



Isai Ragam activity report 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 till May

Update: May 2024



*Children from Mahaveerpuram on melodica and guitar*

# ISAI RAGAM MISSION / VISION AND BACKGROUND

\*For activity report scroll down to page 3.

## Mission and Vision

*We envision that village children in and around Auroville have access to various forms of Art and the opportunity to develop conversational English and computer skills.*

## Isai Ragam welcomes you!

Welcome to Isai Ragam, which we hope will give you an idea about Isai Ragam's activities.

First of all, we would like to introduce ourselves. The Tamil name 'Isai Ragam' means 'Melody of Music', and our organisation is geared towards educational development in the villages in Auroville's bioregion. Long-term Aurovilians Ivar Jenten and Brigitte Vink, both originally from The Netherlands, have been working with village children for decennia and founded Isai Ragam under Auroville's Auromitra Trust in June 2021. The specific beneficiaries are very poor children from villages and Dalit settlements around Auroville.

## Aims & objectives of project:

- General skill development for under-privileged children in the villages around Auroville
- Providing a basic foundation for future employment opportunities
- Preparing young minds towards future schooling and higher studies
- Introducing village children to certain arts which they normally may not get to know

## In general:

*To contribute towards strengthening relationships with the local people in Auroville's bioregion.*

## Problem statement

In the villages around Auroville, due to extensive alcohol abuse by the male population - triggered by financial, family, marriage, religion or other social problems- many families still live on subsistence level. Ill-fated circumstances may cause trauma, disharmony and broken-up households. Because of this, children may early in life lose a parent, are traumatized, and don't get the attention they need.

***To have a safe place where they can freely go to do their homework and/or other educative activities in an entirely different and open atmosphere gives them a better opportunity to wholesomely grow and prepare for their future life. By being in close contact with the children we hope to lighten a little the cumbersome burdens of their young lives.***

## **Executives**

**Project holders / executives of the project are long-term residents of Auroville Ivar Jenten (11-7-1947) and Brigitte Vink (28-12-1979).**

## **History**

As far back as 1975, young Dutch Ivar Jenten went to India to take part in the 'Auroville' project, a universal city-in-the-make where occidental and oriental thought & way of living could be combined together. Auroville is located in Tamil Nadu, southern India, a few kilometres inland from the Coromandel Coast and some 10 km north of Pondicherry Town. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity in diversity.

***Ivar came to Auroville because of Sri Aurobindo - Ivar stayed because of the Tamils and Sri Aurobindo. 'While nobody is perfect', he says, "Tamil people have by nature something in their psyche that I have hardly been able to glimpse in myself..., so what I cannot glean from reading and meditation, I hope to learn by being and living with them."***

As socially engaged person, Ivar soon became aware of the severe difficulties of the socially marginalised Dalit communities surrounding Auroville and began to reach out to them. With simple methods and means, he started various evening schools in the colonies and, in 1979, founded the first day school, 'Isai Ambalam', for the local kids. The school functions till this day and is since 1987 officially taken up in Auroville's educational curriculum.

By working in the evening schools, Ivar was directly confronted with unemployment, the abuse of alcohol, overcrowded families, suppression of women, altogether not an easy way of living. He quietly and persistently started setting up several empowerment projects for women, enabling them to get their own salaries. From 1977 up till 1982, with the help of other Aurovilians and organisations, he developed 12 night schools for the children in the villages and colonies around Auroville, many of which in one way or the other are still functioning. Needless to say, quite a number of the youngsters benefitting from them are currently confident residents of Auroville.

Due to family circumstances in The Netherlands, Ivar had to leave Auroville in 1990. However, he never forgot his projects which continued functioning by trusted friends. One of them was Ms Brigitte Vink, a young and energetic Dutch woman, with the help of whom he founded after his return in 2003 the Isai Ma(i)yam Trust in Pondicherry, 10 kms south of Auroville (NGO organisation). Isai Ma(i)yam means 'centre of music' and it includes a well running school for

differently-abled children, an art school, a boys & girls home (home till 2020) as well as various village projects.

**All this lead up to Ivar and Brigitte founding the Isai Ragam unit under Auroville's Auromitra Trust in July 2021. Apart from private funds, the now elderly Ivar dedicates nearly his full monthly Dutch pension to the project and there's an urgent need to make it financially more stable.**

## **ISAI RAGAM ACTIVITY REPORT 2021-2024**

### **PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES**

*Sri Aurobindo emphasized that education should be in accordance with the needs of modern life. In other words, education should create dynamic citizens so that they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. He also mentioned that physical development is one of the chief aims of education.*

### **Activities Isai Ragam**

- Computer classes (typing and word, power point, excel, photoshop etc.)
- English conversation classes
- Bharata Natyam (classical) and folk dance classes (girls)
- Street dance classes (boys)
- Music classes (guitar, violin and keyboard/piano)
- Supporting some higher studies for youth (mainly young women)
- Support school homework classes to village children
- Others: like in holiday summer we organize an educational tour, we give new dresses with Pongal and Devali, we give teacher training for English lessons, we give snacks and sometimes meals.



