing a Place: The Verbal, the Visual, and the Experiential in the Understanding of Indian Hill Stations'. Dr. Pandey's expertise lies in English Literature and Materiality Studies, in which he recently earned his PhD as a Cambridge International Scholar from the University of Cambridge, UK. His lecture for Picwic convened by Mr. Binoy Bhushan Agarwal however drew on his eclectic understanding of photography in both practical and philosophical terms, shedding light on the ways in which photography can help us understand our individual and collective identity in relation to natural and built landscapes. By specifically focusing on the hill station of Shimla – Dr. Pandey's homeland – the talk drew numerous connections between the photographic image and architecture, culture, cinema, and literature. Dr. Pandey spoke to an audience of around 60 students and staff members from various disciplines, who enthusiastically engaged with the topic that was close to many of them, hill stations being popular touristic destinations. The talk meandered through around 50 critically acclaimed photographs of Dr. Pandey that have been exhibited in leading museums and galleries such as the Gaiety Theatre (Shimla) and the Oriental Museum (Durham, UK), each of which had a story to tell. Apart from giving a flavour of distinctive cultures of hill stations, the presentation also made the audience aware of the importance of self-reflexivity while engaging with landscape art, ending on the need to think about artistic practices as both individual and socially committed forms of human engagement. The deliberate conversational, non-academic style achieved the objective of interdisciplinary participation, as evinced by the numerous interesting questions and comments put forward by the staff and students afterwards. Overall, the presentation was a hugely successful affair, helping initiate new ways of thinking and appreciating the world we inhabit.

Binoy Bhushan Agarwal
(Convenor of Special Lecture Series & Picwic)