

Nature and Significance of Political Theory

AS HUMAN BEINGS we live in society. Society includes many institutions like family, school, religious organization, polity, etc. Every institution serves some specific purpose. It involves some organization and use of authority. Authority denotes a relationship of command and obedience where the command is generally regarded to be reasonable. Mild protests, if any, would not upset the authority.

A

NATURE OF POLITICAL THEORY

WHAT IS POLITICAL?

When an organization is designed to regulate the whole community, it takes the character of polity. Polity, therefore, denotes an organization where rules are made and decisions are taken for the whole community, and authority is exercised over each member of the community. The term 'political' refers to something that is 'public', as distinguished from private or something applicable to a limited number of persons. Sheldon S. Wolin, in his *Politics and Vision* (1960) has beautifully summed up the characteristics of the 'political' as follows: Of all the authoritative institutions in society, the political arrangement has been singled out as uniquely concerned with what is 'common' to the whole community. Certain functions, such as national defense, internal order, the dispensing of justice, and economic regulation, have been declared the primary responsibility of political institutions, largely on the grounds that the interests and ends served by these functions were beneficial to all of the members of the community.