

MY 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR FLAMENCO AND FOR LIFE



La India

Translated by: Monica Rossetti



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PRESENTATION OF THE ENGLISH EDITION

To all those who were part of Facebook private group *El Tutorial 21 “La Técnica y el Ser en Unidad”* in June 2017; more than 130 beings from different parts of the planet: Spain, France, Netherlands, Italy, India, Japan, Uganda, Mexico, Israel, Turkey, USA, England, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina and Dominican Republic; they lived a 21-day experience with the aim of bringing mind, body and spirit awareness into their dance.

To Lucía Ruiz Burgos, who made the drawing representing this new book and who was herself part of the above-mentioned group.

I am thankful for the *energy* generated by that community; it inspired me to distribute “*My Ten Commandments for Flamenco and for Life*” out of the Facebook group and to put them at disposal of anyone longing to read this text; it can be done by simply downloading it from my website www.la-india.es at no charge.

To all those people who started that crazy and visionary path with me, studying traditional flamenco and its emotional components online from their homes. Even though Facebook did not offer much at that time, live videos were enough to build up a deep connection which changed us all considerably. It was as if something was guiding my steps and time confirmed this for me; teaching online offered me something that live classes do not provide: time, a component that 2020 gave us and that we all desperately needed.

Dancing online from home allowed us to get time to stop and think about the sense of each single movement for each single segment of our body. We finally realized that our mind, just like air, moves much faster than our physical mass. We often wish we could pause a lesson with some magical Stop red button to study all the minimum details of a certain dance move, but since this is not possible, we must pretend and go on, even if we have not understood something, striving to copy and learn that move as quick as possible; consequently, we may feel slow and sometimes even clumsy. This happens because we normally compare ourselves with other people’s ability, when we should simply slow down, take a breath and realize that our body is not the same as any other; it should first be inhabited by our own soul.

The description of my 10 commandments for flamenco and for life gave me more confidence in my own path, making me stronger and more determined, since I was no longer alone; moreover, the way I was paving proved to be useful for flamenco students and teachers in many parts of the world. That Facebook group has been constantly growing since then; today it is called *Flamencos Conscientes*, with more than 630 participants; it often proposes free events to encourage further participation. Getting to know these people was, and still is, a source of inspiration for me, that is why I still organize online emotional exploration workshops with the aim of channelling emotional and expressive needs, as well as technical ones. In this way, thanks to Love, the live workshop FlamenConsciente was magically created; it has now reached its fifth edition in Seville (including the one held in 2020), with students coming from different parts of Spain and from the rest of the world. The first edition of Conscious Corporal Technique Training was created in the same way; it started in June 2020,

the year of the pandemic, during which many of us used their energies to fight against fear; it was exactly with this purpose that I created www.flamenconsciente.com and the *Online TCC Training method*, patented under the name of *FlamenConsciente®*; this brand confirms the new paradigm according to which technique can be connected to our being and we can allow our heart to feel happy in the most loving and expansive way. This book has been translated first into Italian and now also into English thanks to Monica Rossetti's love for other people. She is a flamenco student, and she followed the TCC complete training to become TCC certified trainer herself; she is also a translator and communication expert; she offered to translate this book to allow English and Italian-speaking people to access this valuable information. "What a pity that they cannot read this book, it is so useful!" - she told me when she proposed me to translate it.

Thank you, Monica, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and hope my words can reach those who need them thanks to your translation.

I am grateful to life, and I feel guided by something bigger, I do not really know how I have got so far but I realize that something was already preparing me for that moment when everything radically changed, at that time when the only safe human contact became the one we could do online. Now I feel I have found the sense of my life, I know for sure that flamenco is my source of inspiration, and I am here to motivate other people loving this form of art: students, teachers, dancers; I want to support them all in searching for their dance, for the deepest dance of their soul.

We need to go on, life does not stop, and, even if we were involved in a wave of destruction, at the same time a wave of creativity spread all over, stronger than ever. Nature knows its own cycles very well and patiently waits for the storm or for the rain to stop, for the temperatures to decrease, for the volcano to stop burning everything around, to experience the birth of new seeds; because life never stops, it keeps on being life in spite of everything.

Thanks, thanks, thanks.

"La India"
María Virginia
Di Domenicantonio Gutiérrez

Translator's Note

This translation, dedicated to my flamenco teachers and classmates, comes from my wish to share and spread a teaching I got during the 2020 lockdown, which provided me with more time to follow my personal growth and my passions, first of all flamenco. Searching for courses and events connected to this amazing dance, I discovered La India's Facebook page by chance (even if I think nothing really happens by chance); I then got to know her teaching method and became particularly curious about it, since it was so different from all the others I had previously experienced; I started with a couple of test lessons, deciding afterwards to attend the complete online Conscious Corporal Technique training, since it corresponded perfectly to what I was looking for: a way to connect dancing to mindfulness, to reach a new approach towards flamenco and, most of all, towards life itself.

After 2 years studying with her, I felt the need of transferring her teaching and the changes I experienced to those people who could not understand this text in Spanish; English is a language which allows her message and know-how to get much further. That is why, after translating it into Italian for people of my own country, I offered to translate her "10 Commandments" also into this language, hoping I can provide suggestions or make people curious about further details of the discussed topics. To be as loyal as possible to her reflections, I kept the English translation as close as possible to the Spanish original version.

Thinking that some readers may not be familiar with flamenco words, I have inserted the explanation of some specific terms (that I have not translated and indicated *in italics*) into a glossary placed at the end of the book.

I want to thank India for being a patient and caring teacher, for inspiring me and for teaching me to bravely experience alternative ways, getting out of my comfort zone, which made me feel at ease but at the same time limited my vision. I hope that people who will read this translation will be inspired too; with this book I also wish I can give my contribution to the development of the already international "pioneer" FlamenConsciente® community, overcoming language barriers that may limit your access to the huge possibilities that the world and the network can provide us with.

Monica Rossetti

First Commandment.

Enjoy dancing.

“Technique is fundamental to express who we are, but not *after* we learn, but rather *while* we are learning. In this way we move a bit slower but with more confidence, with ourselves, fully enjoying what we do”.

