



Does God Have A Form?, by Arthur Osborne

"Has God a form?" a man once challenged Ramana Maharshi, the great Indian sage.

"Who says God has a form?" Ramana retorted. The questioner persisted,
"If God is formless is it not wrong to ascribe to Him the form of an idol and worship Him in it?"

He had understood the retort to mean, "Nobody says God has a form." But it meant exactly what it said and was now amplified, "Let God alone; tell me first whether *you* have a form."

"Of course I have a form, as you can see, but I am not God." "Are you then the physical body made of flesh and bones and blood and nicely dressed?"

"Yes, that must be so; I am aware of my existence in this bodily form."

"You call yourself that body because now you are aware of your body, but are you that body? Can it be yourself in deep sleep when you are quite unaware of its existence?"

"Yes, I must have remained in the same bodily form even in deep sleep because I am aware of it until I fall asleep, and as soon as I wake I see that I am just as I was when I went to sleep."

"And when death occurs?" The questioner stopped and thought a minute,
"Well, then I am considered dead and the body is buried."

"But you said your body is yourself. When it is being taken away to be buried why doesn't it protest and say: `No! no! don't take me away! This property I have acquired, these clothes I am wearing, these children I have begotten, they are all mine, I must remain with them!'"

The visitor then confessed that he had wrongly identified himself with the body and said, "I am the life in the body, not the body in itself."

Then Ramana explained to him: "Till now you seriously considered yourself to be the body and to have a form. That is the primal ignorance which is the root cause of all trouble. Until that ignorance is got rid of, until you know your formless nature, it is mere

pedantry to argue about God and whether He has a form or is formless or whether it is right to worship God in the form of an idol when He is really formless. Until one sees the formless Self one cannot truly worship the formless God."

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