

# A biography of seyyed hossein nasr

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Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the world's leading experts on Islamic science and spirituality, is University Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University. Professor Nasr is the author of numerous books including *Man and Nature: the Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Kazi Publications, 1998), *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford, 1996) and *Knowledge and the Sacred* (SUNY, 1989).

### Introduction

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, currently University Professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, Washington D. C. is one of the most important and foremost scholars of Islamic, Religious and Comparative Studies in the world today. Author of over fifty books and five hundred articles which have been translated into several major Islamic, European and Asian languages, Professor Nasr is a well known and highly respected intellectual figure both in the West and the Islamic world. An eloquent speaker with a charismatic presence, Nasr is a much sought after speaker at academic conferences and seminars, university and public lectures and also radio and television programs in his area of expertise. Possessor of an impressive academic and intellectual record, his career as a teacher and scholar spans over four decades.

Born in 1933, Professor Nasr began his illustrious teaching career in 1955 when he was still a young and promising, doctoral student at Harvard University. Over the years, he has taught and trained an innumerable number of students who have come from the different parts of the world, and many

of whom have become important and prominent scholars in their fields of study.

He has trained different generations of students over the years since 1958 when he was a professor at Tehran University and then, in America since the Iranian revolution in 1979, specifically at Temple University in Philadelphia from 1979 to 1984 and at the George Washington University since 1984 to the present day. The range of subjects and areas of study which Professor Nasr has involved and engaged himself with in his academic career and intellectual life are immense. As demonstrated by his numerous writings, lectures and speeches, Professor Nasr speaks and writes with great authority on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from philosophy to religion to spirituality, to music and art and architecture, to science and literature, to civilizational dialogues and the natural environment.

For Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the quest for knowledge, specifically knowledge which enables man to understand the true nature of things and which furthermore, " liberates and delivers him from the fetters and limitations of earthly existence," has been and continues to be the central concern and determinant of his intellectual life.

### Brief Biography

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born on April 7, 1933 (19 Farvadin 1312 A. H. solar)

in Tehran into a family of distinguished scholars and physicians. His father, Seyyed Valiallah, a man of great learning and piety, was a physician to the Iranian royal family, as was his father before him. The

name " Nasr" which means " victory" comes from the title " na~r al-aibb (Victory of Physicians) which was conferred on Professor Nasrs grandfather by the King of Persia. Nasr also comes from a family of Sufis. One of his ancestors was Mulla Seyyed Muhammad Taqi Poshtmashhad, who was a famous saint of Kashan, and his mausoleum which is located next to the tomb of the Safavid king Shah Abbis, is still visited by pilgrims to this day.

As a young boy, Nasr attended one of the schools near his home. His early formal education included the usual Persian curriculum at school with an extra concentration in Islamic and Persian subjects at home, as well as tutorial in French. However for Nasr, it was the long hours of discussion with his father, mostly on philosophical and theological issues, complemented by both reading and reaction to the discourses carried on by those who came to his fathers house, that constituted an essential aspect of his early education and which in many ways set the pattern and tone of his intellectual development. This was the situation for the first twelve years of Nasrs life.

Nasrs arrival in America at the young age of twelve marked the beginning of a new period in his life which was totally different and therefore, discontinuous from his early life in Iran. He attended The Peddie School in Highstown, New Jersey and in 1950 graduated as the valedictorian of his class and also winner of the Wyclifte Award which was the schools highest honor given to the most outstanding all-round student. It was during the

four years at Peddie that Nasr acquired his knowledge of the English language, as well as studying the sciences, American