We want to enjoy life and to feel well when we dance. We feel Flamenco deeply inside and we pretend to express the same externally, bursting out and expanding as brightly as fireworks. Sometimes this may suffocate or frustrate our desire. When we make love with someone that we fancy a lot, something physiological, that we cannot avoid, takes place: orgasm. Why? Because orgasm is not mental; it is definitely the most anti-mind thing we can experience. The more we think, the less pleasure we feel. Orgasm is pure impulse. When we approach the sexual game with this purpose, we experience an energy discharge. I am not talking about Love nor sensuality, I am speaking of sex and satisfaction, the one you feel in the precise moment of the exquisite explosion. Sometimes, immediately after, when we go back to consciousness, we might even feel the need to escape, but this is a totally different topic...

Enjoying while we are dancing means allowing ourselves to feel that orgasmic pleasure, focusing on each single micromovement, refining the sensation which connects us to our partner - in this case the musicians - being aware that we stay within our body. For me it was really hard to enjoy while I was dancing, as I was too focused on various aspects: musicians, audience, *tablaos*, *palmas*, everything but myself. I learned to enjoy dancing only when my inner space could coincide with myself, exactly as it happens when I have sex.

The Groups' Reflections on the first Commandment.

-I am whenever I dance

-If I do not know the dance steps, I cannot relax and enjoy dancing

-If I allow myself to enjoy, I am afraid I could make mistakes

-I cannot enjoy, I feel incomplete, I cannot relax while I am dancing

-I still find it very hard to enjoy dancing, most of the times I am more connected with my mind than with my body and my enjoyment, because I want to do the dance moves correctly.

-When I connect with myself, I can show everything I have inside, and this undoubtedly touches the audience.

-Feel it, enjoy it and express your sensations: that is the matter.

-I enjoy dancing since it is my way of paying tribute to flamenco for giving me all that pleasure

-When I go to class, I do enjoy every moment, it is absolute pleasure for me

Second Commandment.

Trust yourself in the present moment.

“At a certain time, I felt the need to stop worrying about the future because that was consuming myself physically and mentally. I realized that focusing on the present corresponds to be aware of my life; this consequently changed my way of dancing”.

We have two topics to take into consideration: trust and presence. We can trust the others so much as to give ourselves completely only when we are not aware of the consequences, when our innocence is as pure as the one of a child who ignores what kind of danger implies playing with fire until he lives it personally; when he does, pushed by innocent and excessive trust, he pays the consequences of this action and learns that fire burns and can even leave everlasting scars on your skin; that is why that child will no longer play with fire after trying once.

In the same way, the innocence of those who have started studying flamenco only recently, can be a source of inspiration, or at least they remind me that initial involvement in spite of everything, that freshness and ingenuity without prejudices, whose perfect desire was simply dancing and enjoying. In that condition, trust is noble, caring, expansive, here and now.

Another kind of approach can lead you to take risks only if you feel confident about the results; I am talking about a pseudo-involvement, a perfect self-deceit, the consequence of getting burned previously. “I can only trust myself if I know everything I need to know”. In this way we no longer play like children; on the contrary, this is the neurotic adult fixing our ego’s rules and building up a personality with enough defences not to get burned again.

Flamenco is a bottomless pit, which simply invites us to start and then to get more and more speed, virtuosities, precision, in a continuous creation. There will always be better dancers, who can do more dance moves and virtuosities, who have better art or technique. We only experience comparative and devaluing mistreatment when our mind’s incessant chatter tells us that “if we try hard, we can make it “. For this reason, we finish up believing that we will be able to “get control” only in the future. In this way, our present appears judgmental, and the carrot keeps there, in front of us, without we can ever reach it.

Trust the present moment, whatever it is, with humility because we are all constantly learning. Allow yourself to make mistakes, to fall and get back on your feet with Love, which is something all artists experience sooner or later. Many of those professional artists we see dancing in theatres have some time in their career pulled the rope more than they could afford. Then they fell and they could get back on their feet only thanks to their humility.

I experienced this myself; I consumed all my energy until I was obliged to give up dancing. My body started to rebel because it was no longer recognizing me and decided to stop me. After nine months without dancing, I started teaching again but only for few hours and with a new schedule of my activity; I then launched the project of the free tutorial “La Técnica

e l'Essere in Unità" (= Technique and Being, in Unity), as part of that inner trip that humility was requiring: serving the others and trusting myself in that precise moment.

The Groups' Reflections on the second Commandment.

-Believe that the fear of making mistakes will disappear once you start dancing.

-It is true, my head gets blocked and the idea of not making mistakes limits my sensations.

-I used to dance *bulería* only by instinct, I danced "a compás" and I liked it. Some years ago, I started studying its structures and got frightened: I was no longer dancing with the same confidence, and I only thought of the moves I had to do, while previously I could do everything without any effort. I left flamenco because I was feeling frustrated.

-I am happy about what I can do today. Previously I got tired after many rehearsals, feeling sorry when I did not find more time to study before going on stage.

- In the past I used to get very angry with myself if I did not do everything perfectly, now I respect my own timing. I exercise and practise as much as I can but if I make mistakes, I no longer punish myself and I simply go on.

-I absorb everything my master can teach me. Previously I felt frustrated because I could not understand all the explanations, now I tell myself: "keep calm, you're going to make it".

- I did not like my dancing because of an excessively demanding teacher; I used to leave the class crying, now I have learned that nobody can ask me more than what I pretend from myself.

-Passion and feelings inevitably give birth to unique, unrepeatable, and intimate technique.

-"Flamenco is a bottomless pit" is the most perfect definition I have ever heard, because in that pit everything is so stunning that we can even get surprised by our own results.

-The fear to face what we do not know

-I am getting more and more confident. It is hard for me to be confident in dancing and in life, as a matter of fact I doubt about the actions I can take in my own life, and this gets reflected in my dancing.

-I am always afraid of making mistakes and this limits me, not only in flamenco.

-Humility is the key. Artists have such a strong ego that they would never accept to be told they need to be humble when preparing to face their audience.

