



**Seyyed Hossein Nasr** (in [Persian](#) : سید حسین نصر) (born April 7, 1933) is an Iranian University Professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University, and a prominent Islamic philosopher. He is the author of many scholarly books and articles.

[\[1\]](#)

Nasr is a Muslim Persian philosopher and renowned scholar of comparative religion, a lifelong student and follower of [Frithjof Schuon](#) , and writes in the fields of Islamic esoterism, Sufism, philosophy of science, and metaphysics.

Nasr was the first Muslim to deliver the prestigious [Gifford Lectures](#) , and in year 2000, a volume was devoted to him in the [Library of Living Philosophers](#)

Professor Nasr speaks and writes based on the doctrine and the viewpoints of the [perennial philosophy](#)

on subjects such as philosophy, religion, spirituality, music, art, architecture, science, literature, civilizational dialogues, and the natural environment. He also wrote two books of poetry (namely

*Poems of the Way*

and

*The Pilgrimage of Life and the Wisdom of Rumi*

), and has been even described as a '

[polymath](#)

'.

[\[2\]](#)

[\[3\]](#)

Nasr speaks Persian, English, French, German, Spanish and Arabic [c](#) fluently. [\[4\]](#)

## Biography

### Origins

Nasr was born in 1933 in south-central Tehran to **Seyyed Valiallah**, who was physician to the Persian royal family, and one of the founders of modern education in Iran. His parents were originally from Kashan.

He is a descendant of Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri from his mother's side, and is the cousin of Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbegloo, and the father of American academic Vali Nasr, a leading expert on political Islam.

## Education

Nasr went to Firuz Bahram High School in Tehran [\[5\]](#) before being sent to the United States for education at thirteen. In the US, Nasr first attended Peddie School in Hightstown, New Jersey, graduating in 1950 as the valedictorian of his class and also winner of the Wycliffe Award, which was the school's highest honor given to the most outstanding all-round student.

[\[6\]](#)

A scholarship offered by MIT in physics made him the first Iranian undergraduate to attend that university. [\[4\]](#) There, he also began studying under [Giorgio de Santillana](#) and others in various other branches such as metaphysics and philosophy. During his studies there he became acquainted with the works of the prominent perennialist authority Frithjof Schuon. This school of

thought has shaped Professor Nasr's life and thinking ever since. Professor Nasr has been a disciple of Frithjof Schuon for over fifty years and his works are based on the doctrine and the viewpoints of the perennial philosophy.

Upon his graduation from MIT, Nasr obtained a master's degree in geology and geophysics in 1956, and went on to pursue his Ph.D. degree in the history of science and learning at Harvard University. He planned to write his dissertation under the supervision of [George Sarton](#) , but Sarton died before he could begin his dissertation work and so he wrote his dissertation under the direction of

[I. Bernard Cohen](#)

,  
[Hamilton Gibb](#)

, and

[Harry Wolfson](#)

At the age of twenty-five, Nasr graduated with his Ph.D. from Harvard completing his first book, *Science and Civilization in Islam*

. His doctoral dissertation entitled "Conceptions of Nature in Islamic Thought" was published in 1964 by

[Harvard](#)

[University Press](#)

as

*An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*

## **Back to Iran**

Seyyed Hossein Nasr began his teaching career in 1955 when he was still a young doctoral student at Harvard University. He became a full professor by the age of 30.

After Harvard, Nasr returned to Iran as a professor at Tehran University, and then at Arya Mehr University (Sharif University) where he was appointed president in 1972. Before that, he served as Dean of The Faculty of Letters, and Academic Vice-Chancellor of Tehran University from 1968 to 1972.

Professor Nasr also learned Islamic philosophy from the prominent Muslim philosophers

Allameh Tabatabaei, Sayyid Abul-Hasan Qazwini and Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Assar during that period leading up to the revolution.

In the 1970s, Farah Pahlavi of Iran appointed professor Nasr as head of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, the first academic institution to be conducted in accordance with the intellectual principles of the Traditionalist School. During that time, Nasr, [Tabatabaei](#) , [William Chittick](#)

,  
[Kenneth Morgan](#)

,  
[Sachiko Murata](#)

,  
[Toshihiko Izutsu](#)

, and

[Henry Corbin](#)

would meet and hold various philosophical discourses. The famous book *Shi'a Islam* was one product of this period.

## Return to the US



Upon his return to the west, Nasr took up positions at University of Edinburgh, Temple University, and since 1984 has been at The George Washington University where he is now a full-time University Professor of Islamic Studies.

Nasr helped with the planning and expansion of Islamic and Iranian studies academic programs in several universities such as Princeton, the University of Utah, and the University of Southern California.

He was an advisor for the award-winning, PBS-broadcast documentary *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* (2002), produced by Unity Productions Foundation.

