

The Provisional Ego

The ego (false and separate sense of self, the “I” [am different] sense) attaches to and feeds off of any and all expectations (honor and disgrace) and will maintain these expectations in an inner fantasy life regardless of external environmental input, casting others or even making up characters for inner dialogue and imaginary scenes. But rather than just relying on the desperate clinging to idiosyncratic fantasy devoid of so-called consensual reality, we tend to fix our identities in social roles that we buy and sell in the cultural marketplace, trying to turn one product into a fortune should we start getting paid for displaying it, paid meaning getting positive (or negative) attention as well as any desires (for or against) met. Besides this falseness, the ego tries to manage the Lahar within that is constantly seeking to (re)join God. The potential Real Self seeking to merge with the One Self in full loving and knowing consciousness when managed by the fearful false self of the ego falls for the promise of a projected Real Self in all that appears other. This is why we hunger and eat, pursue and hold onto, fall in love and act foolishly—trying to get what merger we can given our ego constraints. And it’s the reason we keep trying to get more and more and go deeper and deeper before reluctantly moving on to something else. But all of this must be broken up as nothing less than everything will do. For that God will put you through situations and surround you with people (esp. family, friends, lovers and other strangers) where nothing works because all the conclusions, compensations, defenses and other strategies of the core false self must be found to be more than wanting, they must be found to be completely false and totally useless, so much so that you can’t and don’t want them anymore. Now how will you survive this coring? You can’t stay identified with your ego, as your ego, through your ego, the very thing being done away with. Not to worry, God has provided—the Provisional Ego.

The Provisional Ego lies behind a provisional personality and a provisional aspect for every other Egoic Matrix identity. It comes from freely giving one’s entire human nature to God (through a Perfect Master or the Avatar) before it is actualized or fully divinized, letting the spiritualizing and divinizing reuptakes be His Will and the work-in-the-worlds downdrafts be as He Wishes. This is not the spiritual fantasy of a Master overshadowing you or the astral insanity of your Master taking over your body: no Real Master does such things or has any need of so doing—that is a mayavic misunderstanding of surrenderance and would run counter to the purpose of a Divine Ego subsuming and replacing the false one. The Provisional Ego comes when God within you is activated by a God Realized One that you experience outside you, and this moves your various soul parts and mindbody functions in their individualized qualifications as opposed to the sanskaric drive and karmic autopilot of the hidden and pent-up Lahar pushing its way through evolution, reincarnation and involution.

So the Lower Triad or Upper Triad or even Causal Triad doesn’t run the show, and neither does the Outer Personality, Higher Self, Inner Being or Inner Anything (Subtle and Causal Egoic Matrix identifications). And our Embodied Soul via the Incarnating Soul, Yogic Self and Bodhisattvic Being stops taking experience, giving expression and exchanging sanskaras. You realize that all effort, deserving and development has to be false and you simply stop seeking a separate sense of self as something to hold onto. And this happens spontaneously in waves by touches of His Grace, no doubt after suffering the removal of

resistance. You remain as a witnessing awareness and sometimes also a method actor with roles that come to you from within as the stage is set from without. There is no question of accepting or denying (save as role play) and really no need to question or worry at all.

The Provisional Ego is for relating to others and the world. The inner relationship with God through a personal and impersonal connection with a God Realized human being with duty in Creation (a manifestation of God as a Perfect Master or the Avatar) proceeds without any provisions or provisos as it needs none.

From [Discourses](#) by Meher Baba:

Ego attempts integration around false idea

If the ego were nothing but a medium for the integration of human experience, it would be possible for one to get established in the final Truth merely by carrying further the activity of the ego. But while playing a specific part in the progress of consciousness, the ego also represents an active principle of ignorance that prevents further spiritual development. The ego attempts the integration of experience, but it does so around the false idea of separateness. Having taken an illusion as the foundation for the construction of its edifice, it never succeeds in anything but the building of illusions one upon another. Arriving at the Truth is actually hindered rather than helped by the function of the ego. The process of arriving at the Truth can be fruitful only if the integration presided over by the ego is carried further without bringing in the basic ignorance of separateness.

Master becomes new nucleus of integration

As long as human experience lies within the limitation of duality, integration of experience is an essential condition for a rational and significant life. But the ego as a nucleus for integration has to be renounced because of its inevitable alliance with the forces of ignorance. There arises, then, an imperative need for a new center of integration that will steer clear of the basic ignorance of separateness and will allow free scope for the incorporation of all values formerly inaccessible to the ego-center. Such a new center is provided by the Master, who expresses all that has real value and who represents the absolute Truth. The shifting of interest from unimportant things to important values is facilitated by allegiance and self-surrender to the Master, who becomes the new nucleus for integration.

