

The Wellness Guru of Parramatta

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Introduction

Parramatta is a place where old habits and new ambitions constantly meet.

In one corner of the city, families preserve recipes, customs, and memories that have travelled across generations. In another, social-media entrepreneurs package ordinary experiences as premium lifestyles, complete with elegant bottles, dramatic photography, and impressive-sounding promises.

At 69 Cowper Street, those two worlds collide.

Nine desi couples share a crowded household where food, family stories, arguments, and jokes are part of everyday life. Living

alongside them is Chunmun Singh, a solution architect at Baba Bank in Redfern, who has an unfortunate tendency to analyse domestic chaos as though it were a software architecture problem.

Their quiet routine changes when a wellness entrepreneur named Chaddichandan begins selling ordinary mustard oil for \$800 under the grand name **Ancestral Aura Sealant**. Surrounded by luxurious packaging and elaborate claims about ancestral energy, the product is presented as a premium spiritual discovery.

For the residents of Cowper Street, however, the mystery is difficult to see.

They have known mustard oil as a kitchen staple, a family tradition, a familiar smell, and an ingredient woven into countless memories. To them, it does not need an expensive bottle or a mystical vocabulary to possess meaning.

Instead of responding with outrage, they respond with something much more troublesome for extravagant marketing: ordinary memories, comparisons, and questions.

Sumitri brings out her grandmother's memories. Puju turns the controversy into dinner-table humour. Rashmi Bongi gathers a panel of brutally honest aunties for a blind comparison. Komal Gupta examines the psychology of luxury packaging. Pallavi opens an old family recipe notebook. Priya Sharma, better known as Ms. Aussie, explains the issue to a wider audience. Priyanka tracks the product's changing price. Khushboo keeps returning the conversation to the importance of cultural context, while Rohini eventually brings the story back to the household's final reflection.

What begins as a joke about an absurdly expensive bottle becomes a larger exploration of memory, marketing, cultural identity, and the strange power of making ordinary things appear extraordinary.

The Wellness Guru of Parramatta is ultimately a comic story about what happens when commercial storytelling meets people who already know the story.

Sometimes the simplest way to challenge an elaborate claim is not to shout louder.

It is to remember.

Chapter 1 — Sumitri and the Eight-Hundred-Dollar Bottle

Sunday mornings at 69 Cowper Street had their own rhythm, a chaotic, multi-layered symphony that began long before the sun had fully crested the Parramatta skyline. The house was large enough to make privacy an occasional luxury and small enough that every disagreement eventually became public entertainment. Nine desi couples lived under the same roof, each with different habits, schedules, and ideas about what constituted a sensible use of money. Chunmun Singh lived there as well, but unlike the others, he was not part of any couple. He was the house's unofficial systems analyst, mediator, and emergency problem-solver.

He also worked as a solution architect at Baba Bank in Redfern, which meant he had a tendency to describe ordinary domestic events using words such as "dependency," "workflow," and "root cause."

That Sunday, the household awoke to a sensory overload. By 7:00 AM, the pale, buttery light of dawn was slicing through the gap in the heavy living room curtains, illuminating dancing motes of dust.

From the kitchen came the shrill, intermittent whistling of three different pressure cookers, aggressively competing for acoustic dominance. The heavy, warm scent of roasting cumin and the sharp, earthy tang of brewing masala chai—thick with crushed ginger and green cardamom—wafted down the hallway, overpowering the lingering smell of the lemon-scented floor cleaner used the night before.

Sumitri found the strangest root cause of all amidst this familiar morning cacophony.

She was sitting with her husband at the large, scratched wooden breakfast table, bathed in the cool blue glow of her smartphone screen. The kitchen's harsh, overhead fluorescent light flickered slightly, casting a sterile, white glare over the remnants of breakfast—a half-empty steel plate of golden-brown parathas and a smattering of vibrant red mango pickle.

Suddenly, an advertisement automatically played on her phone. The sound it emitted was completely alien to the loud, clattering reality of the Cowper Street kitchen. It was the synthetic, overly engineered sound of a trickling waterfall, layered over the low, resonant hum of a Tibetan singing bowl.

The bottle in the advertisement was dark green glass, opaque and heavy, sealed with a brushed gold cap that caught the studio lighting perfectly. It stood on a slab of pale, veined marble. Behind it burned a single, thick beeswax candle, casting a warm, flickering amber light that made the scene look sacred. A small, meticulously polished brass bowl containing exactly twenty black mustard seeds sat beside the bottle.

The product name was printed in elegant, minimalist serif letters of pure white:

ANCESTRAL AURA SEALANT

Price: \$800.

