

## The MorDoo

By Alan Surrey

The word psychic and psychotic got lost in translation and I was assured that Bafaan was not crazy but in fact a gifted 'astrology lady.' "She can look into your face and tell everything about you" said Kanchan, a friend who was introducing me to a side of Thai culture the tourist rarely encounters.

Thailand is a cultural mix of Ancient Thai, Indian and Chinese influences, inherently spiritual, yet deeply superstitious. Bridging this divide are the MorDoo, men and women, who are gifted with clairvoyance - the apparent ability to gain information about a person, place or event in time using methods outside the realm of scientific explanation – or the commonly known five human senses.

From the time of Plato and Aristotle, the mind itself has been referred to as the 6<sup>th</sup> sense. Its true potential lies dormant, subdued by the incessant noise and busy ritual of modern life. The MorDoo are reputedly gifted with a 7<sup>th</sup> even 8<sup>th</sup> sense. Widely renowned, they serve the communities in which they live, rich or poor, charging around 90 baht per consultation (US\$2.00).

Bafaan is a MorDoo in her mid 50s. Businessmen travel over 300 kilometres from Bangkok to consult her. She is an ebullient character who openly warns the men waiting to see her, that if they have a *mae noi* (second wife) they should leave because she only 'sees' and 'tells' the truth.

When Bafaan was in her 20s, she went into a trance like state. She was taken to a local temple where she spoke in tongues and made predictions about future events. When she regained clarity of mind 4 days later, she had no recollection of the experience. She was however, left with a gift of 'seeing.' A visit to Bafaan therefore, requires a certain amount of courage and a donation to the local Buddhist Temple is expected before you leave!

When a French tourist in her mid 40s consulted her out of curiosity, she was immediately asked if she had ever had an abortion. Shocked, the woman confirmed that when she was 18, she did in fact terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Bafaan told her that the spirit of the child, a boy, had been following her ever since - bewildered why it did not have life. The woman was advised to seek consultation at a local monastery where a Buddhist monk could perform the *ta wai sang ka tan*, a sacred ceremony that formally names the child and allows the spirit to move on. She did.

I was sceptical during my first visit to Bafaan. I watched her berate a woman for several minutes for not paying a family debt. Thoughts about being publicly humiliated for not paying my credit card bill on time crossed my mind. When I sat in front of her she stared into my face for an uncomfortable minute or so. I was relieved when she finally smiled. Over the next 40 minutes, Bafaan clearly demonstrated some sense of 'knowing' or 'seeing clearly.' She told me things about myself only I knew, about my mother's death, my father's failing health, pertinent facts about my childhood and career. She got my attention.

She said that the spirit of a woman is ever present and watches over me. And then the session took a bizarre twist.

Bafaan told me that I have two daughters neither of whom have life – terminated pregnancies. She said the spirit of the most recent (1996) follows me everywhere I go. I was also advised on the merits of the *ta wai sang ka tan* ritual.

A few days later, the details of my meeting with Bafaan were related to Pra Ruoy, a Buddhist monk at Wat Kholak. I sat on the floor of his Kut as he quietly listened. His response was immediate yet calm. “I know of this child from my meditation” he said. The experience was unsettling.

With the benefit of hindsight however, the predictions Bafaan made about my short-term future proved inaccurate. They were wildly optimistic. Predictions made about my long-term future were equally bright. Thais who regularly consult the MorDoo accept their fallibility. “Sometimes they only get 50 percent true” said Kanchan. “Maybe she’s tired or not very well.”

Most MorDoo are deeply religious, devout Buddhists and practitioners of insight meditation. And yet, placing too much faith in the clairvoyance of the MorDoo is disapproved of by monks and the Theravada Sangha, the official religious body in Thailand. They believe it is a distraction from the path of enlightenment and point to the dangers inherent in the belief that individual paths are somehow predetermined, isolated from personal action or the actions of others. Insight into character traits and an individual’s past is fascinating but at best, your future is considered uncertain.

I was surprised therefore when I was taken recently by Kanchan to visit a Buddhist monk who she referred to as a MorDoo. Phra Ta Huay is 82, wears a hearing aid and smokes cigarettes. During the course of his normal duties as a community, spiritual leader, word quickly spread about his uncanny gift of insight. A steady stream of visitors eager to have their astrological charts read by Phra Ta Huay, pass through the isolated, rural monastery every day. Donations go towards the construction of a new building, the first in 60 years.

Phra Ta Huay told us about a local man who was suddenly confined to a mental hospital. He had lost the use of his legs, Doctors could do nothing for him and he was kept under constant sedation and restraint. Phra Ta Huay visited him and immediately ‘saw’ that he was possessed by a “Bad Spirit.” He performed a sacred Buddhist ritual and the man has now returned to his family and is enjoying perfect health. His long-term predictions about my future echoed those of Bafaan.

The MorDoo in Thailand represent a phenomenon that has existed in different cultures throughout recorded history. From the Pythia of ancient Greece who foretold the prophecies of the Oracle to the well documented life of medical clairvoyant Edgar Cayce. They form a tangible link between the verifiable and the unexplainable.

We constantly search for answers to old questions - or revisit and reinvent the old explanations – Angels, pyramids, crystals, past life regression, New Age Spirituality, Theosophy or the Kabbala. Paul Coelho’s book *The Alchemist* is an international Best Seller with over 27 million copies sold worldwide. All are symptomatic of our natural curiosity about unexplained phenomenon, about destiny and the age-old questions - why are we here? What is my purpose? Are we alone?

The MorDoo in Thailand hold sway over that space between religious conviction and the practicalities of everyday life. They are a source of counsel and solace in a time

when the accelerating pace of change creates uncertainty, disruption or a departure from the traditional. Their gifts are commonly associated with spiritual awakening, with the life-long practice of meditation and yet the MorDoo are a common phenomenon the length and breadth of Thailand. Ordinary people leading ordinary lives with extraordinary gifts.

Whatever the MorDoo sees, it is mysterious and once experienced, not easily dismissed. But in such matters, one always ends up with more questions than answers.

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