Chapter IV

Vedantic Nationalism

Be possessed of Shraddha (faith), or Virya (courage), attain to the knowledge of the Atman, and sacrifice your life for the good of others – this is my wish and blessing.

(Vivekananda 7: 267)

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

(Whitman “SoM,” 20: 401-402)

This present chapter aims at Vedantic nationalism, advocated, propounded and practised by Vivekananda and Whitman, though Vivekananda was conscious and Whitman unconscious of Advaita, the cardinal principle of their philosophies. In the angle of Vedantic nationalism both of their philosophies come together. These two radical thinkers have become the torch bearers of social, national and spiritual changes. Both belonged to the nineteenth century, a period which was in need of a strong voice to instil the spirit of freedom in each one’s blood stream. It was a period in which great leaders were silenced through failures, a period when revolutions were started for anti-slavery issues, a period when national feelings were getting consolidated in various parts of Europe, India and in other countries. According to them, the practical ideals of spirituality must be carried out in every part of the life of a nation. Spirituality should
enter the thoughts, words and deeds of people. The intellectual acceptance of the *Advaita* doctrine, the basic sameness and equality of all human beings as manifestations of the Divine, should be applied in practical day to day life. Both of them insist on the importance of individual purity and progress, since these result into national purity and progress respectively. This chapter exposes the emergence of Vivekananda in the right situation when all leaders were silenced after the great defeat of the Sepoy Mutiny. Vivekananda infused the spirit of independence in the minds of Indians through his speech. Whitman arrived in the political scenario of the United States when the nation was in need of such a bard to raise the voice against slavery. The drastic aftermath of the Civil Wars prompted him to visit the camps to offer physical and mental solace to the wounded soldiers. Both empathized with the sufferers and took efforts to mitigate their sufferings. Vivekananda wanted to make India a strong and developed nation. He felt that the unified growth of science, technology and production could make India stronger. His clarion call to motivate India was not only for the spiritual growth alone but for the national progress. Both of them strongly affirm that human divinity is chiefly the cause for unity among people and human excellence is fundamental for a nation’s progress. Since this principle is the basic tenet of *Advaita*, the researcher terms their national feelings and views as Vedantic nationalism. This divine equality puts down all discriminations and this sense of divinity, if everyone inculcates, a nation gets morally uplifted people and they are the promoters of national unity. This Vedantic nationalistic philosophy is practicable since the application of the principles of this philosophy everyone can practice.
Vivekananda shook the nation through his majestic voice and awakened the Indians to work for the freedom of India by shaking off its garment of slavery and hopelessness. Vivekananda emerged in a political situation when all Indian leaders were silenced and India was under the British rule, undergoing slavery and submission. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, when western influence began to pour into India, subsequent to the conquest by the organised might of the west, doubts began to arise in the minds of the Indian intelligentsia about the foundations of their civilisation. A sweep of sense of doubt regarding the whole national set up came and people developed a condemnation of the past of India and imitated the western ways. Different movements in different parts of the country like Brahmo Samaj movement of Bengal, the Arya Samaj movement in Northwest, theosophical movement in South furnished the necessary correctness to the spirit of heterodoxy. The launching of Ramakrishna Mission by Vivekananda marked another phase of national renaissance prior to the Congress. The galaxy of Indian freedom fighters includes Vivekananda too, and they struggled to free India from the yoke of British Colonial rule, in fact that was a saga of struggle and sacrifice represented the history of the nation. Vivekananda was a harbinger of freedom who inspired and gave a clarion call to all to arise, awake and to achieve. India in those days was in the need for a leader who would bring a compromising moral adjustment between occidental and oriental. Yes, the leader required should harmonise or mingle the need for materialism and spirituality. Vivekananda appeared in the political scene of India as a rare meteor, with a majestic voice and appearance. When the Indian people and the Indian leaders were in a state of doubt and fear he strongly proclaimed the necessity of getting freedom. India should
not be let down to death. A close study of the Indian freedom struggle reveals the fact that freedom is holy and the defenders of it are dedicated souls. All his sincere efforts and effective lectures have been recorded in *CWS*. He observes:

The Indian nation cannot be killed. Deathless it stands, and it will stand so long as that spirit shall remain in the background, so long as our people do not give up their spirituality. Beggars they may remain, poor and poverty stricken, dirt and squalour may surround them perhaps throughout all time, but let them not give up their God, let them not forget that they are the children of the sages … so long as holiness is supremely venerated, India cannot die. (Vivekananda 4: 154)

Vivekananda’s clarion call to humanity begins as follows:

Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; you are not matter, you are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter. (Vivekananda 1: 11)

After having motivated thus, he advises everyone to be positive always, that is to hold positive purposes and work with sincerity to achieve life’s goal. For this one should cultivate faith on oneself and faith on the Unseen Universal Force. This Force, termed God, reveals itself to the pure heart. One should use one’s intelligence to take decisions and this power of reasoning is the gift of God. Every human, according to Vivekananda must strive to become perfect and divine with the realization that every human soul or atman is part of the Ultimate Atman.
His love for India and its people was strongly based on spirituality because he wished every Indian to understand the divinity within each individual. Vivekananda’s patriotism or nationalism was so strong that he committed himself to work for India and its people. He was termed “patriot-saint” and “lodestar of Indian independence”. He realized that he was not meant to live the life of an ordinary recluse but he must teach mankind and “to be like a banyan tree” giving shelter to the tired and weary people who were in need of spiritual motivation for national uplift. He travelled widely in India, moving from one place to another, and found out the stagnant life of the Indian masses who were crushed by ignorance and poverty. He was disturbed by the spell of materialistic ideas that he noticed among the educated, who blindly imitated the glamour of the west. He observed that spirituality was at a low ebb in the land where spirituality was actually born. The picture of ancient India came before his eyes vividly in all its grandeur and glory, and the contrast was unbearable. India should not be allowed to drift that way but on the other hand India should become dynamic in all spheres of human activity. Above all India must spiritualise its people and he strongly felt that he was the instrument chosen by the Ultimate Reality to bring about the necessary changes. He created a positive spell on the minds of the Indians and they responded to the clarion call made by the majestic voice of Vivekananda to get independence. Elevated thinking through education, physical strength through right food habits and exercises, mental strength through the cultivation of moral principles, were strongly stressed by Vivekananda. The Indian revolutionaries felt that sheer force of weaponry would not bring freedom and this they felt due to the failure of the Great Revolt of 1857. His voice thundered in every nook and corner of India, awakened the
people from long slumber of fear and transformed the minds of the Indians to fight against the British rule, to get freedom for their spiritually based Mother India.