Union with Master and realization of Truth

The Master, when truly understood, is a standing affirmation of the unity of all life. Allegiance to the Master, therefore, brings about a gradual dissociation from the ego-nucleus, which affirms separateness. After this important crisis in the life of an individual, all mental activity has a new frame of reference. And its significance is to be gathered in the light of its relation to the Master as the manifestation of infinite Truth, not in the light of any relation to the ego-center as a limited "I." The person henceforth finds that all acts that flow from him are no longer initiated from the limited "I" but are all inspired by the Truth working through the Master. He is also no longer interested in the well-being of the limited self but is only interested in the Master as representing universal and undivided life. He

offers all his experiences and desires to the Master, reserving neither the good nor the evil for the limited "I," stripping the ego of all content.

This advancing bankruptcy of the ego does not interfere with the process of integration because the function is now performed around the new center of the Master as representing the Truth. When the ego-nucleus is completely bankrupt and devoid of any power or being, the Master, as Truth, is firmly established in consciousness as its guiding genius and animating principle. This constitutes both the attainment of union with the Master and the realization of the infinite Truth.

Knowledge of true Self

As the ego gradually adjusts itself to the spiritual requirements of life—through the cultivation of humanity, selflessness and love, wholehearted surrender and offering oneself to the Master, as Truth—it suffers a drastic curtailment. It not only offers less and less resistance to spiritual unfoldment but also undergoes a radical transformation. This eventually turns out to be so great that in the end the ego, as an affirmation of separateness, completely disappears and is substituted by the Truth, which knows no separateness.

The intermediate steps of slimming down the ego and softening its nature are comparable to the trimming and pruning of the branches of a wild and mighty tree, while the final step of annihilation of the ego amounts to the complete uprooting of this tree. When the ego disappears entirely, there arises knowledge of the true Self. Thus, the long journey of the soul consists in developing from animal consciousness the explicit self-consciousness as a limited "I," then in transcending the state of the limited "I" of human consciousness, through the medium of the Master. At this stage the soul is initiated into the consciousness of the supreme and real Self as an everlasting and infinite "I am," in which there is no separateness and which includes all existence.

[[Discourses](#), 7th Revised Ed, pp. 176-8.]

Egoism must disappear

The help of the Master is most effective when the aspirant surrenders his ego-life in favor of the unlimited life that the Master represents. Complete self-surrender is most difficult to achieve, and yet the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the decreasing of egoism to its minimum. The objective of spiritual advancement is not so much "works" but the quality of life free from ego-consciousness. If the aspirant has many great things to his credit that he has claimed as his, his ego fastens itself upon the achievements; and this constitutes a formidable hindrance to life unlimited. Hence comes the futility of rituals and ceremonies, acts of charity and good works, external renunciation and penances, when rooted in ego-consciousness.

The dilemma

It is therefore most necessary for the aspirant to keep free from the idea "I do this, and I do that." This does not mean that the aspirant is to avoid all activity through fear of developing this form of the ego. He may have to take to the life of action to wear out the ego he has already developed. Thus he is caught up in a dilemma: if he stays inactive, he does

nothing to break through the prison of his ego-life; and if he takes to a life of action, he is faced with the possibility of his ego being transferred to these new acts.

Treading path like walking on edge of sword

For spiritual advancement the aspirant has to avoid these two extremes and yet carry on a life of creative action. Treading the spiritual path is not like riding a saddled horse but like walking on the sharp edge of a sword. Once a rider is on horseback, he is practically at rest, sitting with more or less ease and requiring very little effort or attention to proceed. Treading the spiritual path, however, requires utmost attention and carefulness since the path affords no halting places or room for expansion of the ego-life. He who enters the path can neither remain where he is nor can he afford to lose his balance. He is thus like one who attempts to walk on the sharp edge of a sword.

Constructing new ego subservient to Master

To avoid inaction on the one hand and pride of action on the other, it is necessary for the aspirant to construct in the following manner a provisional and working ego that will be entirely subservient to the Master. Before beginning anything, the aspirant thinks that it is not he who is doing it but the Master who is getting it done through him. After doing the task he does not tarry to claim the results of action or enjoy them but becomes free of them by offering them to the Master. By training his mind in this spirit, he succeeds in creating a new ego which, though only provisional and working, is amply able to become a source of confidence, feeling, enthusiasm, and “go” that true action must express. This new ego is spiritually harmless, since it derives its life and being from the Master, who represents Infinity. And when the time comes, it can be thrown away like a garment.

