THE CAREGIVER'S CHEAT SHEET TO:

Caring Across Cultures:

South Asian Edition

(While translating, scheduling, and keeping the peace)

Caregiving can sometimes be complicated. And for South Asian families, there can be extra layers. Faith, family expectations, and traditions don't always line up with U.S. systems. **If you're a first-gen South Asian caregiver trying to balance it all, this one's for you.**

1. How to Handle Family Dynamics

- [ ] **Make a group chat or shared doc with the fam, so everyone stays in the loop.** Siblings, cousins, and even family abroad often want a say. So expect any caregiving decision to also be a group decision.
- [ ] **Loop in sons and sons-in-law.** Let's be honest: Daughters and daughters-in-law usually carry the load. Assign the men specific tasks – even simple ones like errands, bills, or appointments make a big difference.
- [ ] **Create a shared schedule & to-do lists** so everyone can see who's doing what.
- [ ] **Frame outside help (like aides or respite care) as *supporting the family*, not replacing it.** Some elders expect only family care, so hiring outside help can carry a stigma. "This gives us more time with Mom" goes over better than "We hired help."
- [ ] **Plan care coordination calls for the early morning** if the family's split across international time zones.

Pro-Tip: When in doubt, center it on your loved one's wishes. Saying "**This is what Mom wants**" ends most arguments before they start.

2. How to Navigate Healthcare & Communication

- [ ] **Ask for an interpreter if language is a barrier,** even if someone in the family thinks they can translate. You'll catch more details and reduce misunderstandings.
- [ ] **Mention all remedies.** If your loved one uses Ayurvedic or herbal treatments, tell the doctor. It helps avoid medication conflicts.
- [ ] **Try softer language when talking about illness.** Many families avoid saying certain words for fear of bad luck.

Instead of:	Try:
"cancer"	"If you get very sick…"
"death"	"If things get harder later on…"

- [ ] **Prepare for the doctor-patient hierarchy dynamic.** Many elders won't question doctors, even when they're unsure. Step in gently – ask for clarification, repeat back what's said, and write it down so you can explain it later to the rest of the family.
- [ ] **Rotate family hospital visits & assign shifts.** In many South Asian families, being alone in the hospital can feel like abandonment. Family presence is comfort – and expected.
- [ ] **Keep a written list of meds + remedies,** so no one forgets to mention them.

3. How to Incorporate Spiritual & Religious Practices

- [ ] **Honor daily rituals.** Even short prayer, puja, or meditation moments can bring comfort.
- [ ] **Ask for same-gender providers.** And request it early to avoid awkwardness. It's a preference many elders won't say out loud (but deeply value when you do).

- [ ] **Ask what would bring them peace when things get tough.** End-of-life comfort matters, so begin the convo before it's urgent. For example, ask if they want to listen to bhajans or set up a seva.
- [ ] **Plan time for mourning rituals.** They shape family routines after a passing. Many families observe 13-day rites or similar traditions before returning to normal schedules.
- [ ] **Know your loved one's wishes for cremation or burial.** Cremation is common in many South Asian faiths, so ask if they prefer their ashes to be kept, scattered, or returned to a special place. Research repatriation rules early if they wish for their ashes to be sent internationally.

Pro-Tip: Not all funeral homes handle cremation. Research early – and consider pre-purchasing services – to save a little money & a lot of stress later. It's more common than you'd think for loved ones to be taken to a funeral home that doesn't offer cremation.

4. More Things to Keep in Mind

- [ ] **Set clear caregiving responsibilities in the home.** Multi-generational households mean overlapping roles. Who handles cooking, driving, or appointments? Spell it out, so the load doesn't fall on one person.
- [ ] **Talk about money early.** Finances can feel taboo – especially for women – but it's key to avoid confusion or resentment later. These convos make sure no one carries the burden alone.
  - → Discuss who will manage funds if elders can't.
  - → Make sure things like beneficiaries, POAs, and wills are in place.
- [ ] **Respect food as identity.** Honor vegetarian, halal, or fasting traditions even in hospitals or hospice care.
- [ ] **Start conversations around inheritance early.** What feels "fair" can look different across generations and traditions.
- [ ] **Know what's tucked away.** Assets aren't always on paper – think ancestral jewelry, land overseas, or cash. Safe deposit boxes and NRI (Non-Resident Indian) or other overseas holdings often have valuables and key documents. Make a list of what exists, where it's kept, and who can access it when the time comes.

Bottom line:
Don't assume. Ask.

Traditions vary by religion, region, and family. The earlier you ask, the easier it is to honor your loved one later on.