His serenity, intellect, purity, maturity, integrity, social awareness, nationalism and the strong faith on spirituality changed the Indian people and they rose against slavishness and suppression. Most of the great leaders of the Indian independence movement like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Chitta Ranjan Das, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sri Aurobindo were highly influenced by Vivekananda. In a website article titled “Nationalism in Swami Vivekananda” published by the Hindu Students Council readers come across the following views made by Lokmanya Tilak, Pandit Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. In 1812 Lokmanya Tilak said, “Vivekananda is the father of Indian Nationalism. Every Indian is proud of this father of modern India”. Pandit Nehru explained, “Full of dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward came as a tonic to the depressed and memorialised Hindu mind and gave itself reliance. Directly or indirectly he has profoundly influenced the India today. Rabindranath Tagore says, “Read Vivekananda, if you want to know India”. He embodied the spirit of India and he gave articulation and voice to that eternal spirit of India. S. Radhakrishnan considered him as the symbol of spiritual aspirations who worked not only for the freedom but also for the equality of people. Vivekananda’s ideals were critically examined as a nationalist text and his speeches were combinations of European enlightened ideals of modernity and rationalism with the Hindu doctrine of Advaita Vedanta. His new nationalist idiom provided the forum for the reconciliation of the conservative and radial reformers.
According to the request made by some enlightened people of India, Vivekananda decided to go to the West, thinking that it might help him in carrying out his divine mission. To fulfil this mission he attended the meeting held at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Some of the declared objectives of the Parliament were to present the important truths held and taught in common by different religions of the world and to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly relationship. Vivekananda attended all the sessions of the Parliament of Religions. During the first session which was held on Monday, 11 September 1893, representatives from all organised religions were packed in a spacious hall of the Art Institute. Vivekananda, rapt in silent prayer attracted the attention of the audience by his commanding presence. A great wave of enthusiasm went through the audience and they were spell bound when he touched the deepest chord of their sentiments through his intimacy and message. In his speech he stressed on the validity of all religions and their harmony. He appealed to every person to preserve his or her individuality and at the same time to be tolerant with other religions. They should learn the truth from other religions. He affirmed that every human is divine, pure and he is the manifestation of the Divine Force which created the universe. The inner divinity should reflect in every thought and action. This is the solution to all problems, according to him. The unknown young monk became known throughout the world and his popularity was so sudden and a timely one.

He travelled widely almost in all world countries and instilled the importance of spirituality. His practical ideologies were so helpful to shed discriminations and differences. He was the prophet of India and considered by the people not as a man but
as a movement. Vivekananda lived at a time of great intellectual ferment, of great moral confusion, and shrinking of standards. People were all animated by the western spirit of science and felt that science would provide the way of salvation of humanity. God was being gradually relegated to the background. That was the atmosphere prevailed at the time of Vivekananda. He awakened the countrymen to the utmost necessity of reviving the ancient spiritual tradition.

The powerful personality of Vivekananda was so much responsible for the fascination which attracted many young men of India towards him, and made them sacrifice their lives in the fiery struggle for political freedom in India. Getting political freedom was the prime goal of the people of India, which was instigated in their blood, by Vivekananda through his lectures. In a lecture delivered in Madras, he said:

Stand as a rock; you are indestructible. You are the Self, the God of the universe. Say – “I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, I am He,” and like a lion breaking its cage, break your chain and be free forever. What frightens you, what holds you down? Only ignorance and delusion; nothing else can bind you. You are the Pure One, the Ever-blessed. (Vivekananda 2: 236-237)

When Vivekananda wanted to enjoy spiritual bliss, it was Sri Ramakrishna who told him that he was meant for a different purpose and that he was not to be like any ordinary saint enjoying spiritual beatitude for himself. He was a person who was meant to be a source of inspiration to millions of people in India and abroad, and it was Sri Ramakrishna who gave that turn to Vivekananda’s spiritual energies and purpose. With
the touch of his master, Vivekananda presented himself to the world not as a passive saint, but as a dynamic world-mover. Realising the deeper significance of the spiritual experiences of his great master and interpreting the truths of ancient Vedanta in their light, Vivekananda applied them to the solution of the problems of Mother India. He had the seer’s vision that India could rise only through a renewal and restoration of that cradle of the nations and the cradle of faith. When there was a need for food and protection than religion, Vivekananda’s compassion, abundant spirituality and dynamic philosophy flowed into a national message of service. He put his Vedantic ideals into practice and this great sage turned into a patriot. From him proceeded a wave of national awareness and patriotism, issuing in a great struggle to improve the lot of the common man. For him all expansion was life and all contraction was death. Therefore renunciation of the limited self and manifestation of the higher self through love and service is the noble path of life through which we can attain total development and fulfilment. Whatever might be the political independence by way of social awareness and national solidarity, they came from the orientation of the ancient message of India’s spirituality.

Vivekananda awakened India by exposing the concrete means of putting ideologies into practice. He reminded people of their duties, thus:

The one vital duty incumbent on you, if you really love your religion, if you really love your country, is that you must struggle hard to be up and doing, with this one great idea of bringing out the treasures from your
closed books and delivering them over to their rightful heirs.

(Vivekananda 3: 134)

Equality and service are the principal values and Vivekananda has feelingly referred to them in a private letter written to a friend from America in 1893. He spoke about it again in 1901 in the intimate dialogue which he held with the young people fired with the spirit of patriotism. It is important to note that the two principles “equality” and “service” are being harmonized with the principles of the ancient *Advaitic* principle of India. Thus he proves himself as a Vedantic nationalist.

Vivekananda did not favour people who merely spoke of patriotism, but he needed men of action. He felt that sincerity in a work would lead on to inspiration and positive actions. Regarding the kind of work every Indian should do, was given by Vivekananda. He spoke thus:

We shall have to work, giving up altogether all desire for results. People will call us both good and bad. But we shall have to work, like lions, keeping the ideal before us, without caring whether “the wise ones praise or blame us”. (Vivekananda 7: 231-232)

In the above speech he has very powerfully explained what is meant by real love for the motherland and what is the nature of ideal patriotism. The title of the independent lecture which Vivekananda delivered in Madras to urge the young workers for restoring the ancient glory of the motherland was “My Plan of Campaign”. He explained all his plans to the people of India, especially to the youth, to work with him. If all people worked together India would flourish and he made a clarion call for the
youth of India to prepare themselves physically, mentally and ethically to fight against autocratic rules and release India from the cruel clutches of the British.

Vivekananda’s patriotism and love for India is so much evident throughout his writings and speeches. Here are his words:

> We must not look down with contempt on others. All of us are going towards the same goal. The difference between weakness and strength is one of degree; the difference between virtue and vice is one of degree; the difference between heaven and hell is one of degree; the difference between life and death is one of degree; all differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind, because oneness is the secret of everything.

(Vivekananda 2: 299)

His tour to the western countries never shook his patriotism and love for India but his love and patriotism had increased to the maximum because he considered India as his life. He remarked thus, “The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life .... India’s society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven …” (Vivekananda 4: 480). He held that once an individual began to know himself in the light of Vedanta, he would be able to discover the path of Godhead. Patriotism demanded a sound body, he said and advised everyone to keep the body fit and strong. Great tasks could not be achieved without strong physique, he said. Vivekananda also insisted to keep one’s mind pure because one’s life must be pure. Vivekananda was a living example for purity in body, mind and speech. His great disciple Sister Nivedita who was his constant companion has remarked, “Throughout
those years in which I saw him almost daily the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed” (qtd. in Majumdar 104). R.C. Majumdar praised Vivekananda thus, “Vivekananda was the patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his minds” (104).

His Chicago addresses made him very popular throughout the world as an ambassador for spiritual values and in India he was the inspirer of national consciousness. He was the promoter of peace and human brotherhood. He was a great and important influence on Indian nationalism and national pride. Personal purity and serenity in the character of every individual was stressed by him because he believed that individual serenity would make a nation serene and perfect. Nationalism, according to him did not mean Hindu nationalism or Muslim nationalism or Christian nationalism or Sikh nationalism since attachment to any one of those, would not make one speak of the nation as one’s own country. He kept the ideal of political freedom before his countrymen, specially the young men, as their immediate goal. His words are inspiring and creating positive impacts on the minds of the listeners. The following is a sample of his effective speech:

Arise, awake! Awake from the hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, to much of hypnotism has been and is upon our race. (Vivekananda 3: 193)
Any researcher who deals with the nationalism of Vivekananda cannot leave his famous lecture on “The Future of India” delivered in Madras in 1897. In the following specimen passage taken from *CWS* he deals with the historic profile of India. He says:

“This is the ancient land, where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country … Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up inquiries into the nature of man and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, an immanent God in nature and in man; and here is the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points. This is the land from whence, like the tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world … It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs … Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country … There have been periods of decay and degradation … Out of this decay is coming the India of the future. (Vivekananda 3: 285-286)

In the second speech he proudly announces the confluence of different languages, races and religions in India. Vivekananda feels proud that India sustains unity in diversity.
Race, religion, language, government – all these together make a nation.

