

21) Does the act of fixing minimum educational requirements for candidates ~~contesting~~ contesting local body elections paves the way for smooth functioning of grassroots democracy? Critically Analyse.

Grassroots democracy is shifting of decision-making to the lowest level of democratic government & in India, it is the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)

For smooth functioning of grassroots democracy, the following governance structure is essential,

a) Devolution of powers & responsibility: The Indian constitution through 73rd & 74th amendment acts mandate the state legislature to devolve as much powers & responsibility to the local bodies yet the states have not done it completely.

↳ Even if candidates with ~~with~~ minimum educational requirements are allowed, they would still be dependent on the state due to structural irregularities with PRIs

b) Financial powers: A study conducted in urban local body of Mumbai found that its revenue drastically decreased after the implementation of GST as local bodies now are devoid of taxation powers. Even the economic survey (2018-19) 2018 had pointed out the lack of autonomy of local bodies in finances.

↳ Without correcting the irregularity in devolution of funds to local bodies, the minimum educational requirement will hardly make a change in smooth functioning.

c) Socio-economic conditions : Despite making huge progress in elevating poverty, BIMARU states have a huge percentage of illiterate population.

↳ Bringing in minimum educational requirement shall violate the constitutional right to contest elections whereas there is also prevalence of panch governance (reservation of women has mainly led to male members controlling here). ~~It~~ Educated women ~~will~~ resist it & in this way, minimum educational requirement may help in smooth functioning of PRIs.

d) Only $\frac{1}{3}$ rd members of local bodies are elected to legislative councils of state. Representation of local bodies in state legislature needs to be increased for smooth functioning of PRI.

↳ Having only educated members in PRIs will not overcome this structural irregularity.

While the state & centre governments have taken steps such as e-panchayats, sabki gajana, sabka vikas for smooth functioning of PRIs, PRIs will have to be given proper training, social empowerment, increased devolution of power. A substantive transformation of PRIs will require political statesmanship from both the state & the centre.