*Festival program in Artsjarampet 2022*



*January 2022*

### **Some facts & observations**

- We have 120 children totally. Their ages range from 6 to 18 years old.
- We work at 8 locations of which 6 are in the colonies and 1 in the village.
- Classes are from Monday till Friday from 6 – 8pm and in the weekends, Saturday and Sunday, during the entire day.
- The aim of the project is that children can improve their skills for English, computer and mathematics, while also learning music and dance which is good for the development of the brain.
- Participation in music and dance programs will give them confidence and self-esteem.
- Science tells us that if children have a good skill of memorizing things and do that in combination with their physical body (like through music and dance), they can memorize much faster and keep the memory much longer.
- The idea behind the computer course is to provide them with practical skills which can be useful for their future schooling and studies.
- In regular secondary schools in Tamil Nadu, English conversation classes are missing (reading and writing are taught without practicing the language). We hope to contribute something which is useful for their higher studies and communicating in general.
- Ivar and Brigitte are not taking any maintenance or salary from Isai Ragam. As Aurovilians, they are voluntary workers who voluntarily organize and manage the project, while also teaching the children English and music, together with (paid) local teachers.
- During the corona lockdowns there were more classes as regular schools were closed.
- Most of our teachers have an bachelor degree completed and 1 has an master degree in mathematics.

## Locations

Before officially starting off with Isai Ragam in July 2021, we went through a process of determining the locations and activities. The locations chosen belong to the local people whom we know already for a long time from earlier activities. At times we had to do some improvements of the buildings for which one part would be paid by Ivar and the other part by the owners of the houses concerned. We also adjusted some of the rooms to make it suitable for the children to study. At most of the locations we attached a big room so that the children are able to do dance activities. In 2021 we started with 5 locations and slowly came to 8 locations in 2023. Now in 2024 we have 7 locations as Artsjarampet location we have stopped temporary as the main teacher got an accident.



*Punitha (music teacher) and Brigitte (music teacher and executive) playing music with the kids.*

*Music class in Artsjarampet*



*Kottakarai*



*Ivar Jenten (music teacher and executive of Isai Ragam) with the kids from Mahaveerapuram*



*Music class in Kottakarai*



*Merlin from Mahaveerpuram performances in Auroville 2022*



*Boys dance class in Moratandi*

Currently (may 2024) we use 7 locations in the colonies/villages close to Auroville:

- Kottakarai colony (2 locations started from 2021 and 2022)
- Kottakarai shoemaker colony ( 1 location opened in March 2024)
- Kottakarai village (1 location started in 2021)
- Mahavirapuram colony (1 location started in 2021)
- Artjarampet colony (1 location from 2021 till 2023)
- Moratandi ( started in 2023 , 1 location)
- Pudhupakkam colony (started in 2021 , 1 location)

***In each place all kids are welcome!***



*Jack from USA Auroville international came to visit us in august 2022.*



## **Future ideas**

-Next to our current set-up we would hope to create some sport and playground facilities around the locations we have at present so that children can play outside. A badminton area would be a great bonus, also for other village children who could join and sport there.

At the moment we have by 2 locations an playground with the help of donations from friends and Auroville Nederland. We would like to have by more of our locations an playground for the kids from that particularly village.

-We would like to buy more second-hand laptops so as to enable computer classes in all locations.

At the moment we have at 1 locations computer classes but we would like to enable this for more locations.

-In order to teach music to larger groups of children we would need more musical instruments, like guitars, bongo's, drum and melodicas (a melodica is a handheld free-reed instrument similar to a pump organ or harmonica).

At the moment we are teaching at 3 locations Bharata Natyam dance and folk dance (girls) and at 1 location street dance (boys). At 3 locations we are teaching music: violin, keyboard and melodica and guitar.

-For homework classes we need small wooden tables. Children can sit on ground with the table. At the moment we have at some locations these small wooden tables but not in all locations.

-Our children are dancing now for quite some time (2 years) and we would like to start with professional dance dresses for performances. At the moment we don't have at any location dance dresses for performances. We are renting dresses if we have performances.

-Children love to bicycle in their village. That's why we would hope to provide cycles which the children can use. The cycles remain property of Isai Ragam and can be used by different kids. Some kids will walk daily 12 km to and come back from school (6 km to school and 6 km back from school). For them will be a cycle necessary.