The elements which compose the nations of the world are indeed very few, taking race after race, compared to this country. Here have been the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Tartar, the Turk, the Mogul, the European – all the nations of the world ... of languages, the most wonderful conglomeration is here; of manners and customs, there is more difference between the Indian races than between the European and the Eastern races. (3: 286)

Any research on Vivekananda would fail in its purpose, if the Chicago addresses are left out. On the first day in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago he addressed the people and impressed them with his recognition of mother India. He spoke thus:

Sisters and Brothers of America, It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects .... I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

(Vivekananda 1: 3-4)

Beginning from 11 September till 27 September 1893, Vivekananda delivered highly inspiring and intellectual talks in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago,
covering many major issues on unity among people of nations, need for religious
tolerance, the spiritual superiority of Mother India, keeping individual serenity, urgency
for the abolition of fanaticism, violence, discriminations of any kind, superstitions,
equality of men and women, need for education, stress on keeping the traditional culture
and heritage of nations, need for a welcome to science and technology, building up character, inculcating social, national and spiritual values in the minds of people, call to the younger generation to rise against evils to save country, acceptance of the merger of science and spirituality, uplift of the poor and the uneducated, understanding of the individual divinity, reshaping the nation on a spiritual basis with a warm welcome for science and technology etc. He put the seeds of all the above said ideals on the minds of people and has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any religious institution but every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. He stands for all that are positive. He is for service and not for fight, he supports assimilation and not destruction. He stands for harmony and peace and not for dissension. He came forward in accepting values and virtues, though they belonged to other nations. In his call to the Indian people he asked Indians also to follow the same procedure. Here are his words in this connection, “To become broad, to go out, to amalgamate, to universalise, is the end of our aims. And all the time we have been making ourselves smaller and smaller, and dissociating ourselves, contrary to the plans laid down in our scriptures” (Vivekananda 3: 271-272).

Vivekananda taught awakened India to come out of the slough of despondence and face the world with a new self confidence. India should contribute its positive
attitude to bring about global humanity. His observations of religious unity are as follows:

There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breath of this land. What do I mean by one religion? … We know that our religion has certain common grounds, common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be, however different their claims may be. So there are certain common grounds, and within their limitations, this religion of ours admits of a marvellous variation, an infinite amount of liberty to think and live our own lives … Therefore, the first plan in the making of a future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is this unification of religion.

(Vivekananda 3: 287)

He advises to gather up all the scattered forces and people should be in the same spiritual tune. His ideal of nationalism was based on the four solid rocks of (1) the awakening of the masses (2) development of physical and moral strength (3) unity based on common spiritual centre (4) consciousness of the ancient glory and greatness of India. Those were the four pillars on which Indian nationality must rest and it was found out that Vivekananda was the first one who clearly emphasized those ideas for the national development. Though many leaders raised objection, Vivekananda very boldly announced the co-operation of the masses as the chief item in the national regeneration. He raised his voice against the policy of begging-bowl. He was not only an ardent nationalist but also a great internationalist and humanitarian. It is a well
known undeniable fact that Vivekananda played a distinct role in the evolution of Indian culture. He will be remembered forever by all people.

In his famous lecture “My Plan of Campaign,” his call stirred the minds of the people of India to assert their will power. Here are his words:

Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. Go back to your Upanishads – the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy – and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. take them up, live upto them, and the salvation of India will be at hand. (Vivekananda 3: 225)

His appeal to all Indians is to stop their complaining and realize the abundant power they have within them, that is the immortal spiritual power and the realization of it only could revolutionize the world. All Indians without any disparity come under the canopy of spiritual oneness and he has explained this in terms of tat-tvam-asi. He says,

The external and internal natures are not two different things; they are really one. Nature is the sum total of all phenomena .... We think that the mind is entirely different from matter. Actually, they are but one nature, half of which is continually acting on the other half. Matter is pressing upon the mind in the form of various sensations. These sensations are nothing but force. The force from the outside evokes the force within. From the will to respond to or get away from the outer
force, the inner force becomes what we call thought. (Vivekananda 8: 245)

This non-dualistic Vedanta is the deepest and the unique expression of India’s spirit. He asserts that let people understand the powers of atman, that even the lowest of the low has the atman within and Atman is the all-pure, omnipotent and omnipresent one. Therefore all Indians are on through this Infinite Soul which assures infinite capacity to become great and good. This realisation makes one powerful, and he joins hand in hand with another and achieves success.

India needs man-making religion, man-making education, and man-making theories. Vivekananda awakens the Indians intellectually and spiritually with primordial importance given to physical strength. He motivates an awareness to shun superstitions and unwanted rituals from life. He prepares young men to be strong, vigorous, sincere and they are the backbones of Mother India. Every body should act with a strong will, since strong will is omnipotent. Vivekananda is the pioneer in awakening India’s national consciousness. He became the voice of India and started his movement from Dakshineshwar.

The uplift of the masses is Vivekananda’s legacy. He connected free India in relation to her service to humanity. A free India would take her rightful place in the Assembly of Nations and make a vital contribution towards bringing peace and good will to mankind and thus his message is both National and International. Strongly affected by India’s bondage he says, “I do not care for it (mukti) as long as a single individual in the universe remains in bondage” (Vivekananda 2: 235).
Vivekananda explains the different forms of spiritual discipline at different ages. At one period it was the practice of austerities, at another period it was the cultivation of divine love, and at a third period it was renunciation, but in the modern times spiritual discipline lies in unselfish service to others (or) in karma yoga, that is doing one’s duties to the utmost sincerity. Here one’s duty includes duty to the individual and to others. Each individual, he has urged, whatever may be his occupation, should try to bring the good of a nation as a whole and also to build up one’s character and acquire such virtues as courage, strength, self-respect, love and service of others. He has determined to reorganize the Indian Universities so that they may produce real patriots. Vivekananda’s tolerance is equivalent to vibrant actions. He is a person of wisdom. Here is an example:

Hold on to the ideal. March on! Do not look back upon little mistakes and things. In this battlefield of ours the dust of mistakes must be raised. Those who are so thin-skinned that they cannot bear the dust, let them get out of the ranks. (Vivekananda 5: 253)

In his lecture on “Future of India” he has commented that India lacks unity and the proper channelization of manpower and with these great powers, Japan excels all other Nations. He appeals the Indians to stop dissensions of all forms and degrees. Mother India must be the only God in India. He points out the two great defects like disunion and jealousy prevail in India and these become hindrances to India’s progress. He says, “The unity in religion, therefore is absolutely necessary as the first condition of
the future India. There must be the recognition of one religion throughout the length and breath of this land.

His Nationalism includes not only patriotism but also progress of an individual with excellence which leads on to Nation’s progress with holistic progress, these also include equality, education, physical, mental and ethical strength. These views raised him to the international level and basically he is a humanist. He also got a clear vision that politics if not combined with spiritualism, will collapse one day or the other. Yes, he played a distinct role in the evolution of Indian culture in the twentieth century. Vivekananda boldly removed those evils in religious thoughts and practices, social theories and customs, principles and methods of education, attitude towards women and low caste etc, which are not in accordance with and hinder the growth of spiritual life according to the doctrine of Vedanta for spirituality is the lodestar of Indian culture. This is again considered as the right yardstick to reform and the compass needle for determining direction.

