**Dear all!!!!Brothers and sisters. Welcome to the audio podcast SERIES OF SRI BALAJI VIDYAPEETH, POPULARLY REFERRED TO AS SBV. TODAY, I SHALL BE SHARING SOME OF MY THOUGHTS ON Universal Immunization programme**

INTRODUCTION: The **National Rural Health Mission** also known as NRHM was launched on 12th April, 2005 with the dedicated and solitary aim of providing health for all. Seventeen years since inception, under the eleventh FIVE YEAR PLAN, NRHM has been striving sincerely to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care to the rural population, especially to those who hail from the downtrodden and vulnerable groups. Subsequently, on the 1st of May 2013, the National Urban Health Mission, also referred to as NUHM was launched as a well-defined facet of National Health Mission or NHM.

The National Health Mission plays a leading role in one of the most crucial and noteworthy endeavours, namely the **Universal Immunization programme** which simply corresponds to the National Immunization programme of our country.

ImmunizatioN: IMMEDIATE & LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS: Immunization is aptly described as a global health and development initiative that certainly saves millions of lives every year the world over. The Indian Government is well aware of this stand and has been ceaselessly contributing towards the development of indigenous vaccines and promulgating vaccination programmes. We need to understand that vaccines reduce the risk and danger of acquiring a communicable disease that could be transmitted from one individual to the other. Vaccines could also endeavour with your body's repository and capability pertaining to natural defences eventually conferring protection. Upon the administration of a vaccine for a specific clinical condition or disease, our body responds with the production of antibodies.

VACCINE-INDUCED IMMUNITY:

A person can build resistance to a communicable disease following an immunization. This is also known as active immunity. Immunization refers to the process that occurs in the body following the administration of a vaccine specifically aimed at conferring immunity to a particular disease-causing microorganism known as the pathogen.

Basically, vaccines utilize an attenuated or weakened or even dead form of a pathogen or subunits derived from the pathogen that are known to provoke or stimulate the immune system towards the typical immune response. Vaccines are administered using an injection, but some are also administered through the oral route or even as a nasal spray.

When the individual’s immune system detects the pathogen, it begins to devise measures ready to destroy and remove the disease-causing agent or the pathogen. This includes forming new antibodies or immunoglobulins in the blood and also memory cells specific to that pathogen. Hence, if the body is exposed to the same pathogen in future, the memory cells will get stimulated leading to the production of antibodies. These antibodies in turn protect the body. We need to remember that the main advantage of active immunity gained through vaccination over natural infection is the fact that the individual doesn’t have to necessarily be affected by the disease itself to become immune.

EXPANDED IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME IN INDIA:

The expanded Programme on Immunization in India was launched in the year 1978. It was later assigned the nomenclature **Universal Immunization Programme.** In 1992, it became an essential component of **Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme.** Since year 2005, **Universal Immunization Programme** has been an integral part of the National Health Mission.

UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE: The credit goes to the Indian government for transforming Universal Immunization Programme as one of the largest public health programmes. The programme covers nearly three million newborns and three crore pregnant women. It can easily be said that the immunization programme is one of the most cost-effective, but effective public health intervention that has certainly decreased the mortality rate among the new born.

SALIENT FEATURES OF UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME:

Vaccines against twelve preventable diseases are administered free of cost and this is a major noteworthy facet of the government’s robust initiative. Vaccination against Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Childhood Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by Hemophilus Influenza type B have brought down the morbidity as well as mortality rate in India, a fact that is directly attributed to the National Health Mission. Vaccination in endemic areas is enabled for Rotavirus diarrhoea, Pneumococcal Pneumonia and Japanese Encephalitis. It must be emphasised that the child is regarded as fully immunized if the immunization schedule is successfully completed within the first year of life. The proactive policy of the government and the able execution of the immunization programme under National Health mission are worthy of adulation. Thanks to these efforts, polio was eliminated in 2014 and maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination achieved in 2015.

OTHER INITIATIVES: I**nactivated Polio Vaccine programme** was introduced in November 2015. Likewise several new vaccine programmes have been launched on a sustained note.

Mission Indradhanush was launched in December 2014 and presently aims at enhancing the full immunization coverage to children.

National Cold Chain Training Centre Pune and National Cold Chain & Vaccine Management Resource Centre, New Delhi have been established with the primary focus laid on provision of technical training to cold chain & maintenance of cold chain equipment.

The Government of India has also taken special efforts in enabling the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) system in a phased manner. The network digitizes the entire vaccine stock management.

CONCLUSION: Provision of universal immunization facilities to protect children against vaccine preventable diseases would continue to be our top priority. Our government has included this initiative in the FIVE-YEAR PLAN. India’s thrust will be on the reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates, the forerunner of India’s all-round progress.