

## IIT Bhubaneswar students retrace Emperor Kharavela's footsteps at cave trails

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**Surjit Kumar Dhal, Bhubaneswar, August 17:** When the Sun rose today and its soft rays kissed the green foliage atop Udayagiri hills, a group of 100 IIT Bhubaneswar students joined the Monks, Caves and Kings heritage trail to know the story of Emperor Kharavela at the Cave Trails at the Twin Hills of Khandagiri and Udaygiri hills, famous for the Jain heritage.

These engineering students who have come from all over the country were in awe of the beauty of Rani Gumpha from where the Emperor and his queen used to enjoy cultural performances two millennia ago. They were all ears to learn the story of the mighty ruler whose presence has always loomed large on the history of Odisha and yet we don't exactly know what he looked like.

One of the aspects that drew the attention of the students was the depiction of a woman in a warrior posture in one of the engraved panels in Rani Gumpha. They loved the idea of this lady all armed and ready to strike because it shows that women were ready to stand up if need be

even back then. One of the students said that this is something we should be proud of and be inspired by.

The walk progressed through the various caves to the top of the Udaygiri hill where they got to enjoy the beautiful cityscape of Bhubaneswar on one side and the Chandaka Sanctuary and its lush green cover on another side. Another point of much discussion was the 17 line inscription at the Hati Gumpha which talks about the glories and achievements of the legendary Emperor.

While the IIT Bhubaneswar students were part of a special group today at Khandagiri and Udayagiri, other students from various colleges of the city participate in the 79<sup>th</sup> Monks, Caves and Kings under Ekamra Walks from time to time as a cultural exposure and for drawing inspiration from our collective historical and cultural legacies.

The Cave Trails at the famous Jain Heritage sites of Khandagiri and Udaygiri happens on Saturday mornings and the Temple Walk at Old Town area on Sunday morning. Both the days the walk starts at 6:30 am. Sunday's afternoon walk at the Odisha Crafts Museum – Kala Bhoomi near Gandamunda starts at 3:30 pm on Sunday. Join the experience for a walk to remember and enrich your knowledge on ancient Odisha.