His patriotic inspiration leads on the spirit of Nationalism, of course with elevated spiritual ideas. Keeping up the culture, tradition and spirituality forms the soul of India. His national reconstruction includes physical, moral and mental strength with human excellence along with eradication of poverty, illiteracy and improvement of man’s material life, which should be subservient to spirituality. Religious observation he deplores, but favours the learning of the methods of organization, science, technology, political, and social theories from advanced countries, simultaneously keeping up with India’s rich culture and heritage. A nation should be secular and be
tolerant to all religions. Any nomenclature in the name of religion does not entitle anyone any special privilege. Future of India depends on people working together with one will. His respect and commitment to nation begins from the grass-root level and this is understood from his deep concern over the educational system of India. India needs man making education and so spiritual education should find a place in the school and college syllabus. Each nation’s ideal should enhance the progress of the whole world and his broad ideals are universal. India’s real strength and vitality is its moral uprightness. India is built on spirituality, higher idealism, moral perfection and life with physical, moral and mental uplift. Even if the lantern of the Athenian sage is taken and a search is made, no one could find such a country anywhere in the world like India. Vivekananda also feels that the debt the world owes to India is immense, but he appeals India to wake up from her age-old sleep to take her true rank in the hierarchy of nations. The Mother India in the words of Vivekananda gets immense pride like this, “... this national ship of ours, ye children of the Immortals, my countrymen, has been plying for ages, carrying civilization and enriching the whole world with its inestimable treasures” (Vivekananda 3: 461).

Vivekananda has made every Indian to love the Motherland. In this respect the following words are apt to be quoted:

Be a man first, my friend, and you will see how all those things and the rest will follow of themselves after you. Give up that hateful malice, that dog-like bickering and barking at one another, and take your stand on
good purpose, right means, righteous courage and be brave.

(Vivekananda 5: 462)

Vivekananda motivates every one to work for the nation. Here he speaks:

Then fear not, not even death .... The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, .... in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion – of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes ... Have faith … my brave lads born to do great things. (Vivekananda 5: 43)

Vivekananda is very particular that the poor people should not be neglected. They should get individuality through education. For him sincere duty is very important which can build a nation. What is required is that Vedantic doctrine of inherent divinity should be placed before the masses.

According to Will Durant, Vivekananda has redefined God as “the unity of all souls” and Vivekananda advises people to practise Religion only through the service of others. He alone serves God who serves all human beings. S. Radhakrishnan, the former President of India has said that Vivekananda is the “spirit of the country”. Here are his observations on Vivekananda, “He gave articulation and voice to that eternal spirit of India … He gave fortitude in suffering … Renunciation, courage, service, discipline – these are the mottoes which we can learn from his life” (qtd. in Jayaraman 152).

Vivekananda has given the message of New India and everyone has received the “India-consciousness”. When Vivekananda is understood by a person, he or she gets a
light from the flaming torch, that is Vivekananda. The salvation of oneself and the welfare of the world, he has taught. He has been concerned with the betterment of the world as with individual liberation. All the pages of his immortal writings breathe these motives of him, justifying him as “the patriot-saint” of India. He is the pioneer of Indian Renaissance, who has raised a world Religion which treats everybody equal. He has made famous lecture on “The Future of India” which deals with the historic profile of India and the challenges India faces. He makes Indians to drink deep the eternal fountains of the past and then march forward, and make India brighter, greater and higher. The ups and downs in the history of India only strengthen India all the more. His words are highly motivating. He says:

A mighty tree produces a beautiful ripe fruit. That fruit-falls on the ground, it decays and rots, and out of that decay springs the root and the future tree, perhaps mightier than the first one. This period of decay through which we have passed was all the more necessary. Out of this decay is coming the India of the future. It is sprouting; the first leaves are already out; and a mighty, gigantic tree, is here, already beginning to appear. (Vivekananda 3: 285)

In India there is conglomeration of various customs, manners and languages, and the people of India should overcome this with wisdom. Vivekananda’s positivism reflects that of his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahasa, and this physical, mutual and moral power defend not only an individual but the whole nation. Once Sri. Jagjivan Ram, then India’s Defence minister in 1973, while paying his tribute to the master of
Vivekananda said, “It is my firm conviction that, if Sri Ramakrishna’s life and teachings are spread widely in the world, there will be no need for having defiance ministers like me in any country” (Jayaraman 163). Here is the head of India being lifted with pride when he says:

Do not say we are weak; we can do anything and everything. What can we not do? Everything can be done by us; we all have the same glorious soul, let us believe in it …. I wish that faith would come to each of you; and everyone of you would stand up a giant, a world – mover with a gigantic intellect – an infinite God in every respect. (Vivekananda 3:244)

When common people, given due respect, and when their needs are fulfilled, get peace, contentment, love and power which will rejuvenate India. The creation of new India depends upon the unified world of million of people who have to rededicate their lives for the nation. These nation-making motivations have been given by Vivekananda in order to arrive at the broadest international approach. His intense nationalism spreads and expands to internationalism. His vision is always the universal. Girish Ghosh, the dramatist and devotee of Sri Ramakrishna says, Vivekananda’s “I” encompasses the whole universe. Josephine Macleod observes that Vivekananda belongs to the “eternity quality”. Vivekananda is the representative from India to the world’s Parliament of Religions and he has received a universal attention, and he has raised India’s prominence significant in the world front. Here is his universalism, “Raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have
that wonderful love until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere” (Vivekananda 3: 430). Long before the League of Nations or United Nations was conceived by humanity, Vivekananda first gave to Indians in 1897 his futuristic vision of the emerging international culture, based on harmony of nations, and harmony of religions.

The problem of life is becoming deeper and broader everyday as the world moves on. The watchword and the essence had been preached in the days of yore when the Vedantic truth was first discovered, the solidarity of all life. Vivekananda, who is called a “spiritual giant” is a patriot who intensely strove for the good of all. Whatever he did or spoke, was for the salvation of India, and also for the removal of the misery of the world, and therefore his message was, not for one time, but for all times not for one country, but for all countries. A large number of people are drawn to Vivekananda for his great love for his country. He the “patriot-saint” was more an awakener of India than an awakener of souls. Expositions of the ideals of Indian nationalism occur in the replies he gave to the addresses of welcome, that were presented to him on his return to India, when he travelled from Colombo to Calcutta and from there to Punjab and Kashmir. They are published in the book called “Lectures from Colombo to Almora”. Separate mention has been offered to these lectures since they were delivered on the Indian soil. The remaining lectures were given from the world platforms of America and England which actually brought eminence and credit to India and its people. It is in these lectures one could feel the “patriotic fervors” and the way in which his spiritual ideology shaped his patriotic zeal. His return to India after his successful mission to the
west and the tremendous enthusiasm it generated at the time were unique events even in the long history of India. Vivekananda’s appearance on the world scenario was the first sign of the awakening of India from the stupor into which it had fallen before and after the British conquest. Indians consider him as a patriotic-spiritual leader who represented their ideals and aspirations. Almost like a mass movement people gathered and gave him a reception of that India had never witnessed before, because through the Chicago talk, India and Indians have got a special status and rank in the world scenario. From this study of world history, he expounded a theory regarding the survival of nations, and he applied it to explain the cause of India’s survival in spite of all the disasters that threatened to destroy it. He maintained that India has to make a contribution of its own for the general advancement of humanity.

