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**🌊 What is Songkran?**

**Songkran** is the traditional **Thai New Year** festival, celebrated annually from **April 13 to 15**. It is one of the most important and joyful festivals in Thailand, known for its massive **water fights**, religious rituals, and family gatherings.

**📜 Etymology and Origin**

* The word **“Songkran”** comes from the **Sanskrit word** *saṅkrānti*, which means **“astrological passage”** or the **movement of the sun** from one zodiac to another.
* Songkran originally marked the **start of the solar calendar** and was based on ancient **Brahmin (Hindu)** traditions, later blended with **Buddhist culture** in Thailand.

**🏯 Historical Background**

* Historically, Songkran was the time for **cleaning homes**, **paying respects to elders**, and performing **religious merit-making**.
* The festival symbolized **renewal**, **purification**, and **letting go of bad luck** from the old year.
* It later incorporated **Buddhist elements**, especially in the **Lanna Kingdom (Northern Thailand)** during the 13th-15th centuries.

**🎉 Modern Celebrations**

Today, Songkran is a 3-day nationwide celebration, combining both traditional rituals and modern fun:

**1. April 13 – Maha Songkran Day**

* Marks the end of the old year.
* People clean their homes, public spaces, and Buddhist temples.

**2. April 14 – Wan Nao (Preparation Day)**

* Day for preparing offerings and food.
* Families gather and pay respects to elders.

**3. April 15 – Wan Thaloeng Sok (New Year Day)**

* Marks the official start of the New Year.
* People visit temples, offer food to monks, and pour water on Buddha statues.

**💦 Symbolism of Water**

Water is the most iconic part of Songkran:

* Originally, water was gently poured on the hands of elders as a sign of respect.
* Over time, it evolved into **street water fights**, symbolizing **washing away sins, bad luck, and welcoming a fresh start**.
* It is also extremely practical—Songkran happens during the **hottest time of the year** in Thailand!

**🙏 Traditional Customs**

* **Rod Nam Dam Hua**: Pouring scented water on elders’ hands to ask for blessings.
* **Sand pagodas**: People build small sand stupas at temples.
* **Merit-making**: Giving alms to monks and releasing birds or fish.
* **Bathing the Buddha**: Pouring fragrant water on Buddha statues for blessings.

**🌍 Cultural Spread**

* Though mainly Thai, **Songkran is also celebrated in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar**, each with slight regional variations.
* In recent years, **international tourists** also join the festivities, especially in cities like **Chiang Mai, Bangkok, and Pattaya**.

**🧘 Spiritual Significance**

While known for fun, Songkran is deeply **spiritual and family-centered**:

* It’s a time for **reflection, gratitude, and renewal**.
* Many people **abstain from alcohol**, **reconnect with family**, and **visit temples**.

**✨ In Modern Times**

* Songkran is declared as a **national holiday**.
* The Thai government promotes **cultural preservation**, urging people to balance tradition with celebration.
* In 2018, the Thai government even proposed Songkran for inclusion in **UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage** list.