Sacred Water, Playful Water
New Year’s Day in Thailand

Wararat Namvichit

My favorite celebration is Songkran festival or Thailand’s New Year. Everyone has three days off from April 13 to April 15. People travel to see their families. They pour water on the hands of revered elders and ask for blessings. The elders then take their hands, wet with water, and put them on the shoulders of the younger person and say a blessing. My family does this too, and that makes me feel good. We put flowers or perfume in the water, and it makes the water smell very nice. It is a way to show respect for our elders.

Everywhere there are people having parties. We have huge water fights and everyone gets all wet. After I spend time with my family, I go hang out with my friends and get wet, and that is so funny. We all have big plastic bowls and when people walk by or drive by in a car or motorcycle we drip some water on them (or throw it!) and say “Happy New Year!”

We always enjoy water in our festivals because it is always so hot. The water refreshes us during the summer season which is in April. My mother says this practice of playing with water started many years ago when people would pray to Buddha for rain in the new year because it had not rained for a long, long time.

Wararat Namvichit (aka “Milk”) is a student at RIRAL in Woonsocket, RI. She will begin studying for her GED this summer and she is also working at a nail salon. After she gets her GED she plans to go to college.

Describe what is happening in these photos. Which is sacred and which is playful? What reasons does the author give for why water is important in this festival? Photos (right) by Tevrapapas and (left) by Takeaway via Wikimedia Commons.