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| Retreat as a Spiritual Practice, By Sabura Allen |
| The practice of spiritual retreat has been part of my life for over 40 years. The retreats have varied greatly - a single day, 3 to 10 days, individual and group, silent and not, residential and not, rustic and 5-star, near home and far away. My first retreat was at 17 at a Christian ecumenical weekend camp. My father was an attendee and an organizer. It was during that retreat that I first felt the power of the spiritual intensive. The experience was wonderful and life-changing. After that, my focus shifted to Sufi retreats. The common thread was that I was stepping outside of the everyday routine of life to focus attention on spiritual health and well-being AND they were life-changing. The person that entered the experience exited changed in ways that were not always readily visible to others or even to me. Yet, upon reflection, the change was evident in the movement forward on my spiritual journey.  More recently, I completed a 21-day retreat – that is a long time. As with all retreats, if I am asked – What happened on your retreat? I can give the general details – I stayed in a beautiful setting, completed practices, breathing, zikr, wazifa, walking, sitting, etc. But what “happened” is hard to explain. It can be summarized as being a time that led to more change, communion with the Divine, and movement towards greater love, harmony, and beauty. More generally, the benefit of retreat (and of all practices) does not only impact the individual, but actually spills out to all of those around them and to all of humanity.  Of course, some of us do and others do not have the capacity or resources to go on retreat. Nor is retreat a requirement for spiritual growth as it is just one of many spiritual practices available to those on the spiritual path. However, I would recommend considering this practice, especially as many of us are on an imposed retreat at this time. Talk with your guide or teacher, or approach one of the local teachers available in Eugene to discuss with you whether a retreat would be appropriate – see <https://www.eugenesufi.org/retreats.html>  I would like to acknowledge and thank all of you who are moving forward on your spiritual path in whatever way is open for you. All the best wishes, much love and prayers and gratitude. |