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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

# After the Delimitation Defeat — South India Must Confront Its Own Inequalities

INDIAN EXPRESS

24 April 2026

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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# After the Delimitation Defeat — South India Must Confront Its Own Inequalities

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE



*"Southern states fear post-delimitation seat loss due to lower population growth. But they also have significant internal inequalities — between coastal/urban areas and interior/rural districts. The editorial argues that southern states must now champion equitable internal development, not just defend their seat count."*

## THE CORE ARGUMENT

The defeat of efforts to delay delimitation reinforces that Parliament seat redistribution linked to population will proceed post-census. Southern states — which have successfully controlled population growth — are projected to lose Lok Sabha seats relative to Hindi-heartland states (UP, Bihar, MP, Rajasthan) whose populations grew faster. The editorial argues that while southern states legitimately protest this federalist inequity, they must also turn inward: South India has significant internal inequalities — between Scheduled Caste/Tribe populations and upper castes, between coastal wealth and interior poverty, between urban prosperity and rural distress. The editorial uses this crisis moment to argue for genuine internal reform.

## THE DELIMITATION BACKGROUND

### What Is Delimitation?

**Delimitation** is the process of redrawing parliamentary and assembly constituency boundaries — and fixing the number of seats per state — based on census population data.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION	DETAIL
<b>Article 82</b>	Parliament must enact a Delimitation Act after each census
<b>84th Amendment (2001)</b>	Froze seat allocation until 2026 — to incentivise family planning
<b>42nd Amendment (1976)</b>	First froze seats until 2001
<b>Current freeze expiry</b>	2026 — delimitation now due post next census

## Why Southern States Fear Delimitation

STATE	POPULATION GROWTH (2001–2011)	PROJECTED SEAT CHANGE
Tamil Nadu	15.6%	Likely to lose 2–4 seats
Kerala	4.9%	Likely to lose 3–5 seats
Karnataka	15.7%	Roughly neutral
Andhra Pradesh	10.9%	Slight loss
Uttar Pradesh	20.1%	Likely to gain 10+ seats
Bihar	25.1%	Likely to gain 8–10 seats

**The concern:** States that invested in education and family planning and achieved demographic transition would be penalised — and BIMARU-like states (high fertility, poor human development) would gain political power.

## THE INTERNAL INEQUALITY PROBLEM

### South India's Own HDI Gaps

Despite macro-level prosperity, southern states have internal disparities:

STATE	COASTAL/URBAN HDI	INTERIOR DISTRICT HDI	GAP
Tamil Nadu	High (Chennai, Coimbatore)	Moderate (Ramanathapuram, Ariyalur)	Significant
Andhra Pradesh	High (Vizag, Vijayawada)	Low (Kurnool, Kadapa)	Large
Telangana	High (Hyderabad)	Low (Adilabad, Narayanpet)	Very large
Karnataka	High (Bengaluru)	Low (Kalburgi, Yadgir, Raichur)	Very large

**Karnataka’s north-south divide:** Bengaluru is among India’s richest cities; Kalburgi and Raichur districts have HDI levels comparable to BIMARU states.

## Caste-Based Gaps

Despite better overall development, caste-based inequalities persist in southern states:

- SC communities in Tamil Nadu face land access barriers
- Tribal (ST) communities in Kerala and AP remain economically excluded
- OBC mobility has improved — but lowest castes face structural exclusion

## FEDERALISM REFORM — WHAT IS NEEDED

### On Delimitation

REFORM PROPOSAL	DETAIL
<b>Compensatory devolution</b>	Increase Finance Commission weightage for demographic performance — not just seat allocation
<b>Upper House reform</b>	Make Rajya Sabha more representative of states’ developmental achievements
<b>Population-HDI hybrid formula</b>	Allocate seats based on both population and human development (like NITI Aayog composite index)

### On Internal Inequality (Southern States’ Homework)

- 1 **Sub-district HDI tracking** — publish block-level HDI indices
- 2 **Targeted transfers** — shift from general subsidies to means-tested transfers reaching interior/tribal districts
- 3 **Education quality investment** — interior district schools need upgradation beyond just enrolment
- 4 **Devolution to local bodies** — southern states have been reluctant to empower local governments despite 73rd/74th Amendment mandate

## UPSC ANGLE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Delimitation; Article 82; 84th Amendment; federalism
GS2 — Governance	Centre-state relations; Finance Commission; local governance
GS1 — Society	Regional inequality; human development

**Mains Keywords:** Delimitation, Article 82, 84th Amendment 2001, 42nd Amendment 1976, demographic dividend, North-South divide, HDI gaps, Finance Commission horizontal distribution, 73rd/74th Amendment

**Probable Question:** “India’s delimitation dilemma pits demographic reality against developmental equity. How should the conflict be resolved?” (GS2 Mains)

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/04/south-india-delimitation-defeat-internal-inequality/>

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