At the moment we have provided for some kids cycles.

## **Training**

-We give training for the teachers in English language and how to teach the children.

-We give training for adults how to play the drumpad for teaching the kids.

-In summer holidays we give handicraft training.

-Jeroline 15 years old playing western classical songs. Jeroline goes 2 times a week for piano class in Trinity collage and will finish next year her 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

-Some teachers from Isai Ragam going for keyboard class by Trinity collage.



*In October 2022 Matthew from Auroville international USA visited us in Kottakarai.*

### **Computerclasses**

Computer classes for kids can help children develop important cognitive skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making. These skills are essential for success in academic and professional settings. The idea behind the computer course is to provide them with practical skills which can be useful for their future schooling and studies.

We giving computer classes for 3 years now in 1 location in Kottakarai village.



*Computerclass in Kottakarai by Gurumurthy*

### **Bharata Natyam dance classes**

Bharatanatyam is a dance of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It traces its origins back to the Natyashastra, an ancient treatise on theatre written by the mythic priest Bharata. Originally a temple dance for women, Bharatanatyam often is used to express Hindu religious stories and devotions. Bharatanatyam is not just a form of art, but also has several physical and mental health benefits. It helps improve posture, flexibility, balance, coordination, and stamina. It also promotes mental discipline, concentration, and focus, and can be a great stress buster.

We are teaching in 3 locations dance (2024).. In At present (2024) 2 locations Bharatanatyam dance (and folk dance): In Kottakarai colony (sinds 2021) and Mahaveerapuram colony (sinds 2024). In Moratandi we are giving street dance classes (sinds 2023). In Artjarampet we stopped in 2023 because the main person got an accident. We would like to continue later.



*Paying games in Kottakarai 2022*



*April 2022 festival Artsjarampet*

### **Programs**

Now after 3 years training the kids (girls) are ready to do some performances. In October 2023, 5 kids did Bharatanatyam temple program and in December 2022 one dance program by town hall Auroville. We have also done performances in the locations itself for the board of Auroville the Netherlands in March 2023 and board of Auroville USA in October 2022 (Matthew) and in August 2022 (Jack).

Since 2023 we have started 1 group of street dance in Moratandi for boys and girls.

On 10 March 2024 we have done one program in Unity Pavilion Auroville with dance and music.


*Isai Ragam*  
Melody of Music Unit of Auromitra Trust Auroville

# *Isai Ragam*

**Program**

What : Dance and music  
When: Sunday 10 March 2024  
Where: Unity Pavilion Auroville  
Time : 3.30 pm - 5.30 pm

by Isai Ragam village children  
Folk and Bharatanatyam dance  
English and Tamil songs







Unity Pavilion program 10 march 2024

Stage is yours program we did on 4 march 2024 in Pondicherry. The Phudupakkam kids from Isai ragam were participating. The program is for showing your talents.





*Jeroline 15 years old playing western classical songs. Jeroline goes 2 times a week for piano class in Trinity collage and will finish next year her 8<sup>th</sup> grade.*



*Pudhupakkam children doing music program in Pondicherry "Stage is yours"*

### **Meditation**

Meditation can give you a sense of calm, peace and balance that can benefit both your emotional well-being and your overall health. Meditation is important in the theory of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The kids have done almost 1 year (2022) meditation classes from Pedro from Auroville. This was given to the Kottakarai colony group kids.

### **Playground**

Playgrounds are safe spaces where kids develop crucial physical, social, emotional and imaginative skills necessary to gain self-confidence, improve coordination, and advance critical thinking capabilities.

We have made 2 playgrounds. One by our location in Kottakarai village and one other in Artjarampet. In Kottakarai village we got an piece of Auroville land for the use of this playground. Application team Priya on 26 may 2023 conformed us that we can utilize the 5 cents ground for children's playground until further development of Green Belt in according to Zone is undertaken (number 291/2).





*Playground in Kottakarai village*

### **Music classes**

As you can see, studying music can have a significant impact on students and their ability to memorize, to increase creativity, to improve discipline, mental capacity, and their opportunity for collaboration.

We are giving music classes in Kottakarai colony and in Mahavirapuram colony and Pudhupakkam colony (only in 2021 ,2022, 2023 and 2024 till may). The main teacher in Artjarampet got an accident so we stopped the activities in 2023. So later we will restart again. We are teaching in the locations: guitar, bongo, melodica, keyboard and violin.

### **English conversation classes**

In regular secondary schools in Tamil Nadu, English conversation classes are missing (reading and writing are taught without practicing the language). We hope to contribute something which is useful for their higher studies and communicating in general.

We are giving English conversation classes in mostly all locations.

### **Homework classes**

We are giving home work classes in all locations.