-20 years ago, I stopped dancing because it was consuming me and making me sick, I could not even perform the smallest usual actions of my normal daily life. Recently I have come back to dance and to flamenco; I have nothing to lose in the end, I can only feel better. I have started with half an hour, since my feet did no longer stand the pain; in that moment I cried, while my soul started flourishing again. I was not sure whether to continue or not, but my Being and my trust in flamenco convinced me to go on; now flamenco is an essential part of my life, it makes me happy thanks to the results I achieve daily. It is no longer a matter of reaching a certain level or going onto a theatre stage, it is simply my way of feeling alive.

Third Commandment

Acknowledge your growth

"The ocean is not so scaring as a pit. If we learn to see our improvements as an endless ocean instead of as a bottomless pit, we will remove the most dramatic part of our learning and we will trust the future".

When we become more rational, we lose our innocence and we only think of what will happen in the future, forgetting how much we have grown so far. Well, we do remember all our difficult moments and situations, all the hours spent focusing on some goal, all the physical exercises we did, the heels we consumed, and we could easily complain about all this. "After all I did!", we could say, leaving space to our most dramatic part, that plays the victim and shows our war wounds. How much have I improved? I could see all the things I have got if only I could stop for one minute, without thinking of what I am missing or without making inappropriate comparisons which underline the results I have not reached. It would be like watching a movie about our own life: how, when and under which circumstances, everything has been going on until today.

The glass half empty is a fake motivator. When we can only see what we are missing, we are comparing ourselves to others who know more than us; but who are these others exactly? RAE (Real Academia Española) explains that the word "comparison" means finding equality and proportion between things you confront. Flamenco is your own story, which is unique and unrepeatable. What else could you ever compare your story with?

Looking back and realizing how much I have grown, makes me strong enough to recognize my skills. It connects me with my present, just when I see myself realistically and when I observe my ability compared to what I did in the past. Today I see all the way I have been going through and I thank myself, capitalizing this experience. In this way, my potential gets revealed with no need to manipulate the future; I simply need to remember this, worrying exclusively about being inside myself, knowing what I feel in every single moment and where I feel it, getting support by means of meditation, mantras and symbolism of the subconscious. In this way my potential can develop in the present and I will see it expressed in my future.

The Groups' Reflections on the third Commandment.

-Sometimes I focus more on what I am missing or what I am doing wrong, instead of noticing my growth. Not to mention how often I compare myself to others.

-This is the hardest thing for me: I always want to go on and rarely wonder if I ever stopped to observe and acknowledge my improvement.

-I tend to complain about what I do not have without realizing what I have got. I focus too much on physical limitations preventing me from doing certain moves properly.

- I can create a beautiful dance with what I have, no matter how much it is. For me it is also necessary to know my strengths as well as my weak points, in order to realize when to use them and what I must still work on.

- Technique has always limited me! My body needs to understand that technique is simply a "little help" to express my feelings and to tell my story.

- Technique is a tool but sometimes we may lose the right perspective.

- After studying so much body technique, all the *palos* and plenty of other aspects, the hardest thing is letting everything come naturally and reconnect to that happiness we had when we were kids, feeling pure pleasure without worrying about how the others would consider us.

-I always think I still have a lot to learn; this does not discourage me because this is my passion, and I am gradually improving. There are many lessons I can attend: *bata de cola*, *mantón*, different *palos*, exercises for *tablaos*. A bottomless pit, or better an ocean, which seems less scaring.

- The flamenco world is so big that it scares me, sometimes I even feel inferior. I do not realise how much I have grown, and this makes me feel small.

-Acknowledging one's growth has a lot to do with acceptance. I feel this commandment is quite close to the second one. Living here and now is a way to acknowledge ourselves and our worth. I am here, this is me today, this is what I have reached.

- My problem is always the same: what else do I have to learn? Who am I in the huge flamenco world?

-Realizing how much I have grown; I can let go what is limiting me and preventing me from enjoying when I dance; by using gratitude, I am learning to leave aside my prejudices day by day.

-It is so pleasant to see how much I am learning without even realizing it. I can do harder and harder dance steps, that I did not imagine I could ever manage to understand. I feel excited if I look at my growth.

-I am very demanding with myself, I think I had better stop and focus on the improvements I have made, because I do know I have improved, even though I am not yet able to enjoy this feeling.

-I “stopped” for three years. Now I have started again, and keeping the pace is not so hard as I imagined; everything I had learned in the past is flowing back naturally. Now I know how much I had grown, but I had to stop for three years to understand it clearly.

-I am now aware of how much I have learned, and I am very proud of myself for that. Before I could not dance at all, now I can do it for one and a half hour without stopping, this is a big achievement for me.

-Experiencing and analysing my growth opens the doors to further improvement. What used to seem difficult - nearly impossible - to me, is now quite natural; it is not a matter of copying, but rather of learning, internalizing, and modifying the steps, according to my personal taste and my feelings; this is what pushes me forward with trust and passion.

Fourth Commandment

Acknowledge your limits without feeling vulnerable

“Some things are not suitable for me, I like them, but I cannot execute them.” This is quite a strong concept, which is connected to our acceptance of what we are. The reality criteria between what I see, what I want and what I can do. What is clear is that Enrique el Cojo was totally aware of not being able to “zapatear”, but he moved his arms in a wonderful way; it would have been terrible for him to fight against his own nature (he was born lame, which is “cojo” in Spanish) and against his own existence trying to do some “zapateo” moves. If Enrique el Cojo had gone against himself, today we would not know anything about him. Or at least we would not know him as a great dancer but maybe as a shoemaker (without any disparaging remark against this job), and now he would be fixing heels instead of consuming them while dancing.

