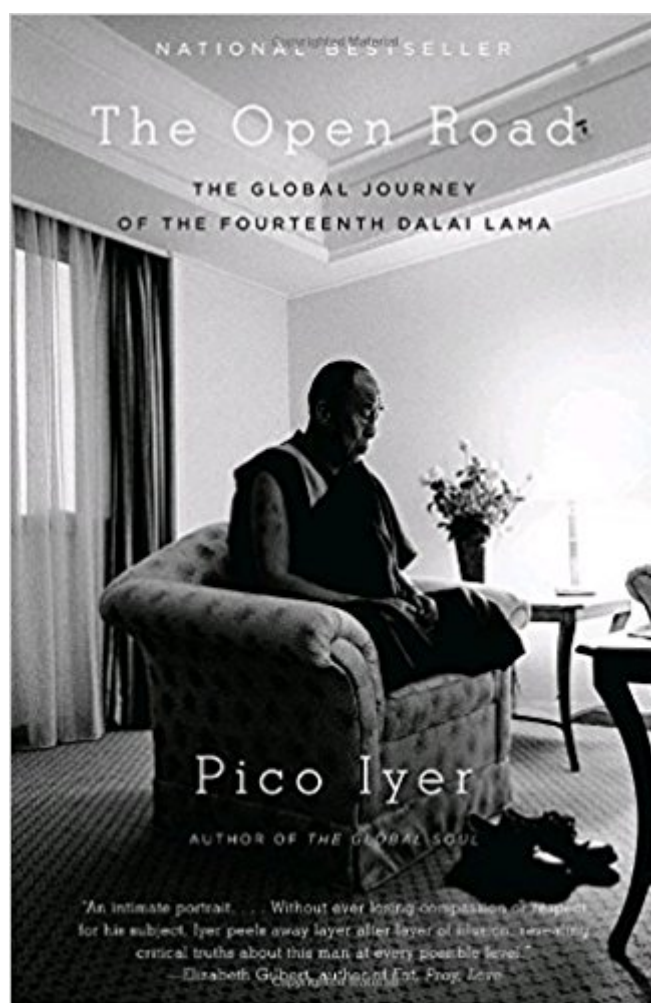


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# The Open Road: The Global Journey Of The Fourteenth Dalai Lama (Vintage Departures)



## Synopsis

For over three decades, Pico Iyer, one of our most cherished travel writers, has been a friend to the Dalai Lama. Over these years through intimate conversations, he has come to know him in a way that few can claim. Here he paints an unprecedented portrait of one of the most singular figures of our time, explaining the Dalai Lama's work and ideas about politics, science, technology, and religion. For Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, *The Open Road* illuminates the hidden life and the daily challenges of this global icon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. This is a brilliant pairing of writer and subject. Iyer has known the Dalai Lama, spiritual and political leader of Tibet, for more than 30 years, thanks to a long-ago connection between the writer's father, an Oxford don born in India, and a young Dalai Lama. And so the acute global observer Iyer, a travel writer, essayist and novelist, has long followed the fortunes of the astute globalist Tibetan Buddhist, who travels the world but can never go home to his Chinese-occupied country. This is not a biography but an extended journalistic analysis of someone deep enough for several lifetimes, as Tibetan Buddhists believe. Iyer organizes his observations by smart descriptions of aspects of the Dalai Lama's work and character: icon, monk, philosopher, politician. This allows him to plumb different sides of His Holiness, whom he demythologizes even as he expresses a clear-eyed respect for the leader's achievements. Iyer reminds readers of

paradoxes: the Dalai Lama is highly empirical, yet holds beliefs such as reincarnation that defy observation. He is a public figure who is diligent about elaborate and private religious practices. Like its subject, the aim of this book is ultimately simple: behold the man. (Apr. 3) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“An exceptionally intimate portrait. . . . Without ever losing compassion or respect for his subject, Iyer peels away layer after layer of illusion, revealing critical truths about this man at every possible level.” • Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray, Love* “A trenchant, impassioned look at a singular life” • *The New York Times Book Review* “Superb. . . . Iyer concretely conveys his truths, making it seem as if he, the reader, and the Dalai Lama are all sitting in the same room.” • *The Philadelphia Inquirer* “Marvelous. . . . An elegant and intensely personal book.” • *The Washington Post* “The bracing virtue of Iyer’s thoughtful essay is that it allows us to imagine the Dalai Lama as something of an intellectual and spiritual adventurer, exploring fresh sources of individual identity and belonging in the newly united world.” • Pankaj Mishra, *The New Yorker* “[Iyer has] an access and insight into the Dalai Lama that lifts his writing above the clichés that normally surround him” | *The Open Road* is not a biography but it probably reveals more about its subject than any formal study.” • *The Economist* “An incisive analysis of the modern relevance of Tibetan Buddhism and its leader” | *Nonfiction* of the highest caliber: fascinating and thorough.” • *Kirkus* (starred review) “A brilliant pairing of writer and subject.” • *Publishers Weekly* (starred review) “A wonderful book. I don’t know when I have seen such a perfect match of a glorious subject and an author who can do justice to that subject.” • Huston Smith, author of *The World’s Religions* “Pico Iyer delights, weaving with scintillating intelligence and evident fondness a spell-binding tale of the 14th Dalai Lama’s uncanny power on the world stage. The *Open Road* intertwines an insider’s access to telling detail with a well-seasoned journalist’s skeptical sensibility. This thoughtful, thought-provoking book will open readers’ eyes. I couldn’t put it down.” • Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* “In *The Open Road*, Pico Iyer transcends his celebrated excellence as a travel writer. In an uncommonly thoughtful and eloquent report on the spiritual reflections and also the complex and demanding political and practical encounters negotiated every day by the Dalai

Lama— a dear old friend of his father whom he has known well since early boyhood, not only on regular sojourns at Dharamsala but as a companionable observer on His Holiness's tireless world travels on behalf of simple sanity and peace— a traveler has brought us an invaluable account and precious gift.

