



Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra
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Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra is a dedicated veterinarian and social researcher working at the intersection of climate change, sustainable livelihoods, and rural development. With a Ph.D. in Veterinary Physiology and qualifications from premier institutions like OUAT, TANUVAS, WBUAFS, and IGNOU, she has contributed significantly to the documentation and empowerment of India's nomadic and indigenous communities—particularly the *Maldhari* of Gujarat and *Bakarwal* of Jammu & Kashmir.

Currently serving as the Documentation Officer at SEVA in Jammu & Kashmir, she leads initiatives on SDG implementation, gender inclusion, pastoralist welfare, and climate-resilient agriculture. Her efforts have earned national recognition, including the Rising Star

Award (IVA 2024), Best PhD Thesis Award (2025), and features in publications celebrating women in veterinary sciences.

Dr Mohapatra has been a key consultant to CSOs and government agencies, working on projects for NABARD and the Centre for Pastoralism. As Rabies and Zoonoses Ambassador with Vigyan Setu Foundation, she has educated youth on one health and zoonotic disease prevention. Her grassroots work has directly impacted marginalized communities, promoting value addition, market access, and policy advocacy.

She also represents J&K in the national Pastoral Census initiative and continues to bridge science, society, and policy with deep empathy and vision.

Championing Livelihoods and Livestock: Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra's Crossroads of Science, Society, and Sustainability

Veterinarian. Researcher. Rural development leader. From Gujarat's Maldharis to Kashmir's Bakarwals, Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra is giving voice, value, and visibility to India's most overlooked communities.

In a country as diverse and complex as India, few professionals manage to navigate its plural challenges with the deftness of science, compassion, and grassroots action. **Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra**, a veterinarian and rural development researcher, exemplifies what it means to blend academic excellence with field empathy.

Currently serving as a **Documentation Officer at SEVA**, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Smruti is a rising force at the intersection of climate resilience, dairy development, gender empowerment, and indigenous pastoral rights. Her work spans from Gujarat's salt flats to the highland meadows of Kashmir, binding together communities that have long lived with livestock—but remained on the margins of policy and development narratives.

A passionate advocate for **One Health**, inclusive growth, and sustainable livelihoods, she is not just a scientist working *on* rural India—she is a leader working *with* it.

A Multi-Disciplinary Mind: The Making of a Grassroots Scientist

Born on **28th May 1991**, Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra's journey reflects both academic depth and a profound commitment to India's marginalised. After completing her **Bachelor of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry (B.V.Sc & A.H.)** from OUAT, she pursued **M.V.Sc** from TANUVAS and then completed her **Ph.D. in Veterinary Physiology** from WBUAFS.

But her learning did not stop there.

She also earned a **Postgraduate Certificate in Agriculture Policy** from IGNOU and a **Postgraduate Diploma in Animal Protection Laws** from NALSAR University of Law. Institutions like **IIT Kharagpur** and **IGNOU-NCIDE** have recognized her as a **potential innovator**, further validating her integrative approach to science and policy.

After completing her doctoral research, she joined **IRMA (Institute of Rural Management Anand)**—a crucible for rural thought leadership—where she took her academic insights to the field.

Research with Roots: Livestock Commons and Indigenous Livelihoods

What sets Dr Smruti apart is her ability to give voice to communities often invisible to mainstream research. Her work with two nomadic and indigenous pastoralist communities—the **Maldharis of Gujarat** and the **Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir**—has earned national and international recognition. These communities have long depended on livestock, yet their knowledge systems, adaptive practices, and ecological stewardship are rarely documented.

Her pioneering research has been acknowledged and **mapped on the World Map of Pastoralists and Camelids**—an honour that not only elevates her work but also brings global attention to India's rich but vulnerable pastoral heritage.

From climate adaptation strategies to animal husbandry practices, Dr Smruti's work captures the nuanced realities of livestock-based livelihoods in the context of **climate change, gender disparity, and rural resilience.**

Honours that Speak Volumes

Dr Smruti's impactful journey has been celebrated through numerous recognitions, including:

- **Rising Star Award 2024** by the Indian Veterinary Association
- Featured in '*Prerna*' and '*Aparajita*', compilations on inspiring women in veterinary sciences (2021 & 2024)
- **Best Oral Presentation Award (2024)** at the J&K Agricultural Science Congress for her work on climate-resilient agriculture
- **Young Veterinary Scientist Award 2024** by RVSKVV Gwalior and Agri Meet Foundation
- **Best Ph.D. Thesis Award (Veterinary Physiology)** on World Veterinary Day 2025 by IVA and BASU