Some years ago, I attended a class by Belén Maya and told her: “I like what you do, and I want to understand if there are different ways to do it with my body, may I follow the lesson without copying your movements? Her dance is not suitable for me but her contact with the body and its language is, indeed; that is why I wanted to study with her. I have never felt so ridiculous, clumsy, and asynchronous in my whole life. I looked at myself in the mirror and laughed; Belén did the same, but she let me continue without interfering. This is how we can all understand what is good for us and what is not, leaving it aside; we must not wear a shirt at all costs if it is not our size. We cannot master all the styles: for instance, if you prefer the traditional dance, the vanguard style will not suit you much; if you are strong on the stylized dance of Escuela Sevillana, you will not dance messing up your hair making your *peinetas* fall on the floor. There is no reason why we should be specialized in all the *palos*; there will always be some which are less suitable for us; for example, I would never dance a Guajira. We are not obliged to use elements we do not identify with, only because the others do. We may decide to study them to become complete dancers, but we do not necessarily have to use a 36 size if we wear 42.

Recognize and accept what is not good for you and what ends up breaking your ankles and soul while you are adapting to it.

The Groups' Reflections on the fourth Commandment.

-Now I feel more at ease with some *palos*, I feel them more suitable for me. Sometimes in the past I forced myself to do something which did not correspond to my personality

- I worried a little about mastering all the *palos* and the elements, while I found it normal for *cantaores* to master only few *palos*, due to the specific timbre of one's *cante*.

-Now I understand and accept my limitations in order to grow. In Portuguese we say, "excellence is enemy of beauty". As a matter of fact, I have reduced my extreme need to know everything, and I am gradually searching for more depth.

-For years, studying with different masters, I tried to understand which was my style, until I met Andrés Marín. I have then realized I could simply absorb his art and getting as close as possible to his level, without reaching him; in this way I could learn a lot every time I spoke and studied with him.

- I have understood that I will never dance exactly like my master or like any dancer I admire, simply because we are different; my body expresses what it feels and what comes from my mind; that is how I have gone back to my self-confidence, and I am overcoming my most vulnerable sides. I doubt about myself when I do not feel close to my own being.

-One of my limits is to feel light, scarcely attached to the ground. What I miss is temper, the correct attitude towards life, that I would also like to bring into my flamenco.

-It is hard for me to find a balance between self-confidence and acknowledgement of my limitations, to avoid falling into low self-esteem.

- Sometimes, criticism from people who think they know it all, makes me doubt about myself.

-With time I become more and more aware of my style, and I recognize the dancers I mostly identify with, because they have something useful for my dance or that I simply like when I see them dancing.

- Not all the *palos* are good for me and sometimes not even the same all the time; energies change according to my mood.

- It is correct to make some research; if something calls my attention, I experience it and decide whether it is good for me. I need to know things before answering. These commandments make me think about the way I live my flamenco and they help my improvement.

-Dancing with *castañuelas* has been and still is a great effort for me.

-I make any possible effort to do everything perfect, while I have realized how good it can be saying "this is no good for me!"

-I studied with various masters, many of them have a style I adore, but I feel not all of them are suitable for my physical characteristics and for my personality. I am now starting to study with those who fit me better.

-It is so unpleasant to feel inferior or superior to others. I only want to know how far I can get.

-I have only been dancing for three years; I have started as an adult; I do not know my limit and my style yet.

-After reading your book and studying with you, this commandment is the one that taught and helped me the most. Recognizing my limitations allows me to understand and to strengthen my abilities and my qualities, removing any competition or comparison with others, which often frustrated me because I could not do some dance steps properly. When I started to recognize my limitations and focused on what I could do, I started enjoying my dance and I have grown without even realizing it.

-I feel I am not the only one who sometimes thinks not to have an attitude for flamenco.

Fifth Commandment.

Keep concentrated when you study

“You reach concentration when your mind turns on autopilot, which is exactly the opposite of what we would normally think. Well, it is just in that precise moment that your mind stops, and your body becomes mind”.

Attending a flamenco class is not the same as studying. Following some discipline and a specific studying method, not only talking about dance, may generally cost lots of effort until it becomes a habit. Before going to your flamenco class, in winter when it is freezing cold, you might look at yourself in the mirror and think: “I can’t be bothered, it’s too cold today!” but once there you start moving your feet and your arms doing some moves. The first ten minutes, that are necessary to overcome boredom and pain while muscles warm up, seem everlasting; your mind keeps on talking. That is the ideal habitat for your tireless ego, imposing you to follow its rules and to stay in your comfort zone, where you do not run any risk but at the same time nothing ever happens. Here comes the ego, with its imperative statements hiding its eternal fear of Being. “Why are you doing this? You know that if you want to succeed you need to sacrifice a lot, day after day, year after year”. These thoughts can be like a prison for your feet. But you are there, with a sort of masochist pleasure leading you to destroy your body and exploit it as much as you can, loving and hating yourself at the same time. You stay inside a classroom by yourself, with your sounds and your noises, your creativity, which is sometimes incomparable but is a total mess on other days. Not to mention women and their period; and be careful! Even men have their own period, although it is not equally evident.

When I need to get out of the vicious circle created by my ego’s nefarious tales, I remind myself to breath and I slowly become more aware of this vital function; in this way I synchronize with the air which will follow the pace of my feet. After few minutes or seconds - I could not tell you exactly how many - my mind gets cancelled. By means of meditation, I can

calm it down with the *zapateo* sound, which becomes my mantra. I can finally raise my bottom, align my axle, and change dimension without even realizing it. This is a clear passage from one mental state to another; after the internal debate inside my mind, the heaviness I felt in my legs and in my bottom disappears, I start feeling lighter. Fun and creativity spring up then, my body gets full of energy and strength. It becomes lighter, until it sends a signal of tiredness and the little voice in my head comes back to take credit. “Very well! Look, you must sacrifice a bit, but you can do it, you are nearly there. Tomorrow more”.

This is the vicious circle that I sometimes see expressed in me; when I can get into my heart and remind myself such a simple action as breathing or aligning my axle and raising my weight, then I can really enjoy what I am doing. Of course, there are some days when my body does not go anywhere, and my mind does not leave me alone. I have now learned to let it happen, because I know what it means to stop at the right moment.

The Groups' Reflections on the fifth Commandment.

-I would really like the *zapateo* sound to become my mantra.