S. Radhakrishnan’s views on Vivekananda are remarkable since Radhakrishnan himself was acclaimed as a philosopher and spiritualist of the modern era. Here are his comments on Vivekananda:

He embodied the spirit of this country. He was a symbol of her spiritual aspirations and fulfilment … He gave articulation and voice to that eternal spirit of India … And if there is any call which Vivekananda made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources. His spirit is supreme, man is unique … Renunciation, courage, service, discipline – these are the mottoes which we can learn from his life. … Vivekananda tried to lead humanity to a nobler and better path … If you really believe in the divine spark in man, do not for a moment hesitate to accept the
great tradition which has come to us, of which Vivekananda was the
greatest exponent. (qtd. in Jayaraman 151-53)

It is good for the people of India to see their motherland through the eyes of
Vivekananda. Vivekananda’s life and personality constitute a condensed India. Both
India’s greatness and pettiness, success and failure were understood by him. He
observed the historical evolution of India with all ups and downs, decided to change and
reshape India’s destiny in the modern age. He went around India, visited the nook and
corner of it, and saw the real India. The poor who lived in forests and plains, the
ignorant and uneducated as well as the rich who lived in mansions and palaces, the
educated and the well-informed people – everyone was questioned by him. Then he
visited the West, extended and launched the spirituality of India and then resolutely
resolved to restore human dignity to man in India, through making dynamic the wisdom
of eternal India. He named his message practical Vedanta and taught humans all-round
development. This universal dimension of Vivekananda is referred to by Jawaharlal
Nehru in his *The Discovery of India* thus, “Rooted in the past, and full of pride in
India’s heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life’s problems, and
was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present” (qtd. in Jayaraman 158).

It is the duty of every Indian to learn the messages of Vivekananda because his
practical ideologies are comprehensive revealing high spiritual greatness. A probing
study on Vivekananda and his philosophy, develops the vision, courage and hope of the
people so that India will become one of the “developed” nations in future. Let every
one re-educate himself from Vivekananda the mental spiritual strength who also
prompted the importance of physical strength and the avoidance of fear, superstition and ritual practices. Vivekananda educated the meaning of true Religion, the science of spirituality, the science of character development, the technique of practical efficiency etc. These new education would endow broadmindedness and sense of sacrifice. Vivekananda’s inspiration would change all pettiness and narrow mindedness of people and of politics. He rang the death knell of the stagnant feudal order through his messages and services.

Whitman, the counterpart of Vivekananda, has been raised to prominence as a unique social reformer and patriot whose conception of “spiritual democracy” was something that the United States of America wondered at during the nineteenth century. Whitman remains, abroad and at home, the poet of political democracy and social freedom. Whitman felt that he had a large spiritual mission to fulfil, brought to world literature a new and profound interpretation of life in terms of an inner, spiritual democracy. For a full understanding of Whitman, a thorough knowledge of his conception of “spiritual democracy” becomes very essential. Whitman was addressed meaningfully by Vivekananda as “the Sannyasin of America” (qtd. in Nikhilananda 134). Whitman has written political philosophy which focuses mainly on the individual purity or serenity which enhances a nation’s purity and progress. When both Vivekananda and Whitman concentrates on “individual purity” as an essential factor for “national purity” and when both say that “individual progress” enhances “nation’s progress”, their philosophies find unity and this is the main aim of the researcher. Whitman is a poet-patriot and a radical democrat. Young American Nationalist Literary
Movement promoted American writers and Whitman was one among those influenced by it. His inherent feelings of nationalism were fanned by this movement. He was also influenced by various free thinkers, bohemians, reformers and feminists. Whitman champions American nationalism political democracy and progress.

Has Whitman’s emergence in the American political scenario happened at the right time? For this question the answer is “yes” and here again he comes closer with the patriot-saint of the same century, Vivekananda. Whitman lived through the Civil War, a time when the country was on the brink of domestic collapse being torn between the opposing interests of the Whites and Negroes. During the 1700’s and 1800’s most countries in the western world were affected by two powerful political forces democracy and nationalism. Many revolts were triggered and one such was the American Revolution. Due to the revolutionary war, the American colonies were declared independent and there came the formation of a new nation, that is the United States of America and it was officially accepted as a republic. After many years during 1861-1865, Civil War broke out between two parts of the United States of America. This American Civil War took more lives of the citizens than in any other war. When the nation was moving towards Civil War, Whitman started noticing the racial, sectional and gender divisions which acted as stumbling blocks to progress. Those divisions were so negligible, if one was determined in doing one’s works sincerely, according to Whitman. Hence he envisions a way around those static identities and took to transcendentalist vision of self at the centre of the universe. He joined that higher vision with the working class materialism. Therefore, in the philosophy of Whitman all
came together without any discrimination. Whitman explored body and soul, as the united transcendentalism and materialism. The Civil War taught people a lesson that all people are created equal and have a right to freedom. Democracy and religion are strongly rooted to the soil.

Whitman’s vision of democracy took poetic form throughout his life. In 1871, Whitman turned his attention to the approaching centennial of the United States to call forth a new revolution. In his prose work, "Democratic Vistas," he suggested that the political basis of democracy was well established in America, but a new spirit was required to fulfil democracy's great potential. This spirit would be a native expression of the expansiveness of the land and the people. This spirit would create a sublime and serious Religious Democracy. Whitman believed the American sense of progress and faith in humanity. Whitman believed that every person has inherent worth and dignity. All people are created equal and have the right to freedom.

The terrible bloodshed caused grief and bitterness that lasted many years and the explanations for the causes of this Civil War revolves around the issue of slavery. The political structure of America shows the sagacity and lofty idealism of its statesmen in an unprecedented material prosperity. Material prosperity was accompanied by a new awakening of men’s minds and consciousness. Whitman witnessed the Civil War and faced the aftermath of this war. He felt so painful at the loss of the precious lives of many soldiers. His own brother who was one of the soldiers, was wounded badly and Whitman got the chance to help these soldiers and nursed them day and night, consoled them psychologically through his positive words. Whitman voluntarily offered physical
and mental solace to the wounded soldiers. Whitman welcomed the social changes that of converting jails into penitentiary systems with humanitarian principles and also looked forward the anti-slavery societies. Democracy, during the time of Whitman, was in full swing and each day was considered as people’s day. During this period America faced the “transcendentalist movement”, which brought the spiritual India into the swift current of American literature. Whitman, who was a contemporary of the concord philosophers, seems to have come very near to Vedantic nationalism and idealism. Though Whitman himself denied his Indian philosophical influences, and though there was no reliable evidence to show the direct Indian impact, Whitman had personally undergone “the secret silent ecstasy”. This bliss he personally felt and he got an unconscious influence of the Advaitic philosophy of tat-tvam-asi which affirms the inner divinity of every human confirms that it is the manifestation of the Ultimate Divinity. Whitman was not a poet of words but a real reformer of actions and all his services to society and nation basically rooted on the view that individual purity, serenity and progress, naturally promote a nation’s purity, serenity and progress, respectively. In his poetry, Whitman takes the transcendentalist vision of the self at the centre of the universe and he becomes the “joiner of the whole” and speaks to the reader. The effect is persuasive that the reader who just cannot observe it, becomes part of it. *Leaves of Grass*, a compiled edition of Whitman of all his poems, was read by Vivekananda who said that the book breathes the spirit of identity with all forms of life.

