

The New Year of many in the South and SouthEast Asian calendars fall in Mid April, (generally on the 13th/14th/15th) and is called regionally by different names:

1. Sri Lanka - Aluth Avuruddha (Sinhalese) / Puthandu (Tamil)
2. Cambodia - Chol Chnam Thmey or Khmer New Year
3. Thailand - Songkran
4. Laos - Songkan / Pi Mai Lao
5. Myanmar - Thingyan
6. Pakistan and Afghanistan - Vaisakhi
7. Nepal - Bikram Samwat / Vaishak Ek
8. Bangladesh - Pohela Boishakh

The Sinhala and Tamil New Year is one of the most important holidays on the Sri Lankan calendar and is referred to as the **Aluth Avurudda** by the Sinhalese and **Puthandu** by the Tamils. It is considered a solar festival, celebrated in many households all over the world, as the sun moves from Pisces to Aries - marking the end of the harvest season. This joyous occasion celebrated



during April 13th and 14th, is an annual expression of the rich culture of the multi-ethnic island nation - a general feeling of good will toward neighbors and friends, through the many interesting customs. This includes customs such as boiling milk, preparing delicious sweetmeats and food to exchanging gifts at auspicious times for good luck and prosperity, and following certain religious observances and playing traditional games during this time.

The Cambodian New Year also known as **Khmer New Year** or (not to be confused with the Water



Festival that is celebrated in November) is traditionally a three-day celebration of the Solar

New Year and is the biggest celebration of the year in Cambodia and by the Cambodian people. The three days are referred to as Maha Sangkran, Virak Vanabat and Vearat Loeng Sak. Similar to other New Year festivities in Asian cultures, it combines tradition with religion, and puts a big focus on honoring ancestors and elders. While there are parties with lots of traditional foods and drinks, the three days are filled with Buddhist ceremonies that center on giving thanks, making offerings to deceased loved ones, and donating to those less fortunate.

Water plays a big part in the **Thai New Year** called **Songkran**. Symbolically it washes away the previous year to welcome the new one. It is a celebration that embraces goodwill, love,



compassion, and thankfulness, using water as the means of expression. The Thai people also spend the holiday spring cleaning, participating in religious activities as well as paying their respects to their ancestors.

The common theme among the South and Southeast Asian people celebrating the New Year all over the world this week, is that the New Year is an occasion to honor family, community, food, and tradition.

Curious to learn more about the communities celebrating their New Year this week? Here are some resources that might be helpful:

<https://travelsrilanka.org/sinhala-tamil-new-year/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian_New_Year

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/celebrations/article/songkran>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_and_Southeast_Asian_solar_New_Year