- That mantra arrives just when I let go by practising on my own, when the *escobilla* gradually becomes smoother, I can do it even better than I wished.

One of the reasons why my mum convinced me to go to dance lessons when I was a kid (classical dance, Venezuelan folklore, Latin-American, flamenco), was to improve my concentration at school. Dance helped me in this sense and for many more aspects. I try to keep a daily routine of self-discipline working on my body, memory, and emotions (by means of improvisation). My goal is to constantly decrease the number of days in which I feel scarcely inspired.

-Our ego, being both wonderful and traitor, can bring us across unexpected paths.

-Flamenco is magic: when I reach my dance school, I say: “what am I doing here? Today I cannot make it...”; but, shortly after, I get involved in the lesson and my body and mind cannot stop.

-Melody is my source of concentration and the only element which keeps me really focused.

- The last few years have been quite difficult: I suffered from depression, I even found it hard to get out of bed, to go out with friends, to attend university; however, at the end I always managed to stand up every single day and I went to teach flamenco and *sevillanas*. Despite the effort it cost me, every time I started dancing, I felt happy and healthy again; that was how I recovered, day by day.

-India, I am very interested in the topic of women's period. We are nature and, just like it, we are cyclical; why shouldn't we use this for our own benefit? Like sail boats need the wind to navigate.

-My concentration comes and goes when I am dancing, I need to understand why this only happens when I am executing a choreography and not, for example, when I am reading: one moment I feel 100% focused and one minute later I get totally lost; this depresses me.

-I lose concentration while I am dancing too! In those moments I feel guilty and think I should not lose any more time, but the truth is that dancing is my passion, and I would like to go on studying; it is hard for me to keep concentrated and I cannot fully enjoy my dance lessons when life puts obstacles on my path.

-Sometimes I cannot do a certain dance step, then I insist and I do it without even thinking; while if I try to analyse what I have done: “*tico taco, punta, tacón, golpe*”, then I make mistakes! It is as if the steps came naturally like a magic, then they disappear.

-I find it hard to keep my body quiet when it is trying to tell me this is not a good day.

-My concentration focuses on my heartbeat and my breathing; I enter the room and feel alone with my body. My heartbeat marks the *compás*.

-When I dance, I disconnect from the world and I am alone with myself. Problems, family, the whole world, everything disappears; it is just me with *compás* and music, with my movements; this makes me feel incredibly well.

Sixth Commandment.

Show who you are with no judgement

“You know you are alive only if you awaken the child who is sleeping inside of you”.

We should first answer the question: who am I? Do you know who you are or, better, who you think you are? I am not speaking like an existentialist now, even if sometimes I feel like it, especially when I have my period, which is the time when I feel I could sink into Hell. The horrible thing is that, without totally knowing who I am (and even if I knew it, I could not be totally sure about it, since I am constantly changing), I dare express judgements on my greatest love: dancing. Love is what expresses me, my love for dance says who I am. Love is expansive; what blocks me is the fear of being something different from what my imaginary believes I “must” be. When I am guided by love, judgement does not exist. While if I let myself be guided by fear, then judgement becomes inevitable. When I sincerely look at the eyes of my inner child, everything becomes simple and I can clearly see my path, its direction and intention. To reach this inner space of sincerity, first I must overcome the traps created by my ego, that knows my inner child better than anyone else and is aware that I can defeat it by going back to my essence, innocence, spontaneity, and authenticity.

The Groups' Reflections on the sixth Commandment.

-Being fills any void; I just need to understand if I fill my voids with my own desires or with someone else's.

-When I have expectations, I automatically fear I cannot fulfil them, which causes my mental malaise.

-What does it mean to be free, not to be afraid? If I put aside my inner child, my feelings get suffocated, while other people's judgement is always there.

-Releasing my inner child, that's the matter.

-Judging yourself harshly has something to do with your story; that is why it is so important to know yourself and to cure your inner child to get through and to gently forgive what we still cannot express freely. Life for me means to try and make mistakes, in order to grow and learn.

-I am what I am now, that's it.

-I am what I have taken with me, what I have been taught, what I am missing and what I have in excess, I am totally free. I am shadow, water, fire, light. I am what I wish I could be, I am what I have always dreamt of. This is me.

-I will prove what I can do without limiting my path. Who am I? Mother, dancer, wife, daughter, teacher, student, worker, friend, colleague? None of these; I am what I am, that's it; my essence is the clear transparency of what I feel in every single moment.

- I am what I am, I get lost in round trips; mind is crazy, it does not obey. Sometimes it thinks it is a queen, other times a homeless, and between these two there are thousands of different images; it indulges in free rain, it is defiant, brave, sometimes it keeps quiet while other times it shouts: "I am as free as the wind!". Mind is like me: crazy and disobedient.

-Now I want to be more than what I know about myself. I can dream of dancing and singing flamenco, but if I want to do it, I need to overcome the fear which is still blocking me.

-Now I can say who I am: Maria, with my way of dancing, feeling, and - especially - speaking, even if I do not say anything. I cannot use words very well due to my shyness; I have realized people understand me better when I dance.

-Fear encloses me into a cave, but one day it will set me free.

-Sometimes, while I am dancing, my mind is not totally focused on dance, on my feelings, on music, because I wonder whether the audience likes my dancing and whether they feel involved by it. I do not want this to happen anymore, I want to be totally present while dancing. But I get obsessed fearing that I am not involving the audience and I focus my attention on that fear rather than on me.

-Until last year I was a mother, wife, sister, daughter-in-law, friend. I did everything for the others, but I had abandoned myself. I was not happy, because I did anything possible to

show the others how good I was. I then realized that all those people were part of my life, but the most important person was me and that I am the one who needs my own essence more than anybody else. That insight was the best thing I have ever experienced; I have started taking care of my inner child again, now I listen to her daily and I feel happy.

Seventh Commandment

Break down complex structures to simplify them and to make them suitable for you

If you have the chance of studying in Southern Spain, when you are there just close your eyes, listen to its sounds, and smell its perfumes. If for you it is enough to see it, then simply go to “YouTube”.

