

Ayurvedic expert connects mind, body, spirit

By JL Watson

jlwatson@news-press.com

September 29, 2007, The News-Press, Cape Life South

Before Mother Nature or Father Time, Ayurveda ruled as the mother of all sciences.

More than 5,000 years later ayurvedic practitioners carry on the medicinal practice that traces its origins to India.

Roughly translated as "life" and "knowledge" ayurveda seeks to find balance through the three pillars of life: vatta, pitta and kapha. The key to healthy living is to find balance — something that isn't easy in a modern world.

"All three (pillars) are there, but the tendency is for one personality to have the majority," said ayurveda practitioner Shekhar Annambhotla.

Annambhotla recently traveled from his headquarters in Pennsylvania to the Purusha Center in Cape Coral for a weekend of private consultations, lectures and a cooking class. A native of India, Annambhotla learned ayurvedic health practices from his grandparents. The basic principles involved in the ayurvedic way of life involve finding balance through diet, holistic medicine, yoga and meditation.

"It talks about holistic health and healing and bringing and connecting of mind, body and soul," Annambhotla said.

Finding the balance takes work and effort. Every person has a dominant personality trait or dosha that requires tempering with other pillars of health. Vata is the impulse principle necessary to mobilize the function of the nervous system.

Vata people tend to be thin and can eat without weight gain. They are artistic in nature but are scattered in actions and thoughts. "They have irregularities in their life and routine," Annambhotla said.

Pitta is the energy principle which uses bile to direct digestion and metabolism. People with a predominantly pitta dosha exhibit Type A personalities, and are demanding. "They are systematic with a very strong metabolism," Annambhotla said.

Kapha is the body fluid principle which relates to mucous, lubrication and the carrier of nutrients into the arterial system. People who lean toward the kapha dosha are easy-going with an even temperament, Annambhotla said. "They are gentle and relaxed," he said. "They're more settled and they don't talk much. They love to eat food and are fond of desserts."

The love of food can lead to weight issues for kaphas. Regardless of which of the three doshas is the dominant trait, all need balance with the remaining two if a person wants to maintain good health. "You want a balanced state," Annambhotla said. "It's unusual to find that."

Lynne Davis signed up for a consultation with Annambhotla because she has studied some ayurvedic practices and tries to maintain her health using holistic practices. "Western medicine tends to be one size fits all," she said. "Ayurveda tends to look at the individual. The different constitutions are taken into consideration. Everything in balance. That's the focus and science of life." To find her own balance Davis, a vegetarian, eats nutritious meals, exercises and meditates. She incorporates the use of herbs and spices into her routine.

Annambhotla recommended that she drink aloe vera juice and avoid raw vegetables. The combination works for her but is most likely different for someone else. "The idea is to get back into balance and refocus," she said. "That's something everyone needs."

Mary Ann Sloan-Greiner, business manager for the Purusha Center said that including the center has a goal of including more ayurvedic practices into the curriculum. "We're trying to make ayurveda a major part of the Purusha Center," she said. "Many people don't know about it."