

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Richard Gere on Buddhism

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, July 7th, 2025

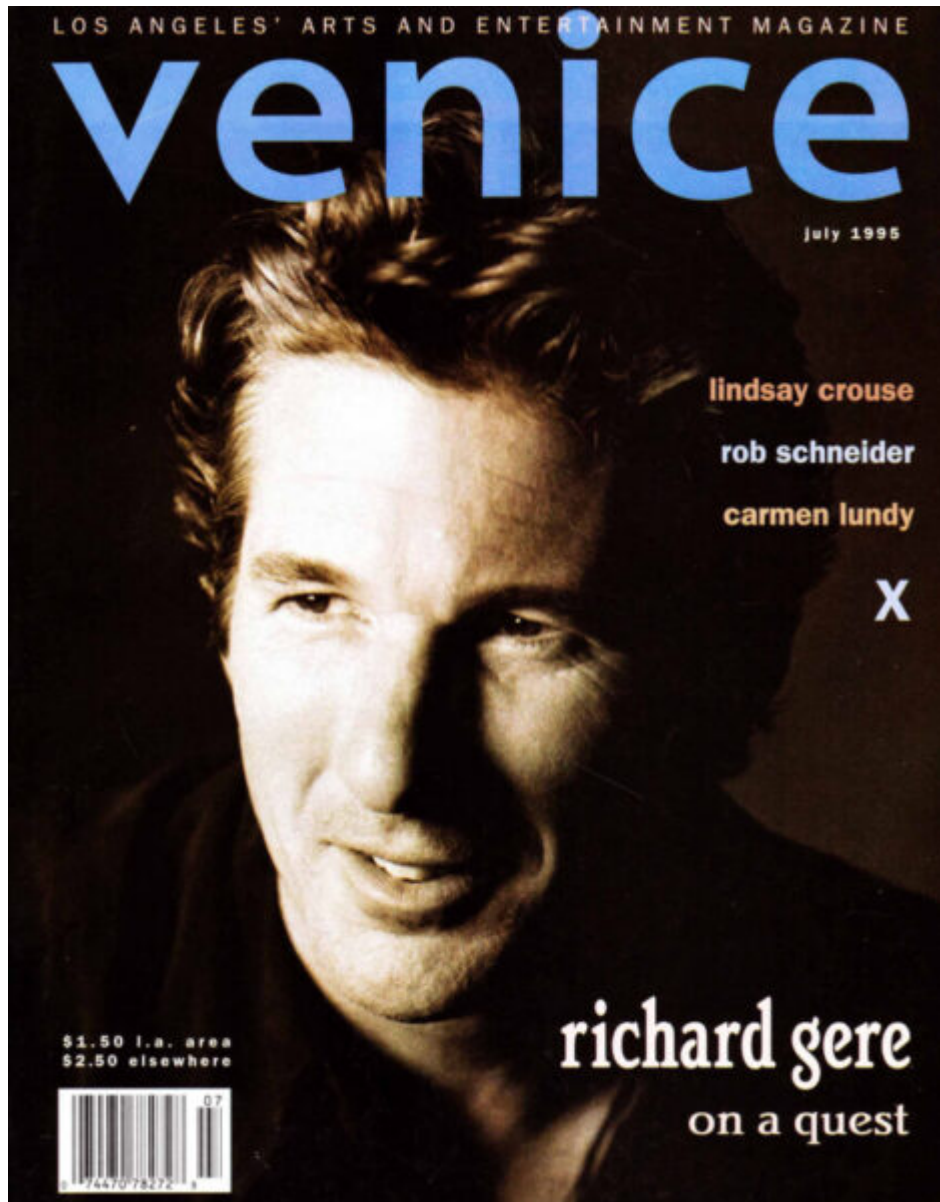
I have been thinking about [Richard Gere](#) lately, because the numerous times that I interviewed him (from 1988 to 2017) during my long career as a film journalist, I invariably asked him questions about his support for the Dalai Lama and his spiritual practice of Tibetan Buddhism.