How many times have we tried to do a long and highly complex *escobilla*? Doing complex things may be amusing sometimes, provided that we take it as a challenge to keep our mind agile and our ears prompt, NOT as our final goal. Therefore, since that complex *escobilla* is not yours - you did not create it - and it is rather your master’s artistic expression, it belongs to him/her, then you might take years to make it yours and even when you do, it will not be the same anyway, because it will reflect your own energy and style. You need time to understand that this marvellous *escobilla* created by a flamenco artist has the only function of inspiring you, which means you do not need to copy it using the metronome to make it exactly as it was. After so much copying and frustration because the result is not the same, you start allowing yourself some modifications, even if you nearly feel guilty for destroying what the master had prepared. Our body’s maturity gradually generates a filter, and our emotional intelligence removes that “guilt” when we realize we are inside that execution with our own story, emotions, physical peculiarities, expressed by a unique and unrepeatable being.

When we work with a great artist who is also a good master, it will be the artist him/herself who will tell us to rebuild all the *escobilla* with our own tools. Pay attention: if you do not have a valid guide, it will be up to you to set limits and wonder “where am I?”; not once, but thousands of times, in each choreography you will dance; you will have to include your whole being, otherwise you will only be one of the many dancers without a specific identity. The sounds - and not the shape we give them - are our true inspiration; I mean the flamenco sounds of this land, that can only be found here, because behind the border they lose air and salt. That is why I said that “if you have the chance of studying in Southern of Spain, when you are there just close your eyes, listen to its sounds and smell its perfumes”.

The Groups’ Reflections on the seventh Commandment.

-The big responsibility to make the step perfectly not to disappoint the master. Thanks to these comments I realize that I think a lot, I focus on the others and not on myself when I am dancing, I do need to work on these commandments!

-Technique is a challenge for me. My mind likes telling me what is wrong. Sometimes I might be able to execute a certain *escobilla* while other times I get lost, it is an endless game. I must allow myself to go deeper.

-After reading your book I made various reflections, one of them is that some steps are no good for us, that is why we cannot do them. Remembering this helps me a lot, I am preparing a choreography which is not mine and I am trying to change it a little bit to make it more personal. Now everything has more sense.

-This explanation helps me but could also be an excuse when I cannot do something.

-This commandment explains my anxiety towards the classes I attend, in which I want to understand and get to know every single *palo* I study. In my country we have few chances to study with important masters and our questions are not always answered; we simply study *escobillas* and *braceo* with all their possible combinations. I realize that in each choreography I focus on technical difficulties to reach some virtuosity; I wonder if this is the correct approach.

-Most of the masters coming to my town (I guess this happens everywhere) only come for short stages; sometimes they prefer leaving steps, steps, steps and technique; but later I do not know how to mix them with the *cante*.

-I like this commandment a lot. Personally, I study each step, each element I learn from great masters, afterwards I use them for my own dance with my personal shape of sounds and steps; I really like learning and even more getting surprised by what I can do.

-The truth is that it is not only difficult for me to dance like my masters, but I also need a lot of time to repeat those terrible *escobillas* they teach me! This commandment is very important because it tells us that we must process the sound in our own way and find our style, instead of copying the master's moves; I find this idea highly interesting.

-I try to copy the single danced move but if I do not feel it as mine, I see myself tense in the mirror; then I remember I must breathe. Thank you for reminding me to breath, I simply forget it when I am desperately trying to understand the technique related to a certain step.

-I needed to hear what this commandment says, after 15 years I can say that the *Tientos* created by my master have now become mine.

-If I want to put aside what is no good for me, I first need to practise a lot. I can do a complex *escobilla* slowly, but then I cannot speed up the pace; therefore, I prefer a simple one that I can do well at all speeds.

-I am learning to let go what is not mine. If I see something I like in a dancer, I try to absorb it, but if it results unnatural for me, I then give up and try to express the same intention with something more suitable for my body, which is however undeniably difficult.

-My last time in Seville, I attended a lesson when I saw many girls dancing all in the same way. In the past you could see Manuela Carrasco, Carmen Ledesma...now they all seem clones to me.

Eighth Commandment.

Emphasize the essential ideas of your dancing

“Step by step, with humility, patience, and awareness. Less hurry and more body awareness. Understanding what I feel and where I feel it. These are the essential ideas I want to follow at this point of my life”.

It took me so long to finally believe I have beautiful peculiarities I can trust! One day I realized that, beyond and despite my defects, my fears, my needs and the buzzing of my ego, my dance had something unique, that does not belong to anybody else. The sky opened and I caught a glimpse of my future path. I got fed up with playing that wicked role of someone who did not allow my authentic being to feel totally satisfied when I danced, that part of me who paid attention to what the others would say instead of taking care of my own feelings. I had to abandon that painful feeling which makes you believe you will never reach your destination; I do not even know where it is exactly, and therefore I do not like anything I do, and I feel compelled to work harder and harder on technique to acquire speed and virtuosity. On the contrary, I finally reached the expansive feeling of swimming in the air and opening my arms towards the sky. One day, probably feeling tired of never reaching the destination, I raised my sight; I stopped looking at my feet, my arms, my breast, and I discovered my navel, my waist, my life, my chest, my hands, my head, the universe. I stopped making “virguerías” (word used to describe technically difficult exercises) and discovered that staying inside of me was my strongest source of confidence. By releasing my arms, I gave wings to what my heart was feeling, my gestures changed, and the fire of my own truth emerged from my deepest side. Have you noticed that the mora queen, the Goddess, the Lady of flamenco, Manuela Carrasco, never snaps her fingers?

Which are your peculiarities? What is the essence of your dance? What expresses you at best?

The Groups' Reflections on the eighth Commandment.

-For me, listening and feeling music calmly is essential to keep focused on what I feel.

-The essence of my dancing: Art and myself; dancing is my being's most genuine expression.

-I am starting to enjoy these moments and to reflect on where I want to go, I have just realized I do not know yet.

-At the moment I cannot answer these questions 100%, even if I know I like tangos very much because they involve me deeply and I could dance them for hours.

