

All the first instance.
this system of
election



All members of the State Assemblies and the House of the People (Lok Sabha) in India are now directly elected, except for two nominated members from the Anglo-Indian community. When voters do not directly participate in the election of their representatives, but choose only an intermediary body which alone will make the final choice, the method of election is called indirect. This intermediary body of electors is usually known as an electoral college.

Indirect method of election involves double election. In the first instance, the general mass of voters elect from among themselves a small group of electors. These electors then elect the final representatives who become members of the legislature. The final choice of electing the representatives is, not that of the general mass of voters, but of the intermediary body of electors whom the general mass of voters had elected in the first instance. This system of election limits the power of the voters. The indirect method of electing representatives is often used for the constitution of second, or what are popularly called upper chambers. In France, the Upper Chamber is indirectly elected.

In former U. S. S. R. the Upper Chamber was called the Soviet of Nationalities. Deputies of the Soviet of Nationalities were voted for separately by the Councils of Union Republics, Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and National Areas.

According to the Government of India Act, 1935, the Federal Assembly was to be indirectly elected by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. The Constitution of India provides for indirect election of the

Upper Chamber at the Centre, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha). Direct election makes people conscious of their rights and duties and it is fully in keeping with democratic principles. A direct contact between the electors and their representatives stimulates interest in public affairs and develops the sense of public spirit.

It also sharpens the political intelligence of the people. Democracy has an educative value and there is no better method of educating citizens than giving them the opportunity of directly participating in the election of their representatives. The spirit of political vigilance so injected in the people enables them to see and judge if their representatives justify the trust reposed in them. But the method of direct election has been vehemently opposed by some political thinkers. It is maintained that all voters are not the best judges to wisely exercise their political right. The average voter, it is argued, cannot always choose for himself the able man.

His judgment, while casting a vote, is very often influenced by considerations other than political standards. Direct election means election campaigns and intensive political propaganda for and against different candidates. Both the press and the platform are geared up for this purpose. The demagogue plays with the emotions of the masses and the catchwords of the professional politicians mislead them.

When voters are swept off their feet by gusts of popular passion, the natural result is the election of undesirable candidates. Election campaigns often assume ugly forms and candidates are vilified. Many citizens, who otherwise would have established their mark as legislators and administrators, avoid

contesting an election. They are “ election shies”, as it is termed, and the nation suffers when deprived of their services. Indirect election, its advocates claim, offers the only escape from the dangers of universal suffrage and the evils of mob rule. The ultimate chance of representatives rests with the body of selected persons constituting an electoral college.

These electors possess superior intelligence and political knowledge. In the selection of representatives they are guided by a keener sense of responsibility than an average voter. Moreover, when representatives are indirectly elected, popular passion is avoided. There are neither election campaigns nor party propaganda. All this tends to reduce the evils of party system.

Indirect election, it is further said, “ introduces an element of delay in elections, and acts as a sort of sieve through which election fever passes.” Emotions subside, reason plays its part and the election of the representatives is according to certain norms of values. Finally, indirect election is best suited for those countries where the people are not sufficiently educated and experiment with a democratic government has just started.

Those whose judgment should really count elect the representatives. But the indirect method of election does not find much favour. It is held to be undemocratic and politically inexpedient. Nor has it any educative value. When voters have no direct participation in the election of their representatives, they take only a lukewarm interest in politics and eventually

become negligent in public affairs. Moreover, the indirect method of election does not decrease the evils of party system.

Actually it leads to more party commotion and in countries where political parties are well-organised, election by indirect method has become a sheer formality; the typical example is the Presidential election in the United States. Indirect elections also mean intervention of the middle-man in politics that has been regarded as a perpetual source of political mischief. Finally, it is feared that this system of election increases the chances of bribery and corruption. A handful of people can be easily tempted and they easily succumb to such temptations.