-Its an quiet place for the kids to make homework.

-The kids can ask questions to the teachers.



*Homework classes Kottakarai colony*

### **Higher studies**

We have supported in the last 3 years (2021,2022,2023 and 2024 till may ) around 18 girls/boys for their higher studies.



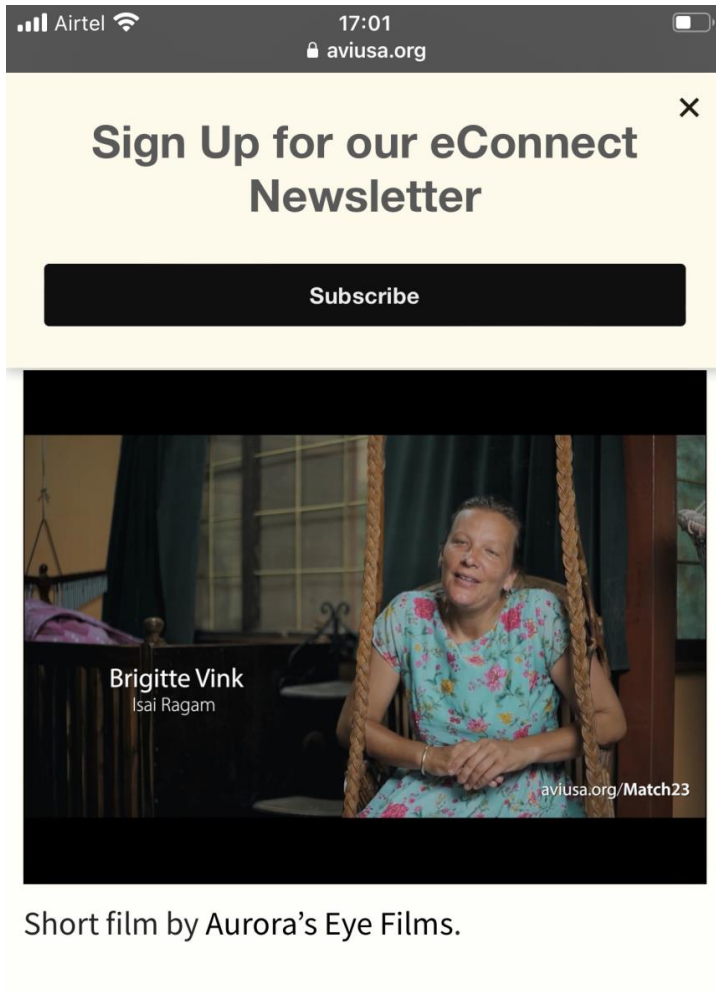
*The board members from Auroville the Netherlands visited  
Isai Ragam march 2023: Josee and Johan*

### Auroville international shortfilm

In December 2023 there was an shortfilm made by Aurora's Eye Films. Because of the match23 campaign AVI USA. There some projects were filmed. One of that was Isai Ragam.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JqXLimBhng>

<https://aviusa.org/match23/>



The screenshot shows a mobile browser interface. At the top, the status bar displays 'Airtel' with signal strength, Wi-Fi, and battery icons, along with the time '17:01' and the URL 'aviusa.org'. Below the status bar is a yellow banner with the text 'Sign Up for our eConnect Newsletter' and a black 'Subscribe' button. Below the banner is a video player showing a woman, Brigitte Vink, sitting on a swing. The video has a title 'Brigitte Vink Isai Ragam' and a URL 'aviusa.org/Match23' in the bottom right corner.

Short film by Aurora's Eye Films.

[BROWSE AND DONATE TO AUROVILLE PROJECTS HERE](#)

Brigitte exécutive Isai Ragam in short film

### **Other activities Isai Ragam**

- Tour to Pogoland (big swimmingpool) in summertime
- Tour to Chennai crocodile park
- Devali and Pongal dress every year for around 70 kids.
- We provide snacks and meals in weekends.
- We give the teachers support for repairing their motorbikes.
- We give teachers training for English conversations.

### **Publicity**

<https://reportersonline.nl/buurthuizen-maken-het-verschil-voor-kinderen-in-india/>

This article came in reporters online in Dutch language about Isai Ragam on 19 march 2023

On our website you can find all information about Isai Ragam with pictures. We also published there our financial reports balance sheets 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and half year trial balance 1 april 2023 till January 2024 and we published newsletter 2022 and this Isai Ragam activity report 2021-2024..

[www.isairagam.org](http://www.isairagam.org)



*Kolum party in Mahaveerapuram*



*Brigitte executive Isai Ragam with dance kids.*



*Dec 2022 program by town hall*



*Summertour 2022*



*Isai Ragam office in fertile*