Elisa Leonelli, Richard Gere (c) HFPA 2002

Having quoted some of the Buddhist teachings of the TV series *White Lotus* set in Thailand in a recent article ([click here](#) to read), I searched my extensive archives for Gere's answers.

I addressed the subject during a one-on-one interview I conducted with Richard Gere in 1995 about the movie *First Knight*, where he played Lancelot opposite Sean Connery as King Arthur, for a [cover story on VENICE](#), Los Angeles Arts and Entertainment Magazine, where I served as Film Editor.



Richard Gere

Here are some excerpts.

From my intro: Gere has been quite involved in supporting the Tibetan cause, after meeting the exiled Dalai Lama, founding the Tibet House in New York in 1987 and speaking openly against the genocidal policies of the Chinese government.

*You have been spending long periods in India to be near the Dalai Lama and other Buddhist spiritual teachers. How important is it in your life the master-pupil relationship?*

“I’ve had a lot of teachers; it’s through the teacher that we gain everything we’re looking for. The teachers in my lineage go back to the historical Buddha, they’re part of the same mind consciousness, and they pass their knowledge, by mind transference, from teacher to student, right down to the present. So, when you encounter your teacher, you’re really encountering a Buddha; when you’re given such an opportunity, you have a relationship of respect, joy and thankfulness with a teacher.”

*On the political front, you have openly denounced the Chinese government for human right violations against the Tibetans. Do you think it’s enough to retire inside a monastery in search of*

*spiritual enlightenment, in order to change the world?*

“That’s where all change really comes from, it comes from inside. I can’t have a really positive effect on anything until I have a positive effect on myself; otherwise you’re imposing an ego, you’re imposing your will on someone else. The idea is to have an absolute that comes through you, that you’re in service of. So, once you can get past selfishness and achieve altruism, then you really can be a good politician, or a good doctor, a good actor, and all these things; then you can have a true positive effect, not momentary, but in perpetuity.”



Richard Gere (c) Elisa Leonelli 1988

I spoke with Richard Gere in 1997 about *Red Corner* by Jon Avnet, where he played an American businessman wrongfully tried for murder in China. That interview was published in the Italian weekly *Gioia* in 1998.

*You have talked about the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community in India as your family. Can that take the place of a family of your own, marriage and children, or is it compatible?*

“It doesn’t take the place, it’s its own thing. I don’t think you can have a totally open intimate equal relationship with anyone, unless you’re on the same spiritual path with them. So, obviously,



when I'm with my Tibetan friends, whether they're from Europe or America or South America, we're all Tibetans, we have the same teacher and we look to the Buddha. We have the same techniques of meditation and training our minds, we're a very close-knit group of brothers and sisters, and these bonds are as strong as any blood connection with family, absolutely."



Richard Gere (c) Elisa Leonelli 1988

In 2002, after the US invaded Afghanistan because of the terrorist attack of September 11, I asked Gere, during an interview about *The Mothman Prophecies* published in *Gioia* in 2002.