There are thus two types of ego—one that can only add to the limitations of the soul, and the other that helps it toward emancipation. The passage from the limiting ego of the worldly to the egolessness of infinite life lies through the construction of a provisional ego generated by wholehearted allegiance to the Master. The construction of a new ego entirely subservient to the Master is indispensable to the dynamics of spiritual advancement.

Sudden transition to egoless life impossible

The aspirant has been accustomed to derive zest in life from his limited ego, and an immediate transition from the life of egoistic action to that of egoless action is impossible on one’s own and also not advisable. If the aspirant were immediately required to avoid all forms of ego-consciousness, he would have to revert to a state of negative passivity, without any joy of expression. Or he would have to seek expression through activity that is merely automatic, like that of a lifeless machine, and therefore he could not derive any sense of fulfillment. The real problem is that the aspirant has to abandon his life of the limited ego and enter into the limitlessness of the egoless life without lapsing into a coma, where there would be an ebbing of all life. Such a coma might give temporary relief from the limitation of the ego-life, but it cannot initiate the aspirant into the infinity of egoless activity.

Spiritual advancement usually gradual

This is the reason why, in most cases, spiritual advancement has to be very gradual and often takes several lives. Where a person seems to have taken long strides in his spiritual advancement, he has merely recapitulated the advancement already secured in previous lives—or there has been special intervention by a Sadguru. In normal cases the advancement of the aspirant has to be gradual. The distance between the limited life of the ego and the limitlessness of the egoless life has to be covered by gradual stages of ego-transformation—so that egoism is replaced by humility, surging desires are replaced by steadily growing contentment, and selfishness is replaced by selfless love.

Ego subservient to Master ensures his help

When the ego is entirely subservient to the Master, it is not only spiritually harmless but indispensable and directly contributory to the spiritual advancement of the aspirant, because it brings him closer and closer to the Master through the life of selfless service and love. The constant inward contact with the Master that it secures makes him particularly amenable to the special help the Master alone can give. The aspirant who renounces the life of an uncurbed and separative ego in favor of a life of self-surrender to the Master is operating, through this new subservient ego, as an instrument in the hands of the Master. In reality the Master is working through him. Just as an instrument has a tendency to get out of order while being put to use, the aspirant is also likely to go wrong during his working in the world. From time to time the instrument has to be cleansed, overhauled, repaired, and set right. In the same way the aspirant—who during his work has developed new problems, entanglements, and shelters for the personal ego—has to be put into working order so that he can move ahead.

Need for recurring contact with Master

The aspirant who enlists in the service of the Master may be compared to a broom with which the Master sweeps the world clean of its impurities. The broom is bound to accumulate the dirt of the world; and unless cleansed again and again and given a new tone, it becomes less efficient in the course of time. Each time the aspirant goes to the Master, it is with fresh spiritual problems. He might have got caught in new entanglements connected with a craving for honor, riches, or other worldly things that allure man. If he pursues these, he might get them; but he might be far from the goal of experiencing God, on whom he had set his heart.

Only through the active intervention of the Master can such spiritual disorders be cured. This task of curing spiritual diseases is comparable to the performance of an operation by a surgeon, who promptly removes the very cause that had been sapping the vital energies of a patient. If a person develops physical ailments and complaints, he must go to the doctor; and if he develops spiritual troubles, he must go to the Master. Thus recurring contact with the Master is most necessary throughout the process of spiritual advancement.

Each resurrection of ego needs fresh surrender

The Master helps the aspirant in his own invincible ways, which have no parallel in the ways of the world. If the aspirant is to be the recipient of this help, he must make a real effort to surrender himself to the divine will of the Master. The personal ego, which the aspirant renounced in his first surrenderance to the Master, may reappear in a new aspect—even within the artificial ego meant to be completely subservient to the Master and create disorder in its smooth working. Hence this new resurrection of the limited personal ego of the aspirant needs to be counteracted through fresh surrender to the Master. The series of successive resurrections of the personal ego have to be accompanied by a series of fresh acts of surrenderance to the Master.

Last surrenderance is that of separateness

Progress from one surrender to greater surrender is a progression from a minor conquest to a major one. The more complete forms of surrenderance represent the higher states of consciousness, since they secure greater harmony between the aspirant and the Master. Thus the infinite life of the Perfect Master can flow through the aspirant in more abundant measure. Spiritual advancement is a succession of one surrender after another until the goal of the final surrenderance of the separate ego-life is completely achieved. The last surrender is the only complete surrenderance. It is the counterpart of the final union in which the aspirant becomes one with the Master. Therefore, in a sense, the most complete surrender to the Master is equivalent to the attainment of the Truth, which is the ultimate goal of all spiritual advancement.