Whitman was the singer and prophet of American democracy. Whitman had become very famous for his true feeling, intuitive grasp that he expressed in his
writings. Henry Alonzo Myers in his article on “Whitman’s Conception of the Spiritual Democracy”, says that Whitman was looking through them to something equivalent to a rationalist’s world. Even though he had a rationalist’s views he is very firm that there is a natural divinity within each one. Whitman valued his inner mind and this is the reason for the expression of his personal intuitive experience. This experience induced him the knowledge of the divinity of every human and its being manifested by the Cosmic Divinity. Whitman says that a perfect poet finds all equal and a man is the “sum total of his experiences”. Since soul is unlimited, Whitman feels that he is also unlimited. The very opening verses of “Song of Myself” make this assertion:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
I loafe and invite my soul. (Whitman “SoM,” 1: 1-4)

This equality is real to Whitman and his political philosophy is based on the ideals – (1) man is inherently divine, (2) every human’s divinity brings equality, (3) man’s this divine nature is “personalism”. Like Vivekananda, he too is not dropping down materialism but it should be only a subservient to uplift the “personalism” of a human and the progress of a nation. He says that one’s soul is not satisfied with only material fulfilment but gets contented only when it gets something loftier. Whitman deplores corruption and tainted politicians in a nation. According to him a society becomes rotten if it is deprived of political institutions. In Democratic Vistas Whitman charges politics and political institutions as follows:
... canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor the element of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to state or man, seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown. (para. 325)

He is very furious at the unhealthy political atmosphere with all sorts of bad practices and behaviour of men and women:

I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States .... What penetrating eye does not everywhere see through the mask? The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature .... The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America ... are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration; and the judiciary is tainted. (Whitman DV para. 16)

'The above statements reveal how Whitman is committed to do services to the nation and as a first step he uncovers all drastic obnoxious nature of the cross section of the society and the nation. He says, "Money-making is our magician's serpent ... an almost
complete failure in its social aspects and in really grand religious, moral literary and aesthetic results” (Whitman $DV$ para. 16).

The same Whitman who pictured the artificiality of the society and the nation in all its splendour and luxury, did not forget to mention the importance of moral and spirituality needed in societies and nations. Material luxuries may progress, but keeping or maintaining a principled spiritual life is stressed by Whitman. Here are his views given in the Democratic Vistas:

Are there, indeed, men here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? … Is there a great moral and religious civilization … Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity. (para. 18)

Mark Van Doren comments on Democratic Vistas thus, “No book of Whitman’s is more honest than this one …” and this is quoted in the article “Walt Whitman’s Democratic Vistas” an electronic source material. Democratic Vistas is an honest but a tragic utterance of the disillusionment of the Civil War, says Mark Van Doren. The text of Democratic Vistas, which Whitman variously described as “memoranda” and “speculations”. Whitman felt the moral and spiritual collapse of the nineteenth century like his counterparts, wanted to elevate the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral faculties of citizens. Whitman defended the principles associated with the democratic, egalitarian ideal. In Democratic Vistas, Whitman himself says that he attempts to demonstrate how freedom and individualism could not only “revolutionize and reconstruct politics,
but Religion, Sociology, manners, literature and art as well. The culture, he envisioned, would raise people to the level of perfection.

In taking up the challenge to reconstruct his country, Whitman assumes several roles and the researcher concentrates on his role as “a visionary seer” who anticipates a great Republic with refined individuals whose freedom lies in their obedience to eternal spiritual laws. His language becomes diffuse as though this poet-prophet speaks from a visionary trance. Whitman places many antitheses – individual and mass, material and spiritual, present and future. An ardent reader understands that Whitman finally finds a synthesis of these antitheses through his higher level of spiritualistic outlook. Whitman fixes a “moral microscope” for his analysis of matters. He accuses American society of hypocrisy, greed, political and religious depravity, saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, and mal-administration. He describes churches as “dismal phantasms”. He is distressed over society’s fragmentation. Whitman wanted people to get mental transformation. He trusted that good literature can tremendously change people to the positive line. Such literature would bring superb American men and women with spiritual outlook. Good literature, Whitman says, has moral efficacy. Whitman’s works capture America. Whitman has captured the widest range of American experience. He writes about city life and country life, men and women, northerners and southerners, blacks and whites and more. Reading his poetry is like watching a film that shows glimpses and images of American life. He gives the snapshots of individuals. Of all the nineteenth century American poets, Whitman saw most clearly the reality of American life and he captured that in his poetry. He captured the beauty and grittiness of
American life. He expressed his range of experiences. Whitman was not a writer of contradiction but he was a writer of reality. He was a spiritual poet who brought forward a frank expression of body and sexuality, just to demystify unhealthy attitudes and wrong notions. Whitman has strong assertion that literature with moral and political efficacy can change the nation. This kind of literature will foster a radical individualism which he names “personalism”. Whitman favours personal liberty and communal solidarity. The “personalism” includes personal dignity, either male or female. His democratic republican principle encourages self-reliance. He insists at heroism and patriotism of every individual, needed for a nation. He affirms that spirituality fuses men and women who belong to distant lands in a network of brotherhood, as a family, making the races comrades and fraternizing all. He aims for a “spiritualized future democratic state”, and the “ideal personalism” should be found in that society. His vistas is for a sublime religious democratic country. His vistas is for a higher “religious – spiritual democracy”. What he envisions is a homogenous society. Such society is characterized by a copious production of perfect characters among the people. Undoubtedly Democratic Vistas is a long visionary lyricism. Arthur Wrobel asserts that Whitman’s views reflect the condition of the present society.

Whitman seems to say that “pen is mightier than the sword” because to uplift a nation from the clutches of artificiality and evils of any kind, only Literature comes as a resort. Literature which has religious consistent with science with competent power is necessary for the day. This prophet of American democracy, strongly feels that human nature can be transformed at any time for the better. In his opinion evil flowed from
tyranny or superstition rather than from human nature. He wishes for the growth of a
noble race of people. He sings about the “divine average” of American citizenship,
engaged in the homely yet wonderful tasks of everyday. His poetry is replete with
unforgettable pictures of American people and American scenes. The blacksmith, the
Negro teamster, the butcher, the farmer, the mother, the soldier, the prostitute, the
pioneer and hundreds of others all move in a motley, yet somehow intensely living,
throng across his pages. “I shall” he said in Democratic Vistas, “use the words
America and democracy as convertible terms.” He identified America with the concept
of “freedom” and “democracy”. Whitman’s emphasis on freedom has spiritual
overtones. The subsumed expressions of Whitman have been identified from
Democratic Vistas and given below, “As the greatest lessons of Nature through the
universe are perhaps the lessons of variety and freedom, the same present the greatest
lessons also in New World politics and progress …” (para. 1). Whitman’s conception
of teacher and women is suitable for all times. He says:

... I promulge new races of Teachers, and of perfect women,
indispensable to endow the birth-stock of a New World. For feudalism,
caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political
institutions, still hold essentially, by their spirit, even in this country,
entire possession of the more important fields, indeed the very subsoil, of
education, and of social standards and literature. (DV para. 4)

Whitman advices people always to keep their identity since maintaining good
individuality is a pride. This individuality should not be marred by anyone. He
expressed the inner spirit of America and its freedom as nobody had ever done before or did afterwards. He was the poet of American democracy since this theme of democracy he applied whenever he referred to humanity and its universality. He identified democracy with poetry and art. Democracy he compares with open air in *Specimen Days*. American democracy, in its numerous manifestations must be vitalised by regular contact with nature. Whitman favours Lincoln’s philosophy. The following opinions he elaborates thus in *Democratic Vistas*:

As to the political section of Democracy, which introduces and breaks ground for further and vaster sections, few probably are the minds, even in these republican States, that fully comprehend the aptness of that phrase, “THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE,” which we inherit from the lips of Abraham Lincoln, a formula whose verbal shape is homely wit, but whose scope includes both the totality and all minutiae of the lesson. (para. 26)

Whitman asserts that a religious and moral character should be interrelated with political and productive and intellectual bases of the States. Democracy and all that are connected with democracy, in their entirety, get meaning only when they are imbued with spirituality. Whitman emphasizes individual purity which according to him, definitely brings societal and national purity. Literature, especially poetry has a strong role in moulding people to be good.

