

## **Narada at Parramatta**

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Narada at Parramatta

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## **Introduction**

In the restless, perpetually expanding suburbs of western Sydney, the heat does not simply arrive; it descends. It presses down upon the asphalt and the corrugated iron roofs with a physical weight, baking the eucalyptus trees until the air itself smells sharp, medicinal, and combustible. Here, the Parramatta River slides past heritage colonial sandstone and the gleaming, mirrored facades of new high-rise towers like a sluggish, half-forgotten hymn. The water, a murky confluence of tidal salt and muddy freshwater, reflects the chaotic, jagged skyline—a city constantly tearing itself down and rebuilding, caught between its penal-colony past and its hyper-capitalist future. The air carries a dense, complex olfactory

signature: the bitter tang of vehicular exhaust from the Great Western Highway, the sweet, yeasty aroma of baking bread from industrial bakeries, and the heavy, humid scent of river mud exposed at low tide.

Amidst this sprawling, kinetic geography, a profoundly ancient presence once crossed the threshold of an entirely ordinary, unremarkable apartment block.

Number 69 Cowper Street stood no different from its neighbours. It was a brutalist-adjacent structure of the late twentieth century, built of liver-colored brick and cheap, peeling render that had faded to a sickly beige under decades of harsh Australian sun. It was a monument to the mundane. The visual landscape of the building was defined by the chaotic geometry of laundry lines strung across narrow balconies, the rusted, dripping husks of window-unit air-conditioners, and the erratic, flickering fluorescent tubes that illuminated the common stairwells in a harsh, unforgiving white glare. The auditory backdrop was a constant, low-frequency hum: the drone of traffic, the distant, rhythmic clatter of the T1 Western Line trains rattling over steel tracks, and the muffled thump of washing machines working through their spin cycles behind thin, hollow-core doors.

Yet, for one brief, blistering, and inexplicable season, this precise coordinate of suburban mediocrity became the unlikely, brightly lit stage upon which the oldest of Vedic currents violently collided with the newest, most carefully curated of Australian lives.

Narada Muni, the wandering, immortal sage whose celestial veena has sounded across the turning of cosmic ages, arrived without announcement, without a forwarding address, and without disturbing the security intercom at the front gate. He simply

appeared in the vestibule, as if the suffocating summer air had spontaneously crystallized into human form. He carried no luggage, no modern conveniences, nothing save the ancient stringed instrument resting against his saffron-robed shoulder, and the two resonant syllables that have followed him like a shadow since the very dawn of creation: *Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa*.

The sensory impact of his arrival was immediate and overwhelming. The moment his calloused feet touched the cheap, industrial carpet of the foyer, the ambient light in the building seemed to shift. The harsh, bluish glare of the LEDs warmed into a rich, liquid gold, casting long, dramatic shadows against the painted brick. The stale, recycled air of the corridors, which usually smelled of damp wool, lingering cooking oil, and synthetic floor cleaner, was suddenly obliterated by an intoxicating, heavy perfume. It was the scent of a thousand crushed lotus petals, burning camphor, and ancient, dry sandalwood—a smell so potent it made the residents' eyes water and their lungs expand involuntarily.

When he spoke, chanting those two syllables, the sound did not merely travel through the air; it vibrated through the load-bearing walls and the concrete slabs. The acoustic resonance of his voice was impossibly deep, carrying the terrifying acoustic weight of a thunderstorm breaking over a mountain range, yet it was pitched so softly it felt like a secret whispered directly into the ear.

Drawn by this impossible sensory anomaly, nine women of Indian descent opened their heavy, fire-rated doors. These were women bound by the invisible, suffocating tethers of modern marriage and thirty-year mortgages to the quiet, relentless machinery of suburban existence. They lived lives measured in train timetables, strata levies, grocery lists, and the muted, polite compromises that allow two people to share a small space without going mad. But

when they opened their doors and looked upon the glowing figure of the sage, they opened something far more dangerous than the physical thresholds of their apartments. They opened their hearts to the terrifying allure of absolute devotion.

Under his subtle, devastating influence, the carefully maintained, deeply negotiated peace of their households began to fray, snapping strand by strand. The sudden injection of cosmic absolutism into the delicate ecosystem of a domestic partnership proved violently toxic to the status quo.

Arguments rose like thick, choking incense smoke through the thin gyprock walls. The building, usually segmented into isolated pockets of private silence, became a porous, echoing chamber of collective discontent. Husbands, men accustomed to the predictable, grey realities of corporate jobs and evening television, found themselves confronting wives who no longer yielded every minor point for the sake of an easy evening. The women's eyes burned with a new, uncompromising light; their voices carried the sharp, cutting edge of spiritual superiority. The brick structure of 69 Cowper Street itself seemed to physically vibrate with a low, persistent, grinding discord, as if the foundations were shifting under the immense, invisible weight of nine simultaneous domestic rebellions.

What follows is the precise, unvarnished record of that discord. It is the accounting of those nine couples whose ordinary, colourless lives were briefly, terrifyingly illuminated—and fundamentally unsettled—by a presence older than the bedrock of the city itself. It is a story of fierce devotion and shattering disruption, of quiet dignities compromised by grand illusions, and of the strange, humiliating corrective that finally, mercifully, restored the balance. This history is set not in the mythic, verdant forests of the ancient Puranas, nor on the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, but in