

---

# Why Buddhists commit themselves for the climate

**By Thomas Seifert**

The man-made climate warming accelerated during the last decade and threatens the nature and the human beings:

- **Drought of forests and forest fires**
  - The working partnership of German forest owners speaks of a historic catastrophe.
  - In 2019: largest forest fire in Mecklenburg since 1934 and largest forest fire in Brandenburg since 1989.
- **Impairment of agriculture because of droughts**
  - 2018 was a catastrophic year for the agriculture in Germany, due to heat and drought. The damage amounted to 3 billion Euros. State support was necessary.
  - The year 2019 is better, but colza plantations suffered.
  - The German Minister of agriculture announced that farmers had to prepare themselves for the climate change.
- **Warming and acidification of oceans**
  - The oceans absorb most of the warming of the atmosphere and thereby the temperature of the oceans rises. The elevated temperature of the water damages corals. Fish species migrate Northward.
  - Through absorption of large amounts of carbon dioxide of the atmosphere, the acidity of the oceans increases. This impacts corals also as well as the microorganisms that are at the beginning of the food chain.
- **Melting of glaciers**
  - All over the world, the glaciers shrink dramatically because of climate changes. Former glacier valleys convert into empty stone deserts. The diversity of species disappears.
  - The average temperature in Greenland increased by 1.8 °C and by 3 °C in winter. The ice melts in Greenland 6 times faster than in 1980.
- **Increase in extreme weather conditions**
  - The German Weather Service (DWD) expects for the future more storms, extreme rain falls and heat waves due to climate warming.

- 
- Hurricane Dorian destroyed 13.000 houses in the Bahamas and causes 50 victims.
  - **Direct impact of heat on human beings**
    - Heat waves cost thousands of human lives in Germany according to estimates.
    - In 2018 490 deaths were due to heat in Berlin only. 1032 deaths were assigned to heat in Japan.
  - **Social peace is endangered by the global climate warming**
    - Floods, cyclones and other extreme weather conditions caused the migration of about 7 million inland refugees in the first half of 2019.

The current climate change with its detrimental impact is only the beginning. All statistical graphs point upwards for example for carbon dioxide and average worldwide temperature. The harmful greenhouse gases will continue to increase and will stay effective in the atmosphere for centuries. It causes complete melting of ice, rise of the sea level, large scale floods, thawing of permafrost, weather catastrophes, mass migration and the risk of military conflicts.

### **Buddhists are concerned about the well-being of men**

Buddhists try predominantly to help people to free themselves from illusions and to reach awakening. But this is sufficient only as long as the basic needs are satisfied: nutrition, accommodation, clothing, absence of threats to the life and limbs.

When humans are endangered by an existential threat, the pressing concern must be the elimination of this threat and the protection of their existence.

Can Buddhists just look on this situation and hope for the help of others? Should they confine themselves to help people suffering by means of spiritual teaching? This would be an all too fatalist attitude.

And when Buddhists commit to avert an existential threat, does it have to happen outside the Buddhist community? Does a Buddhist have to take off his rakusu before averting a threat to humans or the nature? No! He or she can keep his rakusu on.

### **Buddhists are concerned about the well-being of nature**

Someone who is concerned about the well-being of men has necessarily to be concerned about the condition of nature, since the life of men depends on the nature. Men can survive only with sufficient water and healthy food from nature. Consequently, all efforts must be directed to avert existential threatening to nature.

Furthermore, Buddhists care for the well-being of all sentient beings. Buddhism explicitly includes thereby all animals. Animals are not considered as objects only for the satisfaction of human needs, but as beings with their own value and right to live.

Therefore, many Buddhists refrain from eating meat or fish. The existential threat to animal species and their extinction is a very sad issue for Buddhists, regardless of which species is concerned. The protection of individual animals and animal species however requires the protection of all biotopes of wildlife: the landscapes of the earth, the rivers and oceans.

---

For this reason, Buddhists shall stay on the front line for the protection of men and nature against existential threats, like the climate change.