-I have very little experience, I am still a beginner, but I recognize myself in these words; lately I have been guided by flamenco, which is in my veins; I do not make complicated steps, only “marcajes”, but these are full of passion, in which I express my *duende* as I feel it. Therefore, I can certainly claim that the best of me comes from corporal expression, from my dramatic attitude, from the way I feel in that specific moment.

-Here in Seville, and more generally in Andalusia, flamenco people prefer a simple *marcaje*, a single movement made with you shoulder or your head, provided that it is well executed on the *compás*, rather than a very difficult and choreographed move. I love dancing when it fulfils you and expresses your feelings, because dancing is not only *tablao* and shows; it is looking at some elderly gipsy women dancing few simple steps, that people like exactly because they are well executed in their simplicity.

-I like listening to music calmly and moving my body *a compás* with total improvisation. This is dancing flamenco too; it is not mandatory to make complicated *zapateos*.

-Sometimes I tortured myself thinking of what the others would say instead of trusting my qualities and expressing what differentiates me.

-Here is what I want: finding myself to express how I am; how can I reach this meeting with myself?

-I think I am humble and generous when I dance, I never hurry. Nevertheless, it is hard for me to find myself, it might be due to fear or to lack of confidence.

-I used to get fed up when I did not satisfy my own expectations; now I take it easy.

-I imagine myself dancing *a compás*. I do it when I arrive at the dance class and I sit on the floor to focus on the *compás*, feeling the vibes coming from the ground up to my body.

-If I do not allow my body to become music, I will never make an *escobilla*, no matter how difficult it might be. I am music to make music.

-I like one thing about myself: I always search for something aesthetic and beautiful with all my body, something different from the usual structural line.

- The essence of my dancing changes depending on what I am experiencing in a particular moment. I let all the energies - invisible useful energies - flow freely through my heart, for me and for all the other beings. I do not dance proper flamenco, it is rather a fusion between inner and outer world; I dance life, I enjoy dancing.

-My best quality is my constant will to learn something new. My best dance is also the best of myself.

Ninth Commandment.

Search for the information you need

Imagine if you were eating a cake that you adore all in a bite: in this way you would not taste it, you could even get strangled while eating it, or it may result indigestible. On the contrary, if you ate it slowly in small pieces, you could enjoy it much more. This seems obvious but it is not, especially because we do not exactly know what we need, which has nothing to do with what we want. These things happen to us much more often than we think, because our ego usually desires what it does not really need, just to attract attention. Indeed, we are much more in touch with what we want than with what we need. Our will is more capricious and ecstatic, our need pushes us towards research, and real experience is exactly within that movement. You will have already listened to the passage from the Bible quoting “ask and you shall receive”. It is also quite fashionable to say that “the universe conspires so that you realize your dreams”, quoting the movie entitled “The Secret”. Well, apparently it is not so easy to know what we want even if it is there, in front of us. Before asking, it is essential to know what we need and what we wish. For those who read the book “Flamenco, my Inspiration”: I recommend you read the chapter “Dancing with your deepest desire”.

Sometimes we are so eager to know everything, that we accumulate knowledge indiscriminately. We collect *escobillas*, lessons, choreographies, creating our own ideal library: this is Pepe’s, this is Manuela’s, etc... However I wonder: how many *escobillas* have you learned so far, and how many more are you going to learn? The one you remember better than all the others (maybe because it is the first you did, or the easiest or maybe because you studied it longer) will be the base you use to start creating; the one explaining you which *palo* is the most suitable for you; then, study it carefully until it becomes your own. If you feel excited dancing *Soleá*, then study *Soleá* with all the masters you can find, absorb its essence thanks to each of them and let it be expressed within yourself, creating a synthesis in the silence of your inner rest because, on the other end, you will feel great mental confusion. Starting from there, knowing you are going to enter with all your being into a *Soleá*, if you ever need to empower your foot technique, then follow all the lessons you can, as long as they help you create a dance which is in touch with yourself, leading you towards an intention and precise direction with each movement (using the words of my master and friend Víctor García - Corporal Therapist); go on until this “cocktail” perfectly settles inside of you and until you understand what belongs to you and what is yours.

Ask yourself: what do I need now? And listen to the answer given by your heart; if you let it come from your mind, you will go back to accumulating theoretical concepts, like in a library. Discover instead what your dance needs - which is probably what your life needs too - if you do it consciously, the answer will arrive.

The Groups’ Reflections on the ninth Commandment.

-So obvious and so simple. At more than 40, I have learned that answers come with questions and that it is essential to have a destination if I want to ride my own boat.

-I really liked this reflection and the other ones too; each of them moved some feelings and sensations. I have just started to learn flamenco; I know the path will be long, but I live each moment with deep joy.

- "What your dance needs is probably what your life needs too". Really? Then I will keep on searching, because I have not realized what it is yet.

- This commandment makes me think about certain personal aspects of my life I was not paying attention to, now I realize they can really help me find my own essence.

-Finally, thanks to this inspiration I have understood what I needed! Thank you so much.

-This commandment is wonderful! "May the synthesis be done within yourself". Thanks a lot.

Tenth Commandment.

Create and re-create your dance with the energy of that precise moment

How? The question is always the same: how and with which tools?

FEELING where the axle and the centre of my body is, in relation to balance.

FEELING where my Strength is.

FEELING where my Weight is.

FEELING when I break those parameters.

FEELING when I come back to the structure making me feel "at home", which means inside myself, with my energy being available and centred.

FEELING how I can make different movements with each part of my body, when I move my weight from one side to the other, when I rely on the strength of each part of my body and try to balance myself.

FEELING what I do when I *zapateo*.

FEELING what I do when I do a *marcaje*.

FEELING what I do when I twirl.