[[Discourses](#), 7th Revised Ed., pp. 253-73]

From [Effort and Grace](#), Open Secrets in Meher Baba's Discourses by Darwin Shaw:

A WORKING STANCE

Meher Baba knows that surrender is not easy for us to do. He says, "Complete self-surrender is most difficult to achieve, and yet the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the decreasing of egoism to its minimum." That is a very powerful statement. Somehow, while continually decreasing our egoism, we have to walk the sharp edge of the sword of "inaction on the one hand and pride of action on the other." What a dilemma!

However, Baba provides a simple, practical way to deal with this dilemma: the creation of a new ego called a "provisional ego" to take the place of the ego that we build up and then dote upon. This new ego, Baba says, becomes the source of our "confidence, feeling, enthusiasm, and 'go' that true action must express."

This provisional ego allows a "working stance" for consciousness that will be completely subservient to the Master. Wholehearted allegiance to the Master is vitally important. It means not holding anything back or keeping a secret life of your own still going on the side.

Operating from the provisional ego, we shift our focus from thinking that it is we who are doing anything to thinking it is the Master who is doing everything through us. There is that paradox again. It is a matter of taking responsibility for our actions and feelings, yet

bypassing the ego and attributing everything to the Master, to his doing. Our purpose is to minimize the sense that we are doing anything.

This provisional ego, surrendered to the Master, helps us toward emancipation. We can use it throughout our journey on the spiritual path. Then, as Meher Baba says, "When the time comes, it can be thrown away like a garment."

The provisional ego is a means for drawing closer to the Master within. Having a provisional ego is like having a close friend who happens to be a Master, who is so close that you know or can get an inspiration as to what he wants or does not want. It is the assumption of an attitude of leaning toward the Will of God. It is a matter of motive, meaning: Are we interested in sanskaric fulfillment or the Will of God? After we die to the false self, our motive becomes serving God's Will. We give up interest in the false self.

LEAVE THE ROOM YOU ARE IN

One of the main requisites of the spiritual path is that as spiritual aspirants we are willing to give our lives for the Master, for God. Meher Baba says, "To be willing to die for the happiness of the Beloved is true love." To die before you die – to die to the self, to die for the Beloved – this can be a means of precipitating our consciousness to a freer level of experience. Dying to oneself is not a temporary letting go of imagination, but a willingness to surrender the egoic life and be born of the spirit.

Dying to ourselves and being born in the spirit is like going from the room we are in to the room next door, where the furnishings are entirely different. This we understand; it is clear to us. We have to leave this room in order to go into that room. We cannot take this room with us.

Our consciousness is the vehicle stationed in the room we are in currently. And when our consciousness is in this room but we want it to be in that room, we have to be willing to leave the room we are in. It is as simple as that, although seemingly difficult for us to do.

REAL EFFORT

We have to work at surrendering. We try to surrender, and then we have the help of the Master. Meher Baba says, "The Master helps the aspirant in his own invincible ways, which have no parallel in the ways of the world. If the aspirant is to be the recipient of this help, he must make a real effort to surrender himself to the divine will of the Master." This should be in bold print: real effort!

Surrenderance of the false self is not something that is done just once; it is repeatedly done, over and over. And as we surrender, we move in the spirit, experiencing more and more of the unlimited consciousness of the Master, of God. This is what it means to be born of the spirit. We surrender the false self to the Master and live through the provisional ego, which is subservient to the Master, our higher self, or God.

As we begin to surrender to the Master, laying down our sanskaras, our burdens, at the Master's feet, putting our trust completely in him, and accepting his grace, we are taking a major step: letting go of the world. From our point of view, we are doing it to unburden ourselves, to be freer, because we are fed up with all the reincarnations, one after the other, and all the complications that go with them. But it is really spiritual progress: We have moved in the spirit. We have taken a step away from the illusory world and the limited self, and made a step toward the reality of God and the unlimited consciousness of God.

To be born of the spirit is a wonderful experience, but that is not enough. We still have to work and become free of inner subjective things that create veils over our consciousness so that we do not perceive the truth as it really is. We have to continue to surrender our self-will in favor of the Will of God, which means putting desires and lesser values aside for the real value.

THE WILL OF GOD

When we surrender to the Master, to God, we become more intuitive. The culmination of listening to the intuitions that come with self-effacement and complete surrender equates with the sixth plane of consciousness. Love expresses itself on the sixth plane as complete and happy surrenderance to the Will of the Beloved; one is completely reconciled to the Will of God. All selfish desires, including longing for the presence of the Beloved, have disappeared. At that stage, one is aware of the How of the Divine Will within. The Kingdom of Heaven opens up for us while we are here on earth.