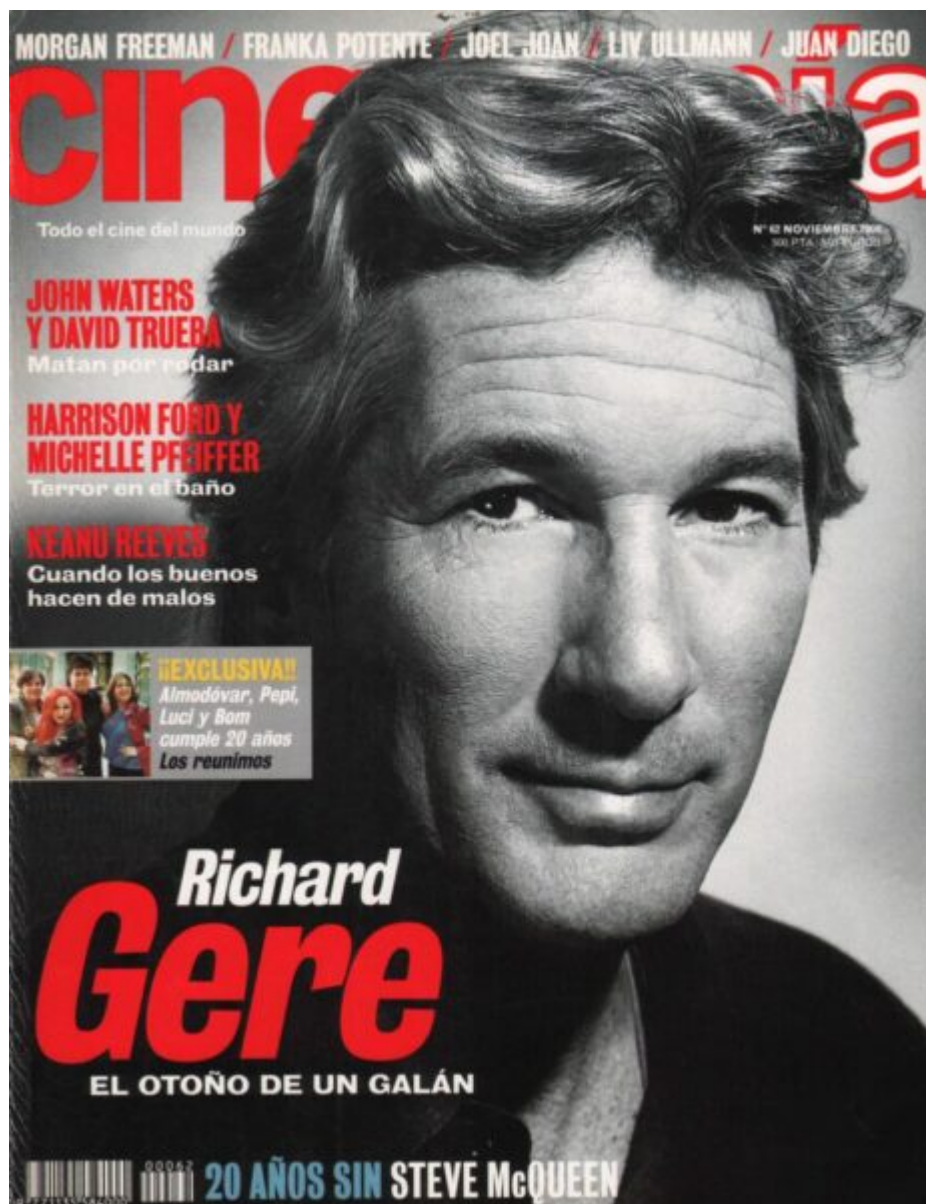
*How is the situation of the Tibetans today? Is the Chinese government still systematically persecuting them?*

"It's a difficult time right now, the situation has deteriorated rapidly in Tibet, especially in these days when the focus of the world is so much elsewhere. Obviously now we're so involved with the Middle East and Afghanistan, the high violence and volatility there, that it's very hard for a peaceful non-violent movement, which is based on survival, to gather any attention. But I think that non-violent movements are the ones that should be supported, not the violent ones."

See links to some more of my published interviews with Richard Gere.