Whitman celebrates the common place and the earthy. He has sung about his countrymen in their totality of their lives, surroundings and doings. To him the whole
Kosmos is beautiful and he sings their lives with their follies, goodness, politeness, and their politics. He lists out every detail, place and name of the American life. He boldly says that there are people of contradictions. He mentions the physiology, phrenology, politics, geography, pride, freedom, friendship and what not regarding his country. Reading this elaborate picture of America given with such involvement and commitment by Whitman raised even the eyebrows of Emerson. Whitman, when refers to the Civil War and its after effects says that America was hospitalised for some years. He praises the soldiers for their sacrifices. They died for America. The most striking feature is his emphasis on the vitality and importance of spirituality and says it should be imbued with all these minute aspects belonged to America. Spirituality is the fine thread which connects the whole of America at the same time and it is the basic foundation of every human and nation. His powerful utterances and strong stress on spirituality even in matters of democracy naturally makes the researcher to compare him with Vivekananda. He quotes Jesus Christ and strongly affirms the importance of spirituality in *Democratic Vistas*:

What Christ appear’d for in the moral-spiritual field for human kind, namely; that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each single individual ... by democracy’s rule that men, the nation, as a common aggregate of living identities, affording ... complete subject for freedom. (para. 34)

For Whitman democracy includes law, the superior law. Nation should not run riot. The core of democracy is religious element, that is spirituality. Brotherly love and
equality are important. He takes “grass” as the symbol or a banner to symbolize the new order of a nation to treat everyone equal and great. His nationalism is so sincere, devoted and loyal. He explains his ideas as follows:

Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind .... But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever .... The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive .... Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it.

(DV para. 37)

Whitman, a staunch nationalist, considers every element of nature as equal. A grass, according to him is a symbol of unity and democracy. A single grass is fragile and weak so as a human being. Grass in a cluster automatically becomes powerful so as people gains strength when united. A single grass also represents one’s disposition and the same grass in a spiritual angle becomes the handkerchief of God, designed as a remembrancer of the Creator. This “babe of the vegetation” does not have any discrimination, grows everywhere symbolizing the need for brotherhood and unity. The sense of brotherhood never takes into account any discrimination. How meaningfully he says:

... I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

(“SoM,” 6: 106-110)

His Vedantic or spiritual nationalism evolves from the detection of the “divine unity” which serves as a unifying factor of all in the universe. He says, “In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley corn less/ In the good or bad I say of myself I say of them” (“SoM,” 20: 401-402)

Political democracy practically works in America, supplies a training school for making first-class men. It is life’s gymnasium and people try to get success. He gives importance to women and common people. Democracy produces superb men and women and this democracy, according to him is the younger brother of nature. His words are so effective and strong in throwing light both on corruption and other evils, but he never fails to focus on all good aspects of democracy. America is a typical democratic nation. He says:

Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training-school for making first-class men. It is life’s gymnasium, not of good only, but of all. We try often, though we fall back often. A brave delight, fit for freedom’s athletes, fills these arenas, and fully satisfies, out of the action in them, irrespective of success. (DV para. 45)
America, the great democratic country has people with common ideologies, brought together in their own inner spirituality. Even his discussions on democracy ends with the Ultimate Reality. He believes that if God is the sea, humans are the rivers. This comparison is parallel to the Advaitic philosophy that each man is divine, a manifestation of the Supreme Divinity.

America’s literature should be New World Literature encompassing all whatever is virtuous and good. Whitman wishes to boost America as a top nation in the world, a nationality superior. For this Whitman expects perfect literature, excellent people with perfect personalities, and a democratic environment. New races of teachers and perfect women are given primordial importance by him. He expects a sublime serious Religious Democracy which idealizes humans who recognize the respectability of labour and the purity of one’s soul. Hence he is named as one of the greatest writers of democracy. Mark Van Doren in his The Portable Whitman praises the Democratic Vistas as a necessary book. Whitman challenges everyone in bringing out the reconstructed country and in which he assumes several roles that of a “Jeremiah” (Bibliographic Record web). The feeling of fraternity is an en masse feeling within him and he wishes everybody to nourish this sense of unity. Here is an evidence from “Song of Myself”:

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,

And I know the spirit of God is the brother of my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,

and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a Kelson of the creation is love.

(Whitman, “SoM,” 4: 92-95)

In section 24 of “Song of Myself” he gives a classic expression to his love of democracy. He says, “I give the sign of democracy/ By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms” (506-07). Whitman was so caustic about the Civil War and the after effects of it in societies and nations. Spirituality was hidden under the materialistic progress, like embers under ashes, and this was understood by Whitman. Thoreau’s dream of the marriage of the East and the West, a real synthesis of Science and Religion have been fulfilled by Whitman. His societal and national ideologies are blended with spiritualism. Whitman stood for equal rights, direct voting, abolition of monopolies and special privileges. He stressed on free trade, universal suffrage, prison reform, women’s rights etc. He opposed economic monopolies, political corruption, exploitation of workers, and such social evils. His democratic instinct is religious based and hence his philosophy is based on Universal human sympathy and freedom. His nationalism includes equality of people without discrimination, and independency, of course on the basis of spirituality. Democratic Vistas, a pamphlet he wrote in 1871, remains as a remarkable testament, to the philosophy of freedom. It is a stirring document instigating faith and broad mindedness to accept all as equals. He warns the nation against the prevailing cynicism, materialism and corruption. Then he underlines the greatness of America’s destiny as a land of democracy, an empire of freedom to serve as a model for mankind. He develops the concept of democracy as a personal not a governmental or political ideal. He
stressed on individual self development in which body, mind and soul proceed toward spiritual ends without the loss of the material functions of living. According to him a government should provide free functioning of every individual in every way necessary for himself to be called perfect and such a Government must rest ultimately upon the fraternity of comrades. He accepts along with Jefferson that all men and women are good and the best Government should aim at human perfection. The higher ideals in Science, Technology, Literature or whatever may be the subject, must act as means to build a democratic nation. About the post Civil War period he writes that the country just by a hair escaped from destruction. Moral degeneration he has felt in America at all levels and he writes, “the official services of America, National, State and Municipal in all their branches and even the department of Judiciary are saturated in corruption” (qtd. in Ramjilal 118-119). His democratic philosophy is described as “personalism”, which aims at the inner development of man to achieve the highest potential, rejecting personal greed and “hoggish materialism”. Each one should be “a moral member” of society. He stresses on the Government to help a citizen to develop, to grow into a perfect one. Such a Government is the “training school” for “making first class man”. Democracy, according to him is a unique form of civilization, since it transcends ordinary politics and material strivings with the sole aim of creating a noble race of human beings. This dazzling vistas, Whitman opens up as a poet of democracy to America and to other nations. He says that nations are united, and people are united only through the feeling of “love” and this alone can fraternise all.
Like Vivekananda, Whitman also gives importance to individual moral enhancement, because it will lead a nation to progress. His sentinel musings have been rooted deeply in genuinely building up moral human character and thus building a nation purely democratic which is based on pure ethics. For him each human is divine and this divinity unites all. Each man’s human excellence he advocates which will lead on to a society’s, a nation’s and a world’s progress. Man is God and so one should respect and admire the other one. The “I” in Whitman is not Whitman alone but it transcends and embraces the whole universe. The “I” mingles and dilates in “multitudes”. How powerfully and meaningfully with philosophical echoes he says that “I am large, I contain multitudes.” (“SoM,” 52: 1326). Unconsciously this Western philosopher reflects the Vedantic ideals. Here are some of the lines of proofs:

I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written tome, and I must get what the writing means.
I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter’s compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child’s carlacue cut with a burnt stick at night.
I know I am august.

