

## Fanning the Flames of the Goddess

by Nada Anna Khodlova

*“This Ancient Dance is a spiral labyrinth where hips begin to sway across the fires of femininity a dancer finds her way... To a time when the drummers were women and they would shake their hips and pound, trancing themselves in ecstatic states until their bodies hit the ground and they would burn inside a thousand fires to know they are the Sun and a thousand fires in a thousand bellies would turn back into One. Dance yourself into a trance burn inside your inner flame and you, for this moment shall never be the same. Your Self is a sun with a thousand fires in your core come dance with us tonight and we shall spark a thousand more!”*

— "Romancing the Divine", Jacqui Lalita

As humanity came out of the forests and jungles and began to move from the realm of animals to harnessing the power of fire, song, word, and dance, the tether connecting us to Mother Earth became tangled as we became more civilized. Much of the ancient traditions keeping us connected and whole have been lost and yet, it is still known deep down in the depths of our womb. Now in the age of technology we arrive at a new dawn where the yearning to connect to the deeper of the dancing web of the universe begins to take a stronger hold and arises in importance in our lives today. It is especially important for girls and women who have lost their rightful standing as the living representation of the goddess herself.

In the passage from girlhood to woman, particularly in western culture, studies show girls lose self esteem, develop body image issues among other things, and in a sense, experience a loss of themselves. The essence of this phenomenon is captured in fairy tales where young women eat poisoned apples and prick their fingers with poisoned needles and fall asleep for a thousand years. The story of Ophelia, from Shakespeares' Hamlet, dramatically and poignantly shows the destructive forces that plague young woman. I experienced this as well and it was only through my rediscovery of my body/self/spirit through dance, the study and then career as a dance therapist, the

goddess gaia in all her aspects, and women's ritual dances and traditions that I began to flame the goddess back on.

Ophelia by Sir John Everett Millais, 1851-52



In my study of traditional women's dances from the Balkans, Greece, Armenia, Italy, and the Gypsies I learned that there are various inherent meanings to the dances, dance styles, and the clothing/embroidery/textiles. The connection goes to the goddess and women as living goddesses. These symbolic manifestations are a reminder of this connection. The dance rituals and ceremonial textiles bring honor, energy, and protection to the womb, the sacred portal of the goddess. On many levels these symbols interlace to support a constant practice of daily embodied living as goddess.

In these fast changing times it becomes imperative to reconnect the 'self' with the 'goddess' and re ignite the power of these women's ancient practices/dances/rituals/traditions. To untangle the goddess thread we need to reignite these ancient traditions in our modern times to not only save our selves but especially our girls and to grow goddesses. The development of women is almost entirely devoid of the power and solace known in these ancient traditions. The following highlight just a few of these

powerful traditions focusing on girls passage to woman/goddess hood across different cultures.

### Puberty Rituals: Life Blood, Inner Fire

In many tribal cultures, menarche is considered one of the most important life passages. In the Navajo religion the puberty ceremony is considered the most important ritual. Not only does it ensure the health, prosperity, and well being of the maiden, but the ceremony is symbolic. The maiden honored represents Changing Woman, the most respected Goddess of the Navajo people, and the reproductive cycle. Her personal coming of age is connected to the growth of the plants and the fertility of the Mother Earth. In Greece, menstrual blood was the “supernatural red wine” given by Hera to the gods. In India, Kali invited the gods “to bathe in the bloody flow of her womb and drink. The Norse god Thor owed his enlightenment and eternal life to bathing in a river of menstrual blood. Odin was made powerful by stealing the “wise blood from the mother goddess’s triple cauldron and drinking it.” How many girls are brought up knowing the power and significance of their menstrual blood?



### Hands of Fire/Firewalking:

#### Consecration, Activation, Purification, Transformation

The element of fire is a key element in a danced rite of passage known throughout Greece and Thrace called the knas. Women gather the night before a woman's wedding and participate in a henna fire hand dance ceremony. As Laura Shannon writes, "this unforgettable image of the bride, outstretched hands radiant with fire, creates a living embodiment of the Goddess. Shannon continues, "In the knas ritual, where the solar cross and the holy fire are placed on both palms and the backs of the hands, both the giving and the receiving powers of the hands are acknowledged and sanctified." As the bride's hands are activated with fire and the dance, the channels within open, creating a direct path to her role as a priestess of the Goddess, allowing the sacred power which brings new life to flow.

