

Report on the Music Class being conducted at Hile, Nigale:

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In music class at Hile Nigale, we are teaching multiple instruments — guitar, keyboard, bamboo flute, and mādal (a traditional Nepali folk percussion) — to the students. The instruments were assigned according to their interest.

Music class is being conducted twice every day. The first class starts at 8 am and lasts till 9:30 am and is attended by junior kids. Students, after the class, are provided with lunch and after lunch they head towards their school. The second class starts at 4 pm. The junior kids after finishing their school attend music class till 5 pm. Then after 5 pm senior boys from around the village attend the class which lasts till 6:30 pm. Both classes are concluded with jam sessions which help them hone their playing skills as well as provide them the firsthand experience of working as an ensemble group. Also, jamming together helps to enhance the bonding among the students.

The lessons that the students are receiving at the moment are as follow:

Guitar and Keyboard:

- Introduction to basic chords (major, minor, and dominant seventh chords)
- Basic finger movement exercises
- Simple melodies of some renown Nepali songs to enhance their finger movements and as an inspiration
- Song accompaniment

Mādal:

- Introduction to the basic jargons of mādal playing
- Popular rhythms that are used dominantly in Nepali folk songs

Bamboo Flute:

- Blowing Techniques
- Introduction to notes on the Bamboo flute
- Rudiments to enhance the finger movement

Aim

Through our music class, we aim to achieve two major goals. The first one is to instill inspiration among the students — i.e. to let our students be able to imagine the possibility of pursuing a career in music. And the second one is to make the music class at Hile, Nigale self-sustainable — i.e. to prepare at least one of the locals as an able music teacher who could at least teach basic music education at Hile, Nigale; thus freeing them from the necessity of importing teachers from outside the village.

Challenges

Music learning is a gradual process. Knowing theory alone is not sufficient. Playing techniques have to be embedded in the body — students are required to build muscle memory — which demands sustained regular practice. Various factors such as not possessing personal instruments, the limited number of instruments in the class, obligations such as necessity to help the family and relatives as well as the neighbors in the agricultural works, obligations to assist and participate in the village ceremonies (which are, much to my surprise, intermittent but frequent), weather conditions such as snowfall at times obviate the students from regularly attending the class and also restrict them from regularly practicing at home.

Progress

Because of the differential aptitude of the students, the difficulty level of the instrument, and the above-mentioned obstacles, there has been inconsistency in the level of progress made by the students. Nonetheless, there are some students who have shown great aptitude and are making considerable progress. They are taking music seriously and are borrowing musical instruments to practice at home. They are also receiving lessons on advanced music theories such as construction of scales, construction of various chords, musical notations and their uses.

Also, a band involving the students has been formed and practices daily playing cover songs. The band is improving day by day as the students are gradually becoming comfortable working together in a band.

Further, I have also been grooming Mr Dendi Sherpa, one of the brightest and the most enthusiastic local students, to become a local music teacher so that he could continue music classes and musical programs at Hile, Nigale once I leave. For that, he is also receiving some personal one-on-one classes with me on advanced theories which he could impart to others in future. He is also helping me teach the students. I am optimistic that he will be able to continue the music class and provide at least the foundational education on music effectively.