



Tropical Classical: Essays from Several Directions (Vintage Departures)

By Pico Iyer

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In **Tropical Classical** the author of *Video Nights in Katmandu* and *The Lady and the Monk* visits a holy city in Ethiopia, where hooded worshippers practice a Christianity that has remained unchanged since the Middle Ages. He follows the bewilderingly complex route of Bombay's *dabbawallahs*, who each day ferry 100,000 different lunches to 100,000 different workers.

Iyer chats with the Dalai Lama and assesses the books of Salman Rushdie and Cormac McCarthy. And he brings his perceptive eye and unflappable wit to bear on the postmodern vogues for literary puffery, sexual gamesmanship, and frequent-flier miles. Glittering with aphorisms, overflowing with insight, and often hilarious, **Tropical Classical** represents some of Iyer's finest work.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

As a respected and beloved journalist and travel writer, Pico Iyer has earned a reputation and a loyal following, and *Tropical Classical* is a good indication why. This "best of " collection of essays, book reviews, and articles is segmented into chapters entitled "Places," "People," "Books," "Themes," and "Squibs," covering topics as varied as Paddington Bear, the numeral 9, Tibet, and the accumulation of frequent-flyer miles. Iyer is particularly gifted in conveying incongruous and anachronistic events, cleverly sharing his fascination with the bizarre--and often hilarious--cultural hybrids born when worlds collide. By capturing the essence of such oddities, he gently pulls the reader closer to obscure locales, and in the process alters the way we look at familiar surroundings. Similarly, his coverage of other writers brings an appreciation of the subject as much as the art of writing itself.

From Library Journal

Iyer (*Falling off the Map*, LJ 5/1/93) again casts a wide net as he brings together a series of lyrical essays on travels to faraway lands. The different directions alluded to in his subtitle include isolated and forlorn Ethiopia; Lhasa, China; and Tibet and its omnipresent Potala Palace with its 10,000 chapels. He encounters people such as Norman Lewis and the 14th Dalai Lama, called a "down-to-earth kind of guy." Iyer writes about books such as Paul Theroux's *The Happy Isles of Oceania* and Ann Beattie's *The Burning House* and a number of titles by non-Western authors. Some of the themes in which Iyer delves are the growth of American pop culture worldwide and subtleties of language and numbers. Iyer's unusual choices and beautiful writing earn his work a special niche among first-person travel memoirs. Recommended for large public and academic libraries or where Iyer's works are popular. ?David Schau, Kanawha Cty. P.L., Charleston, W. Va.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

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Users Review

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