Preface

Water is the life giving and the origin of all matters. This is not just a myth.

The fact is that:

- Water is a source of human being's culture and civilization;
- Water is in us and around us in an endless buffer. More than 70 % of the surface of the earth is water, and human body generally contains 70 % of water;
- There is enough water on the earth;—still there is a lack of water;
- Philosophically or culturally water is a phase, a process, a movement, a virtue, and a status.

As summarized in Tao Te Ching by Lao Zi, "The highest level of ethics is like water. Water knows how to benefit all things in the world but never contends its own contribution or competes with them. It stays in places loathed by all men, it therefore comes near the Tao".

Water has many folds of characters:

- Water is inclusive and philosophical;
- Water can temper force with grace and mercy;
- Water has very strong cohesion and infinite capacity;
- Water is clear, transparent, fair, and perfectly open in all one's actions;
- Water has the "power" of two opposite sides—blessing and catastrophic.

Few things are like water—a subtle and thought-provoking substance, being so simple yet complicated, so obvious yet unpredictable, so soft and peaceful yet powerful, and so unexceptional yet special and even unique. Water is by far the world's biggest commodity. It is everyone's property, but still it is not obvious for everyone.

Still, and may be just because of this, we very seldom make time to wonder about the many folds and how water in nearly unbelievingly many ways affects our life.

This is what this book is about:

- Naturally the properties of water and the many phases of water from ice to gas, as well as the many faces of water in Chap. 1;
- Philosophically or culturally how water influences our language, our society, our history, and human beings ourselves in Chap. 2;
- Geologically the increasable resources of water on the earth on how it is distributed in snow and ice, oceans, rivers, lakes, etc. And functionally how these water resources influence our life and our world, as in Chaps. 3–5;
- Materially how water creates transport possibilities (Chap. 6), how water gives and takes energy (Chap. 7), how water constantly is changing the surface of the earth (Chap. 8), how it is enough water on the earth, but still it sometimes gets too much or too little (Chap. 9), as well as how water gives us recreation experiences (Chap. 10), and how water supply us with food in a myriad of many folds (Chaps. 11).

It would be too ambitious to believe that one could manage to cover all the ways of water, but hopefully the book, through showcasing the versatility of water for human culture and activities as well as sharing the outcome of the trips to many places of the world and what have been thought and enlightened in mind by the two authors, might contribute to increased interest and insight in the most important substance in our life and society in the past, present and future—water for the researchers, students, decision makers, and everyone who are interested in water-related science and culture.

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