## Awards and honors

- In year 2000, a volume was devoted to him in the [Library of Living Philosophers](#) .
- Templeton Religion and Science Award (1999)<sup>[7]</sup>
- First Muslim and first non-Western scholar to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures
- Honorary Doctor of Uppsala University, Sweden (1977)
- He was nominated and won King Faisal Foundation award, but his prize was withdrawn upon the prize knowledge of him being a Shia. He was notified of winning the prize in 1979 but later the prize was withdrawn with no explanation. Extracts from ( <http://www.arabiaradio.org/> )

## Works

Nasr is the author of over fifty books and five hundred articles (a number of which can be found in the journal, [Studies in Comparative Religion](#) ) on topics such as traditional metaphysics, Islamic science, religion and the environment, Sufism, and Islamic philosophy. Listed below are most of Dr. Nasr's works in English (in no particular order), including translations, edited volumes, and [Festschriften](#) in his honor:

## As Author

- *The HarperCollins Study Quran*
- *In Search of the Sacred*
- *Islam in the Modern World*
- *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*

- *Ideals and Realities of Islam*
- *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*
- *Knowledge and the Sacred* [online](#)
- *Islamic Life and Thought*
- *Islamic Art and Spirituality*
- *Sufi Essays*
- *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy*, 2nd edition
- *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World*
- *The Need for a Sacred Science*
- *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*
- *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*
- *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, edited by Mehdi Aminrazavi
- *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*
- *Three Muslim Sages*
- *Science and Civilization in Islam*
- *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*
- *Religion and the Order of Nature*
- *Muhammad: Man of God*
- *Islamic Studies: Essays on Law and Society, the Sciences, and Philosophy and Sufism*
- *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*
- *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*
- *Poems of the Way*
- *The Pilgrimage of Life and the Wisdom of Rumi*
- *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization*
- *Islam, Science, Muslims, and Technology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal*
- *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by [William Chittick](#)

## As Editor

- *The Essential Frithjof Schuon*
- *Religion of the Heart: Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on his Eightieth Birthday*, edited with William Stoddart
- *History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited with Oliver Leaman
- *The Essential Sophia*, edited with Katherine O'Brien
- *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, edited with Mehdi Aminrazavi (5 vols.)
- *Islamic Spirituality* (Vol. 1: Foundations; Vol. 2: Manifestations)
- *Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality*, edited with Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr and Hamid Dabashi
- *Expectation of the Millenium: Shi'ism in History*, edited with Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr and Hamid Dabashi

- *In Quest of the Sacred: The Modern World in the Light of Tradition*, edited with Katherine O'Brien
- *An Annotated Bibliography of Islamic Science*, edited with William Chittick and Peter Ziris (3 vols.)
- *Isma'ili Contributions to Islamic Culture*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr
- *Mecca the Blessed, Madina the Radiant*, photographs by Ali Kazuyo Nomachi; essay by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

### Works About Nasr

- *The Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr Through His Fortieth Birthday*, edited by William Chittick
- *Knowledge is Light: Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by Zailan Moris
- *Beacon of Knowledge - Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by Mohammad Faghfoory
- *Shi'ite Islam* by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, translated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr
- *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, edited by L.E. Hahn, R. Auxier, and L.W. Stone

### See also

- [Sufi studies](#)
- [Higher Education in Iran](#)
- [Iranian traditional humanism](#)

### Other religious and traditional scholars

- [Frithjof Schuon](#)
- [Titus Burckhardt](#)
- [Martin Lings](#)
- [Jean-Louis Michon](#)
- [Tage Lindbom](#)
- [Kurt Almqvist](#)
- [Ivan Aguéli](#)
- [James Cutsinger](#)
- [Rene Guenon](#)
- [Julius Evola](#)
- [Ismail Faruqi](#)

- [Allameh Tabatabaei](#)
- [Louis Massignon](#)
- [Henry Corbin](#)
- [William Chittick](#)

## References

1. [^](#) John F Haught, *Science and Religion*, Georgetown University Press, 2001, ISBN 0-87840-865-7, p.xvii
2. [^](#) Egbert Giles Leigh Jr (1998). "Review: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Religion and the Order of Nature", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Volume 44, Number 2, p. 124-126 [124]
3. [^](#) Clivre Irving (1979), *Crossroads of civilization: 3000 years of Persian history*, Littlehampton Book Services, p. 145
4. [^](#) [a](#) [b](#) [Biography / Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#)
5. [^](#) .دانشگاه تهران (دانشگاه تهران) ۱۳۸۵ .دانشگاه تهران .  
Interview with Ramin Jahanbegloo in: *Dar Jostejooye Amr e Qodsi*. ISBN 964-312-848-2 p.229
6. [^](#) Sheikh, Nadia. "[Islamic scholar calls GW home](#)" , *The GW Hatchet* , February 20, 2007. Accessed February 5, 2011. "As a 12-year-old, Nasr came to the United States to study at the Peddie School, a New Jersey boarding school where he graduated in 1950 as valedictorian."
7. [^](#) [Press Release Archive: University Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr Wins Award For Best Course In America In Science And Religion](#)

## External links

### Articles and biography

- [Understanding Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#)
- [The Foundation for Traditional Studies](#)
- [Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies](#)
- [The Seyyed Hossein Nasr Foundation](#)
- [Nasr's CV](#)
- [Biography of Sayyed Hossein Nasr](#) by [Ibrahim Kalin](#)
- [George Washington University commemorating Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#)
- [Islam and ecology - Nasr](#)

## Media

- [Encounters with Islam and Nature](#) Downloadable interview with Nasr regarding Islam and the environment. June 15, 2007.
- [Nasr on PBS](#)
- [In The Beginning Was Consciousness](#) . 2003 Duddleian Lecture at Harvard University.
- [Development and Muslim Societies](#) . Lecture at the World Bank.



- [Unlearning Intolerance](#) . U.N. Conference on Islamophobia. Keynote address given by Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
- [PilgrFile: The Heart of Islam](#) . Lecture at the Washington National Cathedral.
- [This is America - Show 925](#) . Seyyed Hossein Nasr television interview on [Google video](#) .
- [Controversy over the Pope's Remarks](#) . Radio interview on *The Diane Rehm Show*.