These accolades reflect not just her research output but her role as a **science communicator, mentor, and changemaker.**

From Researcher to Rural Enabler: Projects That Empower

Dr Smruti has served as a principal investigator and consultant on several high-impact, field-driven research and development projects:

1. **IRMA Project (2022–23):** As Principal Researcher, she led the project titled *"Mitigation strategies against adverse effects of climate change on animal husbandry practices by Maldhari community of Kutch."* This participatory research brought together traditional knowledge and scientific approaches to improve dairying resilience.
2. **Centre for Pastoralism Study (2024–25):** Her work evaluated the real-time impact of Jammu & Kashmir's pastoralist policies, identifying gaps between policy intent and ground realities.
3. **SEVA-NABARD Livelihood Project (April 2025):** As Team Leader, she designed and implemented training modules for **wool-based livelihood development** around Wullar Lake in Bandipora, Kashmir. The initiative trained tribal and pastoralist communities in **value addition, marketing, and sustainable wool processing.**

Rabies and Zoonoses: A New Public Health Narrative

Dr Smruti's efforts are not limited to livestock livelihoods—they extend into **One Health advocacy and public health education.** As a **Rabies Ambassador 2023**, and later as **Zoonoses Ambassador 2024** for the **Vigyan Setu Foundation**, she brought critical awareness to zoonotic diseases among school students in Jammu.

Her sessions included interactive discussions on rabies prevention, safe handling of animals, and hygiene education—especially crucial in regions with limited veterinary infrastructure and high exposure to animal-human interfaces.

In 2025, she was appointed **Team Lead for the Rabies Ambassador Programme** across India and Nepal, reflecting her cross-border leadership in science-based community education.

Women, Wool, and Worth: Impact on the Ground

Dr Smruti's work stands out for its gender-sensitive approach. Through her IRMA fieldwork, she initiated programs like the "*Rural Haat for Maldharis*", connecting artisans and dairy women with markets. One such example is **Smt Laxmiben Rabari**, who established "*Pehnav*"—a handicraft collective now empowering women in the Anjar block of Gujarat.

Similarly, in Kashmir's **Bandipora District**, her April 2025 SEVA-NABARD training empowered local women in wool weaving, marketing, and eco-friendly processing. These aren't just livelihood programs—they're platforms for **dignity, income, and identity**.

A Scientist with a Community Compass

As a consultant to several government departments and civil society organizations in Jammu & Kashmir, Dr Smruti serves as a crucial knowledge bridge. Her efforts contribute directly to **India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially:

- **SDG 1 & 2:** Poverty alleviation through pastoral livelihoods and food security
- **SDG 3:** Good health via One Health and zoonoses awareness
- **SDG 5:** Women's empowerment through livelihood creation
- **SDG 13 & 15:** Climate action and sustainable ecosystem usage
- **SDG 17:** Partnerships for development through inter-institutional collaboration

The Way Forward: Building a *Viksit Bharat* from the Margins

When asked about the future, Dr Smruti smiles thoughtfully. "*Viksit Bharat* will not be built from cities alone—it will be woven from the aspirations of villages, the resilience of nomads, and the untapped wisdom of indigenous women," she says.

Her vision includes:

- **Mapping and mainstreaming pastoralist knowledge systems** into veterinary education and policy
- **Establishing a dedicated One Health Awareness Hub** in J&K to address public health through an integrated human-animal-environment lens
- **Training tribal women as rural para-vets and animal health entrepreneurs**, merging care with commerce
- **Expanding her wool-based livelihood models** across other Himalayan states
- **Using storytelling, documentation, and social media** to amplify invisible rural stories to national platforms

Final Reflections: A Note to the Next Generation

Dr Smruti's journey offers a powerful message: You don't need to choose between lab and land, research and rural. The future belongs to those who bridge divides.

"I want young vets, scientists, and development professionals to remember—real impact happens when you listen before you prescribe, include before you plan, and empower before you lead," she says.

Conclusion: The Future is Female—and Field-Based

Dr Smruti Smita Mohapatra represents a new generation of Indian scientists who are deeply rooted in the field yet firmly connected to global conversations. Her story is not only one of personal excellence but of systemic influence—changing how we see livestock, livelihood, law, and life in the hinterlands of India.

As India dreams of becoming a *Viksit Bharat* by 2047, professionals like her remind us that sustainable development begins in the shade of a tree, in a wool-weaving hamlet, or in the eyes of a child who now knows how to prevent rabies.

In science, as in society, **visibility matters**—and thanks to leaders like Dr Smruti, the invisible are beginning to shine.