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Ojai Reads the **Diamond Sutra** with **Byron Katie** and **Stephen Mitchell** *Wordfest* Launches ONE CITY, ONE BOOK Reading Program at Festival, November 11 & 12

September 25, 2017 (Ojai, California) — *Wordfest*, in cooperation with *The Ojai Library* and *Center for Spiritual Living*, will celebrate the inaugural event of their brainchild, a first-ever community reading program named ONE CITY, ONE BOOK. Showcasing the just-released book - *A Mind at Home with Itself* by world renowned local authors Byron Katie and Stephen Mitchell - is a buzz-worthy beginning of a program designed to bring together those who thrive on the written word.

The yearlong reading program, ONE CITY, ONE BOOK, is an attempt to get everyone in a city to read and discuss the same book. The program takes the idea of a book club and expands it to cover a whole city. The community is encouraged to create events surrounding the chosen book.

The reading program starts with two events held the weekend of November 11-12, during the *7th Annual Wordfest Literary Festival*: an Author Reading & Reception at the Ojai Library (11/11 at 3:30-5pm. FREE. 111 E. Ojai Avenue) and an Author Reading and Q&A at the *Center for Spiritual Living* (Sunday, 11/12 at 10:30-noon. \$15 donation requested. Ojai Valley Woman's Club 441 E. Ojai Avenue.)

A Mind at Home with Itself is structured around the *Diamond Sutra* - the earliest, dated, printed book in the world. Known as a 'rockstar' in the translation world, Stephen Mitchell has created an accessible adaptation of this sutra and Byron Katie's brilliant commentary illuminates the famously difficult text with her own profound, dramatic experience. Katie's method of self-inquiry, which she calls *The Work*, is a kind of enhanced mindfulness. She's been a spiritual teacher of this 'mindfulness' for thirty-one years and helped millions worldwide. The Katie/Mitchell book was released last week by *HarperOne*, a spiritually-founded imprint of *HarperCollins Publishers*.

“Ojai has a rich history of religious texts written by various local spiritual leaders – Juddu Krishnamurti, Aldous Huxley, The Theosophical Society, etc. - so, I am thrilled to participate in showcasing more globally-distinguished, locally-based spiritual writers,” says Reverend Marilyn Miller of the *Center for Spiritual Living*, a member of the *Ojai Interfaith Council*.

ONE CITY, ONE BOOK’s inaugural selection, with the new version of *Diamond Sutra*, was chosen for its literary significance. It was made 586 years before the Gutenberg press and preserved for more than 1000 years after! It was recovered by an explorer and is now housed at the British Library in central London.

"*A Mind at Home with Itself*, based on the *Diamond Sutra*, is sure to appeal to a worldwide audience," says Sequoia Hamilton, co-founder of *Wordfest*. She adds, "This is about a work of literature, of the power of a compelling story to cause ripples around the world."

For more details on *Wordfest* the literary festival or the new ONE CITY, ONE BOOK program, call 805-766-7222 or visit www.OjaiWordfest.com.

The Ojai Library is part of the Ventura County Library System, inspiring all members of the community to explore, discover, and connect. For more information about the library or its events, please contact Ron Solórzano at (805) 218-9146.

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Press Release Support Info:

Compiled from Wikipedia, the British Library and by Sequoia Hamilton.

What is Buddhism?

Buddhism dates back 2,500 years to when Siddhartha Gautama, or 'the Buddha', achieved enlightenment under a fig tree. Buddhism, or the study of being a Buddha, centers on the search and attainment of Enlightenment, possible for every human being.

A central text of Indian Buddhism, the *Diamond Sutra* was first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in about AD 400. It is assumed that Buddhism (originally from India) spread to China along the network of trade routes known as the Silk Road.

Most Chinese Buddhists follow the Mahayana tradition, which unlike Theravada Buddhism believes that everyone (and not just those who live a monastic life) can achieve enlightenment.

Buddhism is arguably more a philosophical outlook, or spiritual tradition, than a 'religion': it does not worship a 'deity' such as a Supreme Being or even multiple Gods. It does not look for a relationship between humanity and God. It centers on the everyday, human practice and development of morality, meditation and wisdom, taking a 'middle way' through life's challenges. Compassion, and a regard for the interconnected nature of life, is central. There are approximately 300-500 million Buddhists worldwide.

What is a Sutra?

The word comes from Sanskrit, the ancient and sacred language of India. It means a religious teaching or sermon, and is most often used to describe the teachings of the Buddha. Sutras preached by the Buddha were committed to memory by his disciples (spoken or chanted) and passed down from generation to generation.

The paper of Buddhist sutras was usually dyed yellow before being inscribed. It was dyed yellow from the bark of the Amur Cork Tree, which had insecticidal properties.

Other Things To Know about the Diamond Sutra.

Towards the end of the sermon, a devoted student asks the Buddha how this sutra should be known. He is told, "This sutra is called 'The Diamond-Cutter Transcendent Wisdom Scripture,' because it can cut through any form of ignorance or delusion."

The Diamond-Cutter Transcendent Wisdom Scripture, was one of thousands of sermons from the robust grouping called *The Transcendent Wisdom Scriptures*. It refers to a larger group of sutras, all preaching the doctrine that the world is illusory.

"Each object in this fleeting world," says the sutra, adapted by Mitchell, "is like a lightning flash, a bubble in a stream, a wisp of smoke, a cloud, a drop of dew, a fading star at dawn, a breath, a dream."

The Buddha stated that just by listening to the *Diamond Sutra* one could become enlightened. It taught that all living beings - not just monks - had the potential to attain Buddhahood.

The *Diamond Sutra* was originally preached in a park in northern India. The text also reports that there was a large crowd present, including over 1,000 monks.

How did this Diamond Sutra survive?

First, although not the earliest example of a printed book, it is the oldest we have bearing a date. By the time it was made, block-printing had been practiced in the Far East for more than a century. Carved wooden blocks were used, and the technique was highly sophisticated by the time this text was produced in AD 868.

The printed scroll was one of 40,000 other scrolls and manuscripts hidden in a cave at a Buddhist monastery near the city of Dunhuang in Chinese Central Asia. The secret library was sealed-up around the year 1000, a time when this desert outpost of China was threatened by the ambitions of the Hsi-Hsia kingdom to the north.

The cave is part of a holy site known as the 'Caves of a Thousand Buddhas' - a cliff wall honeycombed with 492 grottoes cut from the rock from the 4th century onwards and decorated with religious carvings and paintings. A monk discovered the sealed entrance to the hidden cave in 1900. Inside, the scrolls of paper and silk had been perfectly preserved by the dry desert air. This *Diamond Sutra* was later found by the explorer Sir Marc Aurel Stein in 1907.

How can I learn more about the original manuscript?

The International Dunhuang Project (IDP) is a ground-breaking collaboration to make more than 100,000 manuscripts, paintings and artifacts from Silk Road sites available on the Internet with top-quality images. Visit www.idk.bl.uk

To see a virtual copy of the actual scroll, visit the British Library at <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-diamond-sutra>.

How can I learn more about the book based on the Diamond Sutra for Ojai's inaugural ONE CITY, ONE BOOK program - *A Mind at Home with Itself*, by Byron Katie and Stephen Mitchell?

To learn more about the book and Byron Katie's programs, visit www.TheWork.com.

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