EARTH SUMMIT
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Who Can Say What Should Be UNCED?

As you read this month's issue, your publisher and editor will be in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We have been bid to join with the spiritual leaders of the world's major faiths and with key parliamentarians in early June to discuss the many matters of environment and development facing the human family.

It's all part of something called Earth Summit, but officially known by the less-than-inspiring alphabetic appellation UNCED, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. You have probably seen it on CNN, since Ted Turner is using his estimable news resources to promote it. Ted and a lot of other people sense the importance of this potentially historic assembly. An astonishing 70,000 men and women are expected for the twelve-day conference, the largest-ever gathering to focus consciousness on the earth and its threatened inhabitants. The heads of 60 nations will be there.

This may be a watershed encounter, progenitor of many such councils where the human tribes all sit down together and, as we say in Hawaii, "talk story." The very fact of such a meeting is a sign of hope. That it has magnetized journalists and artists and activists and presidents and lamas and padres and swamis is just a millimeter short of miraculous.

Still, I know what you're thinking, "Seventy thousand people! Ridiculous. Seventy people couldn't agree on what a tree is, let alone how to save one." You're right, of course, and it is one of the great fears of organizers that the United Nations Earth Summit may be too unwieldy, too ambitious, too politically pre-determined and, let's say it, too big.

That's where the Global Forum on Human Survival comes in. This is a small group

of very big people who believe that a purely political and scientific solution to the matrix of human dilemmas is insufficient. They hold that politicians need to be informed by spiritual leaders, and that spiritual leaders could benefit from the reality-check of sitting down with scientists, artists and politicians. They note that this is seldom done, for the two groups have a healthy distrust for each other's domain. One thinks that politicians are selfish, mindless opportunists who care little for mankind's real needs. Little wonder they haven't sat down together much.

The Global Forum thinks they should sit together, candidly and often. The idea really the dream of Japanese philanthropist Akio Matsumura, is that we need both sides of ourselves focused on these issues. The parliamentarians bring to the table pragmatic concerns for our temporal, physical, material and social well-being. The spiritual leaders contribute insight into our eternal, metaphysical, unearthly and spiritual needs. Nothing that the problems which threaten the earth have derived from breakdowns in both arenas of our existence. Mr. Matsumura has concluded that out best chance for solutions is to take both into account.

When the Global Forum heard about Earth Summit, they saw that world leaders were neglecting the spiritual dimension of the problem, and they organized a small three-day event to fill the gap. One of the most sensible things about the Global Forum's Mini Summit in Rio is that it will be personal. A handful of scientists, businessmen, artists, media professionals, politicians and religious men and women will meet privately, allowing them to interact more intimately than is the norm at such conferences. Long speeches from the podium will be replaced with opportunities for each participant to be heard. Questions from the floor to moderators will be replaced with personal testimony. In other words, there is the hope of real communication, something that might prove useful in saving the earth.

In such an atmosphere, we are hopeful that some of the great wisdom of Sanatana Dharma may be expressed and understood. Happily, Hinduism will be strongly represented in Rio. As long-time readers know, we feel strongly that the ancient wisdom of India has much to offer mankind at this crossroads of history. If the ideals of dharma, ahimsa, family integrity, simplicity, generosity, tolerance for others' ways and hour-by-hour spirituality that have lighted the way of Hindus for so many millennia can be shared with the politicians seeking solutions to complex problems, new solutions may be found. They may endow their search for a technological fix with a more human face; they may even seek to instill right values into our earth colony, values which change attitudes, which change actions. After all, that is the strategic solution. Everything else, every engineering breakthrough,

is working only with the symptoms. By focusing on basic beliefs, values and attitudes, we approach the cause and have hope of a cure.

We need your help with this. It's too late for the Earth Summit in Rio, but the Global Forum will hold its next important gathering in April of 1993 in Kyoto, Japan. Please help us to represent Sanatana Dharma in all its glory in Japan. For one thing more traditional Hindu spiritual men and women are needed in Kyoto. There is a special interest in those leaders who are based in India. They need not be the most famous, or run the biggest ashram. The important thing is that they be authentic representatives of Sanatana Dharma, living expressions of our faith, our way, our ideals.

You are invited to suggest names. Take a few minutes and fill in the form here. Share your thoughts on how dharma can be applied to the issues. Be practical, or visionary. Be sanguine or cynical. Be pithy or prolix. But don't be silent. With your help on our Reader Survey, the Hindu voice, your voice, can be heard in the Great Councils and make a difference.

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