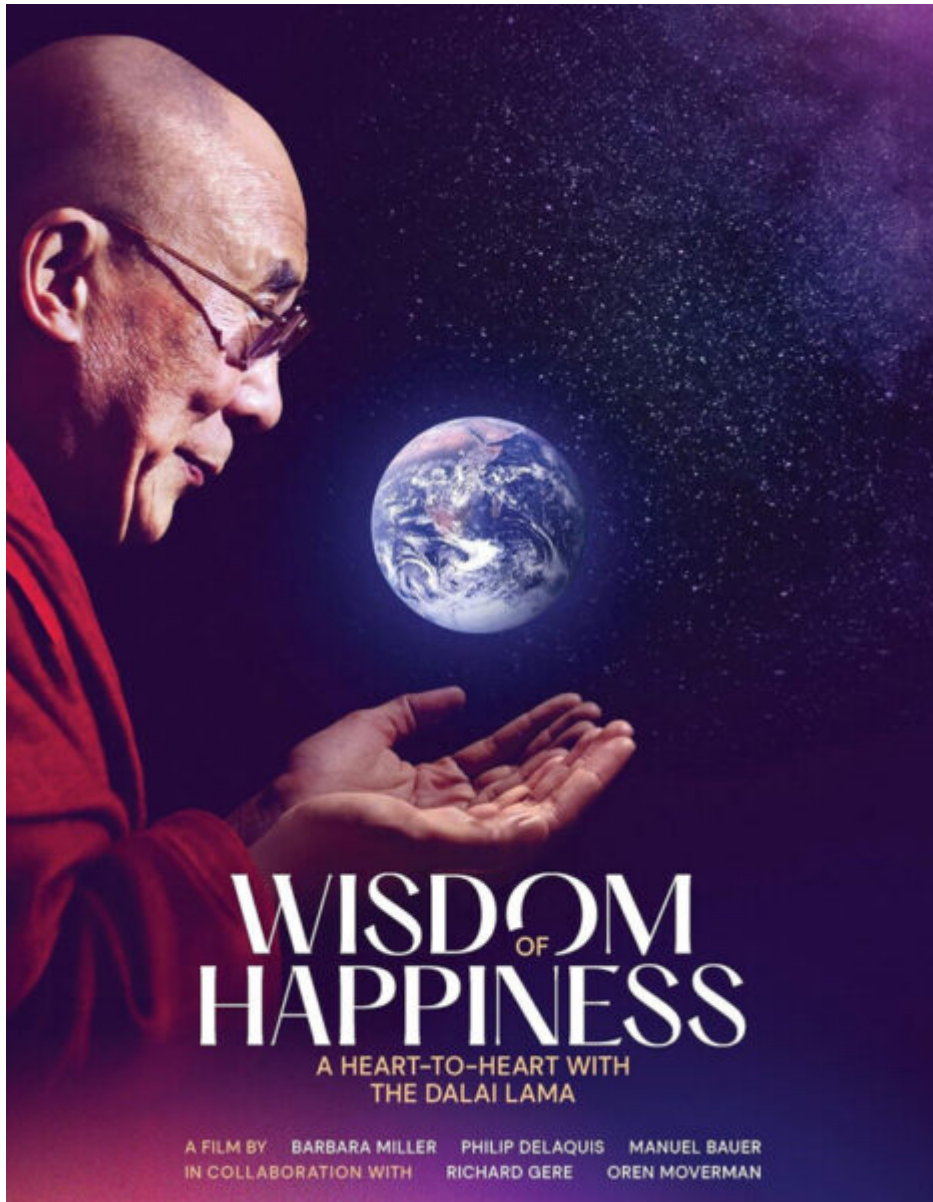
CIAK, Italy. July 1990. *Pretty Woman*.

Gioia, Italy. 1996. *Primal Fear*.



*Cinemanía*, Spain. November 2000 cover story. Notice the description under Richard Gere's name, "El Otoño de un galán." It refers to the title of his movie, *Autumn in New York*, and *galán* in Spanish means: handsome, heartthrob, leading man, hero.

I also wrote interviews with Gere for *Marie Claire*, Italy in 1989 and 1994, for *Donna Moderna* in 1996, 1998, 2007, and a few more.



In 2024, Richard Gere produced a documentary, *Wisdom of Happiness*, featuring the Dalai Lama speaking about the universal quest for inner peace and happiness, the potential for a peaceful and happy 21st century. It was shown in Switzerland, Germany, India, Denmark, Finland so far, still seeking US distribution. [Watch trailer](#).





Richard Gere, Dalai Lama (c) 2018

Only recently I learned from my meditation teacher [davidji](#) that the word [Dalai](#) in Mongolian means Ocean or big, and Lama in Tibetan means spiritual teacher or guru.

July 6, 2025 was the [Dalai Lama](#)'s 90th birthday. It was declared the "Universal Day of Compassion" by the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace.

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