**Making mental health and well-being a global priority**

My warm greetings to the ladies and gentlemen!

Welcome to the audio podcast series of Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth!!

Today’s podcast reaches you on the eve of commemorating **World Mental Health Day 2022** on the 10th of October 2022.

For a long time, “health” is considered as just being “free from any illness or disability.” The Constitution of World Health Organization defined health, way back in 1948, that it includes not just physical well-being, but also mental and social well-being. We should acknowledge that this definition has stood the test of times. However, the acceptance and implementation of this integrated wellness concept has changed over time and was significantly affected by globalization and associated life stress.

Depression remains as one of the leading causes of disability. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. People with severe mental health conditions die prematurely due to preventable physical conditions.

Mental health is intimately linked to working outcomes and performance at the workplace. Absenteeism due to stress, anxiety, and depression at work has become extremely common.

In a country like India that is pressed for material resources, human resources, and infrastructure, healthcare is a critical concern for people. Currently, the strength of mental health professionals in India, to cater to the 1.38 billion people (latest UN data) that live here, is a meager 4000. The treatment gap is a staggering 83 percent.

Apart from availability and accessibility to mental health services, people with mental health conditions are barred from better quality of life due to invisible but palpable barriers like human rights violations, discrimination, and stigma. Even today, there are individuals who prefer visiting god-men and babas for resolving matters of mental illness.

Reinstating the importance of mental health, it has been included in the Sustainable Development Goals, and active efforts are being taken across nations to promote mental well-being for all people. Despite such advances, there is limited importance attached by the societies to mental health.

However, everyone has been alerted now in the past couple of years which had bought unprecedented changes to our social equilibrium. Yes, we witnessed the unfolding of the mental health crisis simultaneously with the dreadful impact of COVID pandemic. Depression, anxiety, insomnia, and post-traumatic stress rose to unimaginable levels in the past two years due to direct and indirect consequences of COVID.

On an individual level, it is important for people to develop empathy, and be open to listening to their suffering family, friends or peers in a non-judgemental manner. The small actions on an individual level will be responsible for creating big ripples of change as a society.

The society, at large, is expected to play a major role in promoting positive mental health through community-based involvement, along with primary care services, social protection, allocation of jobs, and providing seamless education.

To conclude, mental health is a crucial component of overall health and well-being of an individual, society and the nation. To provide effective mental health services, stigma and discrimination towards people with mental illness have to be dealt at both individual and societal level.

One needs to acknowledge the fact that there is ***no health without mental health!***

Wish you all peace and health!!