Sumitri stared at it, her brow furrowing. The artificial trickling water from her phone speaker clashed comically with the loud, rhythmic *thwack-thwack-thwack* of Priyanka chopping onions on a wooden block nearby.

Her husband looked over, pausing with his teacup halfway to his mouth. The strong, sweet smell of his Assam tea hung between them.

"What is it?" he asked, his voice rough with sleep.

She pinched the screen to enlarge the crisp, high-definition photograph.

"Mustard oil."

He leaned closer, squinting against the harsh glare of the phone.

"It cannot be."

"It is."

"Are you sure?"

"I am absolutely sure."

She stood up, her chair scraping loudly against the tiled floor, a sound that briefly silenced the chopping. She marched over to the kitchen cupboard, the hinges giving a familiar, metallic squeak as she pulled it open.

Inside, bathed in the dim, yellowish light of the pantry, an ordinary plastic bottle of mustard oil sat wedged between a crinkling plastic packet of basmati rice and a sticky glass jar of lime pickle. The liquid inside the plastic was a vivid, luminous golden-yellow, thick and entirely unpretentious.

She held it up triumphantly, the plastic crinkling under her grip.

"Here."

Her husband let out a sudden, barking laugh that echoed in the cavernous room.

"How much did you pay for that?"

"Twelve dollars," Sumitri replied, placing the sticky plastic bottle on the table directly next to the sleek image of the \$800 Ancestral Aura Sealant. The visual contrast was absurd.

Sumitri looked again at the advertisement, scrolling through the sleek, dark-themed website. The product description claimed that the oil had been "ancestrally aligned," "ritually prepared beneath the crescent moon," and "designed to restore energetic continuity through dermal absorption." The text was written in a faint, muted grey font against a stark black background.

She read the sentences twice, her mind struggling to reconcile the pungent, eye-watering smell of the oil she used to fry potatoes with the phrase "energetic continuity."

Then she called out to the rest of the house, her voice piercing the morning din. "Everyone! Come here. Now." Pallavi arrived first, wrapping a bright magenta shawl tighter around her shoulders, bringing with her the fresh, soapy scent of a morning shower.

Priyanka paused her chopping nearby, wiping onion-scented tears from her eyes, a silver knife still clutched in her hand.

Then Rashmi Bongi, her heavy silver anklets jingling rhythmically against the floorboards.

Soon the kitchen was crowded, a shifting kaleidoscope of brightly coloured morning robes, mismatched pyjamas, and uncombed hair.

The air grew thick with the combined scents of sleep, sandalwood talcum powder, and brewing coffee.

Komal Gupta, adjusting her thick, black-rimmed glasses, leaned over Sumitri's shoulder and read the description aloud, her voice dripping with dry disbelief.

"Restores energetic continuity between body, memory, and lineage."

Puju frowned, her nose crinkling. "Does that mean it makes your hair shiny?"

"No," said Komal, tracing the words on the glowing screen.

"Does it taste better?"

"No."

"Then what does it do?"

Nobody knew. The kitchen fell into a bewildered silence, broken only by the rhythmic hum of the refrigerator.

Chunmun finally looked up from his laptop at the far end of the table. He was surrounded by a fortress of coffee mugs, the rapid, percussive clacking of his mechanical keyboard suddenly halting.

"What are you all discussing?"

Sumitri walked over and handed him the phone.

He watched the advertisement. The screen reflected in his glasses, tiny squares of light playing over his eyes. The presenter was a social-media wellness entrepreneur named Chaddichandan. He wore loose, unbleached linen clothing that looked effortlessly expensive. He stood beside an artificially lit waterfall, speaking softly into a hidden microphone, his voice a rich, manufactured baritone talking about "forgotten ancestral wisdom."

"This," he said in the high-definition video, holding the dark green bottle up to a perfectly positioned beam of synthetic sunlight, "is not merely oil. It is a vessel of inherited consciousness."

Sumitri stared at the screen, shaking her head. The heavy, pungent smell of the actual twelve-dollar mustard oil on the table seemed to mock the video's ethereal claims.

"My grandmother used it to cook potatoes," she said flatly.

There was a moment of absolute silence in the kitchen.

Then, a wave of laughter erupted. It started as a low chuckle from Puju's husband and quickly escalated into a roaring, tear-inducing chorus from **eighteen** different people, their voices bouncing off the tiled walls. Chunmun did not laugh. He adjusted his glasses and replayed the advertisement, listening to the resonant hum of the singing bowl again.

"Interesting."

Sumitri stopped laughing. "What's interesting?"