



## Invasive Intrusion - Ethical Dilemma in Forest Conservation

Devika Mehra is an Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer having the dense and biodiverse forest of Madhupur, MP under her jurisdiction. She has always been committed to preserving the natural beauty of the forest and the interests of its indigenous tribal communities.

However, under the pressure of financial constraints and the need to combat a destructive pest outbreak threatening the forest's ecosystem, Devika, in desperation, introduces a non-native insect species in the forest, which is known to feed on the invasive pests, hoping it will contain the infestation.

Initially, the insect species appears to control the invasive pest outbreak, providing relief to the forest ecosystem in what seems a financially viable way. However, gradually, the invasive insect becomes a threat itself, affecting local plants, insects, and birds, disrupting the delicate ecological balance.

Not only this, the tribal communities, whose livelihoods have long relied on traditional hunting and gathering, experience disruptions in their food chain. They also began to view this move as a violation of their sacred space creating a sense of distrust towards the forest department.

What do you think are the long-term implications of Devika's actions and what alternative approach could she have taken?

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