It is not a choreography; it is me dancing inside my own steps. The same choreography made by all my classmates becomes unique because I am performing it. When I understand

this, I respect myself and accept how I am - even if I still do not know *who* I am - and I know I can do it differently from anybody else without trying hard to be like other people. In this path of “uncertainty”, I gradually discover myself. When a dance becomes mine, I feel certain, balanced, strong, I can sustain my weight. In a moment, the centre of my body gets connected with balance. When I make a dance my own, I feel certain, balanced, in a moment I can break everything and let myself be guided by the present, losing the structure, and going back to it later. This means allowing myself to lose control trusting my abilities, knowing that I will be able to go back to my centre after channelling all that energy - which needs to be expressed - impulsively and instinctively. For this reason, people say that a flamenco dancer is “wild”, and students admire that spontaneity as something surprising. It is a matter of learning control and then decide when to lose it without fear. That is why the limits of one’s body must be accurately studied, so that you know how far you can go. To dominate ourselves, we must know our body deeply, as well as the emotions generated by each single movement, while we often try to control them mentally with our prejudices towards what we imagine we should not do, without the actual experience proving it. It is a matter of enjoying yourself and of liking even what you do not know. It is just in what you do not know about yourself that you will find the strength to grow in your dance and in your life.

Final Conclusions

The first nine commandments were very clear to me even before I started the training on aware corporal therapy, that I consider to be essential for flamenco. That training lasted 21 days, with online classes of 90 minutes each; during those classes 130 participants had to write notes and to practice in the following days of the week. The four key moments of that flamenco corporal activity were connected to the positioning of the body as the base of everything, spreading then to the corporal position they had to work on: *escobillas*, twirls and *marcajes*; this is all precisely described in “Technique and Being, in Unity” (the fourth part of the book “Flamenco, My Inspiration” - Ed. Círculo Rojo - 2015). Later, however, I felt the need of offering practise beyond theory to those who had never been to Seville or at least had never attended my classes. That is why I decided to give away for free the practical version of what was written in the book, to facilitate a better comprehension of the concepts I had explained; that was my way of joining the structure of flamenco dance with those Beings it expresses.

Each of the essential elements of this aware corporal technique - described in the book and in my online sessions - has got some emotional connection to be discovered. For this reason, those commandments gradually defeated the physical armours which were marking a certain temper, learned with years of studying flamenco technique without ever acquiring awareness of one’s emotions; the story, the fears, the blocks, they all create limiting beliefs to everyone, not only in life but also in dancing. Show me how you dance, I will tell you who you are.

I proposed the tenth commandment at the end of those 21 days, whose aim was to provide the participants with a habit to consciously study each body movement and each emotion that movements can generate. In effect, the tenth commandment, *create and re-create your dance with the energy of a precise moment*, is not only related to physical maturity, but also to the emotional one. There are many students and professionals who practise for years; their bodies acquire a certain maturity while their emotions, doubts and reflections keep blocked. They limit their will to understand themselves deeply within their emotional story; this considerably limits their artistic expression. Artists, on the contrary, must stay in connection with their source, their centre, their creation; this movement towards us is exactly what we need to be different from anybody else; it is the processing of an inner space which is hard to face but which inevitably helps us if we do not want our flamenco to look like what we would never tolerate in life.

Flamenco is pure energy: it removes your blocks and puts you in front of what you do not want to face. It makes you feel what you are not good at, which creates frustration, anger, what you do not dare to do, the reason why you compare yourself to others and you compete with them. The intense work of the four tutorials, the daily practise and the reflections rising from that, brought the participants, once they analysed this tenth and last commandment, to express all their gratitude without being able to say anything else, sometimes they even felt a bit surprised for how deep they could go, in a silence leading them towards an inner and intimate space. Since that moment, no one has ever danced again as they did before, because they had entered a totally new world.

I felt more than satisfied knowing I had helped them and led them to the beginning of that inner journey that we all continued, each one according to one’s possibilities, time, and pace. In the following days, messages were posted on the group; the participants happily explained how they had learned the technique, practised with the tutorials, transferring those exercises to their daily practise with better awareness. They shared the results they were obtaining and accepted it was still hard for them to transfer them into their dancing expression.

The creative work connected to the energy of that specific moment needs time to take possession of the information and to be able to use it at one's own advantage.

In my life, nothing could push me to grow and to overcome my limits more than flamenco. Now I am starting again, from a "feeling of helplessness" not directly linked to flamenco but rather to my story, which can be expressed in my dancing.

The private Facebook group "La Técnica y el Ser en Unidad" keeps on working and searching; you can be included by sending me an email to: tutorial@la.india.es

"I can come along the path with you, as someone did it for me.

I can facilitate the process for you, as mine was facilitated.

In the honour of those who supported me and thanks to my experience, I can now do the same with you."

Flamenco Artist, Corporal Therapist, Facilitator and Writer.

www.la-india.es

El Flamenco Mi Inspiración, ed. Círculo Rojo 2015.

Seville, Spain

GLOSSARY

A compás = following the rhythm

Compás = cadence or rhythm of a musical composition

Baile = dance

Bata de cola = a traditional Flamenco skirt or dress with a train featuring many ruffles, it is a garment and memorable feature of Flamenco performance.

Braceo = typical flamenco movements done with one's arms

Bulería = palo, musical form with its own specific rhythm and compás

Cante = popular Andalusian or Gypsy singing

Cantaor/a = flamenco singer

Castañuelas = castanets

Compás = cadence or rhythm of a musical composition

Duende = special innate gift and charisma that person has for dancing, singing, playing thanks to which art emerges naturally during a performance, it appeals directly to the emotions that the person provokes in the audience when he/she puts all his/her soul in the performance

Escobilla = flamenco expression indicating a rhythmic melodic and extended zapateado

Golpe = name of a flamenco step

Marcaje = flamenco expression indicating rhythmic movements involving the whole body

Palmas = accompaniment to flamenco singing and dancing, which is performed by tapping with the fingers of one hand on the palm of the other or blowing both palms

Palo = flamenco expression used to define the various flamenco styles

Peinetas = female hair ornament consisting of a convex body and a set of spikes that fit over the bun

Punta = shoe toe

Sevillanas = typical dance of Andalusian festivities

Soleá = palo, musical form with a specific rhythm and compás

Tablao = place where you can see flamenco live shows

Tacón = heel

Tientos = palo, musical form with its own specific rhythm and compás

Zapatear = shoe tapping