(Whitman, “SoM,” 20: 403-409)
According to Whitman America should aspire for self reliance and perfection. The very order, ethical principles and whatever positive measures a democratic nation should adhere to all such things have been already prevalent in the cosmos and it is the duty of every individual to catch it and utilize it according to the needs as well as to the progress of a nation. “America” and “democracy” seem to be convertible terms, Whitman’s nationalism includes equality of men and women. He strongly believes in woman’s nobler role as a mother and also for other finest roles where she does sincere efforts. Whitman’s emphasis on individual dignity and concern, his ideas on the equality of sexes, his appeal for political and social morality, his rejection of extremes of wealth and poverty, his secular religion which transcend all dogmas and creed, his detection of the divinity within man which equals the whole humanity find similarity with Vivekananda’s ideals. Whitman refers to Lincoln’s “this Government of the people, by the people and for the people”, he actually means mainly the common people – the labourers, lumber jacks, miners, clerks, factory workers, bus drivers, sailors and such people. And these common people are Whitman’s “brothers” and “sisters” and he also finds oneness with them in the merger of the multitudes.

Vivekananda and Whitman are the inspired prophets of democracy who instilled the spirit of democracy and made clarion call to nationalism. Democratic Vistas the prose work of Whitman is the expression of a national character which expects each man to be perfect. His whole Leaves of Grass is a message and also a vigorously expressive recognition of the people of the earth, their cultures and religions. “Lilacs Lost in the Dooryard Bloom’d” is also highly expressive of his democratic feeling.
Democratic Vistas is an important landmark in the history of Literature expressing his intellectual persuasiveness, noteworthy power of prose and the most important is “ideal democracy” exposed there. In his book common people’s welfare is stressed as one of the features of democracy. Whitman’s nationalism is unbounded, since he commensurates with the people, his spirit responds to his country’s spirit, and he incarnates its geography, natural life, rivers and lakes. Individualism to keep one’s honour and to maintain human excellence is taught by Whitman. Whitman’s all embracing universalism is so impressive. He judges not as the judge but as the sun falling around a helpless thing. Faith, he considers, as antiseptic of the soul. When a nation loses “liberty”, it means it loses everything. This is Whitman’s opinion of liberty and he welcomes “frankness” in a being and Whitman is ready to forgive all other mistakes, provided if the person is truthful. In Whitman’s imagination, a new order of society will be formed where each man shall be his own priest. Very proudly he says with a sense of oneness, “I am a poet of comrades”. He had a mission to alleviate the problems of the people. Whitman is called “the prophet of America” and he is the prophet of “democracy”. He addresses his fellow citizens as “comrades” and the greatest appeal for him is “liberty”. He lays strong emphasis on fraternity. Equality, is an external law for Whitman and this is revealed in Democratic Vistas. He says that his is a larger humanism. For him there should not be any discrimination among the people.

The technical and scientific network which bring nations together has been already recorded by Whitman through his expressions that are spiritual in temperament.
The spiritual and normal material progression make a country nationalistic, and this prophesy, has been foretold by him in “Passage to India”. Whitman like Vivekananda instil within everyone “self-reliant individualism”, the extension of love and respect, service to the other, patriotism with the sense of International Co-operation. His views are global and universal and he loses himself in the vast flux. Whitman’s support for the cause of freedom is not restricted to local or national politics. He is the most potent force in shaping the ideas of democracy of the period and he is a radical democrat who advocated equal rights, direct popular vote and abolition of monopolies and special privileges. He also advocates free trade, universal suffrage, prison reform, women’s rights etc. He opposes to temperance laws, economic monopolies, political corruption, exploitation of workers and other evils. He is intuitively and instantly and inherently a democrat, who based his philosophy or faith on universal human sympathy and on the ever widening freedom of the masses of men. Universality was his “grand theme” and in it he rooted his democratic outlook. The fullest expression of all these was given in Democratic Vistas. The pamphlet is a remarkable testament to which makes important pronouncements on democracy. He writes as follows:

It (democracy) is the old, yet ever modern dream of earth, out of her eldest and her youngest, her fond philosophers and poets. Not that half, only individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love that fuse, ties and aggregates, making the race comrades, and fraternizing all. Both are to be vitalized by religion. (qtd. in Ramjlal 119)
Democratic Vistas is a testament to the philosophy of freedom, and a stirring document of faith in humanity. Human mind is stretched and the human horizon is enlarged. It is a major contribution to world literature of democracy. Democracy is an individual’s personal self development in which body, mind and soul all proceed toward spiritual ends without loss of the material functions of living. Only a Government which provides for a free functioning of every individual in every way necessary for complete being can be regarded as democratic, and such a Government must rest ultimately upon the “fraternity of comrades”. What he expressed in Democratic Vistas are historical words that they stood the test of time and are applicable for the present day political on goings and his political philosophy will be useful for future politics. Thus both Vivekananda's and Whitman's spiritually based nationalism is so true that their ideologies are common to the past, present and future.

Then American democracy has fallen upon evil days through the schism of war and also for various other reasons, and this also is called by him as the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual, and he advices to follow the “ideal”. In his criticism of post Civil War America bitter remarks were given by him. Politicians, he says, “were the creatures of the moneyed men,” and the nation “like a physician diagnosing some deep disease.” (qtd. in Ramjilal 118). Just as nature teaches great lessons through the universe the lessons of variety and freedom taught through politics, he says. He also says that democracy's aim is to make perfect men and women.

Whitman’s spiritual angle comes out like this, “Even for the treatment of the Universal in politics, metaphysics or anything sooner or later we come down to one
signal ‘solitary soul’ ”. He continues, “Democracy is keeping the traditional culture. The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts and loving perceptions and of self respect.” (qtd. in Ramjilal 349). What Vivekananda hails as “human excellence” is referred as “character” by Whitman. He says: “Character will be a main requirement and not merely erudition or elegance.” (qtd. in Ramjilal 369). He always correlates nationalism with spiritualism. This is how he speaks:

We see, as in the Universes of the material cosmos, after meteorological, vegetable and animal cycles, man at last arises, born through them, to prove them, Concentrate them, to turn them with wonder and love, to command them, adorn them and carry them upward into superior realms … the work of new world is not ended but only fairly begun. (qtd. in Ramjilal 378)

The vision of national unity as advocated by Vivekananda and Whitman was not based on the mere abstract ideas. Vivekananda has a vision of global unity and peace. His conception of Indian unity leads on to world unity. His persistence in human freedom expands in global peace. He has an intercultural perceptive, provided it must aim human excellence through spirituality. Vivekananda has been hailed as a world thinker from scientific, sociological, aesthetic, religious and ethical perspectives with an expansion of multi dimensional states of human existence. Vivekananda brought inspiration for nationalism. He brought an awakening among his countrymen. He taught people self respect, self confidence and self assertion. Whitman asserts that no one is inferior to the other and all things in the universe are perfect miracles each as
profound as any. His works are actually like documents or will bequeathed to the American people and he says that the spiritual order of life embracing the whole gamut of creation. The super structure of his world has been raised on the Vedantic base, born out of his own mystical experiences.
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Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