Even a child can experience God's Will, perhaps even more so than an adult who has a monstrous mind and an even bigger ego. This is why Jesus spoke of becoming like children – not childish, but childlike. We learn that we can trust in God, that God is trustworthy and dependable, more than we are. But to dare to go out on the limb of complete faith in God and depend upon His Will for us, day by day, in every circumstance, requires a real effort, a real daring. I have had some experience with that. Even from my early life when I was working on cattle ranches in the West, I was aware that I was doing things under the Will of God. I felt that God was guiding me.

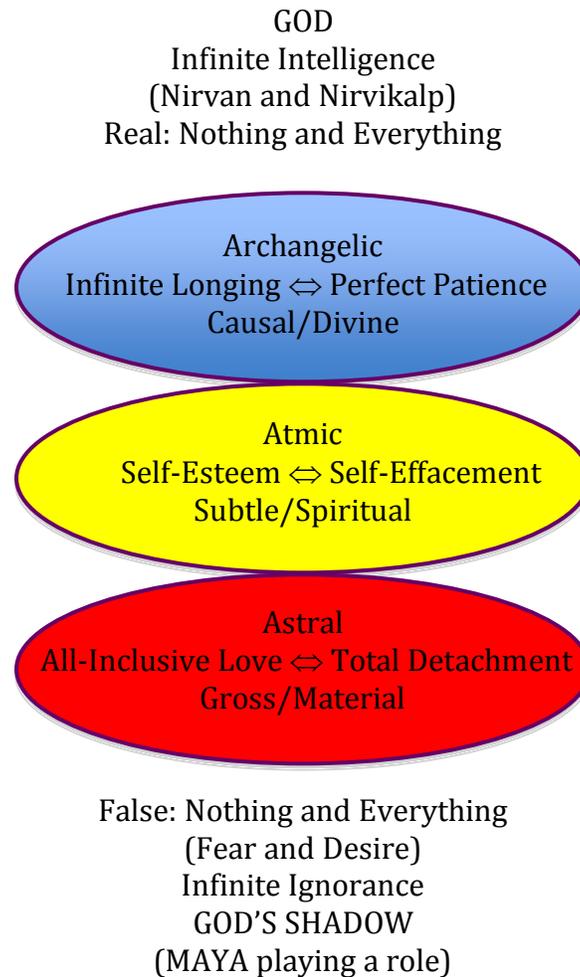
This is something that is worth trying to experiment with, trying to see how we would deal with surrendering ourselves completely to God's Will without having a whole side issue of things that we can draw upon to please ourselves. And when His Will goes contrary to what we want to do, if we are willing to do His Will rather than go with our will, we will make progress toward experiencing His unlimitedness, especially if we do it in the spirit of love.

The sense of God's Will coming through can become a steady, substantial, and reliable flow. Moreover, it is not so much like a message coming over a wire – it is an access to the presence of God. It is not something apart from God – it is an access to God. And this is where our consciousness begins to merge in God.

[\[Effort and Grace pdf, pp. 56-7\]](#)

Also relevant here, and inspired by Effort and Grace, is the figure from [Everything in Nothing](#) showing the two poles putting us under tension in relation to the three worlds, a tension/polarity used like a battery by the Master for the Provisional Ego.

Two Impossible Poles for Three Unreal Worlds and One Central Axis



The Provisional Ego takes care of the false self of the Embodied Soul and takes over the Personality (and all other aspects of all Egoic Matrices). The resultant Provisional Personality (and all other aspects of all Egoic Matrices) no longer serve the false self through a life of validating core conclusions, glorifying core compensations and strengthening ego defenses. Rather, core conclusions of the separative ego are replaced with Faith in God and the ways and words of the God Realized; core compensations are given up in favor of Service to the Master; and ego defenses are dismantled in Surrenderance to God. There are bridges of Truth that get one from the false self to the Provisional one: the bridge from core conclusions to Faith in God is Love of Truth; the bridge from core compensations to Service to the Master is sublimation of falseness in favor of Truth; and the bridge from ego defenses to Surrenderance is seeking Truth.

Provisional Ego		
Surrenderance to the Master (as an embodiment of God)	Faith in the Master (as being one with God)	Service to the Master (as service to God)
Bridging Ego		
Seeking Truth	Love of Truth	Sublimation of falseness in favor of Truth
Separative Ego		
Ego Defenses	Core Conclusions	Core Compensations