— Peter Matthiessen, author of *The Snow Leopard*

“Pico Iyer has taken on perhaps the hardest subject in the whole world to capture on paper: the story of a spiritual/political leader whose greatness is routinely condensed by media accounts into platitudes, and of a movement for both globalized understanding and the salvation of one very particular sliver of land. His account of the 14th Dalai Lama is an undiluted triumph, a book as subtle and moving as any nonfiction produced in recent decades. The planet and its possibilities will look different to you by its close.”

— Bill McKibben, author of *Deep Economy*

Through keen attention and not a little subtle irony, Pico Iyer brings an observation of any subject he tackles as penetrating as that of Proust in his observance of the human character, and as detailed as Peter Matthiessen or Reg Saner in turning his eye to the natural environment, which makes traveling with him a great joy. And yet the most delightful part, for me, are the glimpses we get of the author himself, always in the shadows, in the corner, huddled in some foreign internet cafe or the niche of an exotic monastery, never proselytizing, but occasionally sharing the wisdom he has garnered in his much traveled life. Iyer is definitely up to the task of comprehending a subject as deep as the Ocean of Compassion—the Dalai Lama. *The Open Road* is open, accessible, and superbly written. I recommend you to Iyer's other books.

I have heard "The Lama" speak and have often remarked he has become one of my favorite people alive today. Oddly, I chose this book to read apart from readily available scholarly works. I am delighted to say this work presented exactly what I wished to learn. I say oddly because I wonder how it could come to pass my experiences and current life beliefs should so align with a spiritual system of beliefs of which I knew almost nothing. Butterfly Effect possibly? Totally credible if I understand the other world I have come upon.

Fascinating insight into the complex world of the Dalai Lama. I was intrigued by the multi-dimensional and oftentimes nearly mutually exclusive pressures that the exiled leader of Tibet is forced to balance in the course of a typical day. That his sponsors had the foresight to recognize this human being as the One best suited to safeguard the nation's future is amazing in itself. Learning how adept the 14th Dalai Lama became at even a young age in addressing the many

threats to his troubled nation's very existence is by itself reason enough to read this book. The author provides a rare glimpse into this unimaginable world by following the Dalai Lama over several decades, being given remarkable access to the legendary man through family connections. If you are looking for an authentic understanding of the chaos and the harmony that tumble around this enigmatic figure, this book is a great place to start.

I heard an interview on NPR with Pico Iyer about this book. Iyer mentioned that the Dalai Lama was 72, which is my age as I write this. I was suddenly struck by the overwhelming thought that I had become this old with my spiritual values still unsettled. By all measures, Pico Iyer is your basic everyday genius, world traveler and visionary writer. He has written eight books plus hundreds of essays, columns, articles and book reviews for Time, New York Times, National Geographic, Harpers, The Financial Times and more. He also happens to have known the Dalai Lama for over thirty years. I had held Pico Iyer on my "authors-to-read" list for too long to miss this opportunity. Illustrated with many meetings and occasions over a period of decades, the author shows the enormous range of a seemingly simple man. The three sections of the book are titled: In Public, In Private, In Practice. Chapters are titled: The Conundrum, The Fairy Tale, The Icon, The Philosopher, The Mystery, The Monk, The Globalist, The Politician, The Future. The fourteenth Dalai Lama is "built like a middle linebacker" but is nonviolent. He is deeply religious--he rises at 3:30am and meditates and prays for four hours--but advises others to find their own way. "A religious teacher who is telling people not to get confused or distracted by religion." He is considered a living god but insists over and over that he is "just a man." He often says, "I don't know." At the end of a talk in Canada he says, "I will remain, to serve." He is famous for his laughter; he has a solid sense of humor but one suspects also he sees much silliness in the antics of those who ask him their profound questions or give him their worldly viewpoints. The author succeeds in illuminating "one of the most visible figures on the planet," a man of wide talents and considerations, whose people revere him and hope to learn through his actions. Young Tibetans are impatient with his policies but are dumbstruck in his presence. He is a doctor of metaphysics but appears childlike to many. A living contradiction of superlatives. I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

Pico Iyer presents a very balanced look at the life of the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism and the continuing struggle for a homeland, that may be beyond their reach. I learned many new facets of the 14th Dalai Lama, and the often hidden aspect of Tibetan Buddhism rituals. Iyer spends an appropriate amount of time discussing divisions, waiting in the wings, of those displaced Tibetans that

would take up an arms to free Tibet. My respect for the monk of peace continues to increase.

A nice introduction to Tibet and His Holiness. Simple and thorough explanation of the fruits, benefits, and challenges with the Buddhist and Tibetan life. Many challenges still exist and it's right to be aware. The most challenging aspect of our times seems to be holding on to tradition with a changing environment. Iyer and the Dalia Lama don't give exact advice on what's next but they have a consciousness and openness to what's ahead.

This is a gentle story, told by a guy who had an opportunity to travel with the dalai lama for awhile. In simple terms he explained his lifestyle, some of his tribulations, and his joys. It just is a nice little story. It is a reminder of the importance of being kind and looking at the big picture and facing life as it comes.

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