

ORAL HEALTH AND THE REPUBLIC

DENTISTRY'S ROLE IN INDIA'S

HEALTHCARE FUTURE

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Why This Book

India speaks often of healthcare reform, universal coverage, and preventive medicine—yet **oral health remains structurally invisible** in national medical discourse. Dentistry is treated as a peripheral craft rather than a **core public health science**, despite overwhelming evidence linking oral health to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, pregnancy outcomes, nutrition, productivity, and dignity.

This book is written to correct a **systemic blind spot**.

It argues that oral health is not a cosmetic or optional service, but a **republican obligation**—integral to public health, economic efficiency, and social equity. By situating dentistry within India's constitutional values, healthcare economics, epidemiological realities, and institutional frameworks, this book reframes dentistry as a **strategic pillar of India's healthcare future**, not an adjunct profession.

Preface

Modern India has built vast health ambitions—Ayushman Bharat, digital health missions, medical education reforms—yet dentistry remains institutionally fragmented, policy-neglected, and socially misunderstood. This paradox persists despite India producing one of the world's largest dental workforces and facing one of the world's highest burdens of untreated oral disease.

This book is neither a clinical manual nor a professional grievance. It is a **systems-level examination**.

Written at the intersection of **medicine, pharmacology, public policy, ethics, and governance**, this work seeks to:

- Integrate dentistry into the **larger health ecosystem**
- Examine structural failures in dental education, regulation, and service delivery
- Propose a coherent national oral health strategy aligned with India's demographic and epidemiological transition

Above all, it treats dentistry not merely as a profession—but as a **public institution serving the Republic**.

Chapter Framework

PART I – FOUNDATIONS: ORAL HEALTH AND THE IDEA OF THE REPUBLIC

Chapter 1: Oral Health as a Public Good

Why oral health qualifies as a public good and why market-only models have failed India.

Chapter 2: Dentistry and the Social Contract

Access, dignity, and the ethical obligation of the state toward oral healthcare.

Chapter 3: The Hidden Burden of Oral Disease in India

Epidemiology, underreporting, and the economic cost of neglect.

PART II – SCIENCE, SYSTEMS, AND CLINICAL REALITIES

Chapter 4: Oral-Systemic Health Connections

Inflammation, microbiomes, and chronic disease linkages.

Chapter 5: Pharmacology in Dentistry

Rational drug use, antimicrobial resistance, analgesics, and anesthetics in dental practice.

Chapter 6: Preventive Dentistry and Population Health

Why prevention failed institutionally despite being scientifically sound.

Chapter 7: Oral Cancer and India

Tobacco, areca nut, screening failures, and missed policy opportunities.

PART III – EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE

Chapter 8: Dental Education in India—Quantity Without Quality

Explosion of colleges, uneven standards, and faculty shortages.

Chapter 9: The Dental Workforce Paradox

Urban saturation, rural absence, and structural unemployment.

Chapter 10: Ethics, Commercialization, and Professional Identity

When survival economics erode clinical judgment.

PART IV – ECONOMICS, ACCESS, AND INEQUALITY

Chapter 11: The Economics of Dental Care

Out-of-pocket expenditure and affordability crises.

Chapter 12: Rural Oral Health and Structural Exclusion

Why dentistry never reached Bharat beyond cities.

Chapter 13: Dentistry and Universal Health Coverage

Why oral health must be integrated into national insurance models.

PART V – GOVERNANCE, REGULATION, AND THE STATE

Chapter 14: Regulation of Dentistry in India

Institutional confusion, regulatory capture, and reform imperatives.

Chapter 15: Public Dental Infrastructure—A Missing Layer

Primary health centers without dental vision.

Chapter 16: Role of State Governments

Decentralization, innovation, and accountability.