### Barefoot Flamenco: Spanish Gypsy Skirt Dance

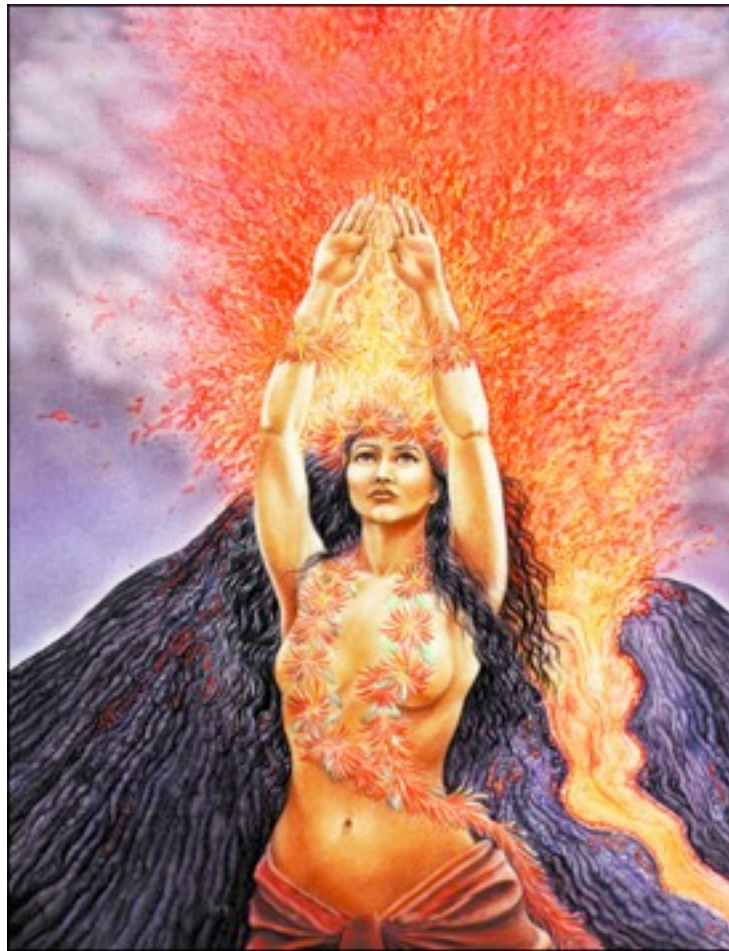
In the beautiful ancient gypsy barefoot flamenco dance form, the Spanish gypsy skirt dance, as taught by Puela Lunaris, I experience the fanning of the skirt, the closing opening, flicking, throwing of the skirt as the cascading pulsation of the internal sacred sexual flame as only known and expressed by a living goddess. The power and sensuality undulates throughout her body and emanates out through the skirt waves. This power is rooted in the earth and flows up to the sky. The container of the dance and skirt allow the full glory of goddess to be expressed, knowing, giving, yet nourishing and protecting. This dance is on the verge of extinction. Many of the women's rituals dance are on the verge of extinction. The goddess is on the verge of extinction. Without this template to the goddess we lose our girls, we have lost many already. Let's grow goddesses and fan the flames of the goddess alive.

It's not only for our girls. As Laura Shannon profoundly states, "what is at stake is the survival of the earth and all living beings. The skills which the dances can help us develop are needed now not only the service of our own transformation, but also for the collective return to safety and peace." (Shannon, L. p. 157, Dancing on the Earth)



Flamenco dancer by Robert Padilla-Montufar

Pele Lava Queen with a thousand fires inside. Woman Living Goddess with a thousand fires dying inside. Where is your flame, your heat, your light? How do you tend to your own hearth in this life on the fly? Burning so bright until your fire dies and you freeze inside. The deepest embers smoldering even though you may not know or see, but it is real and only one spark can make you feel. The spark is there with the girl inside. Lost but waiting to ignite the goddess alive. Tend your inner fire and you will find a hearth smoldering with the light of a thousand goddesses inside. Join hands with the living goddesses and the flames will go live wire and the coals never expire, as a new day dawns where girls go higher and higher, living, breathing, being the goddess with a thousand fires inside.



Pele by Hrana Janto [www.hranajanto.com](http://www.hranajanto.com)

For further information about Dance/Movement Psychotherapy and Growing Goddesses please contact Nada at [nadakhodlova@gmail.com](mailto:nadakhodlova@gmail.com) and visit me at [www.nadakhodlova.com](http://www.nadakhodlova.com) or The Dancing Web on Facebook.

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