

Madhu Valli, an emerging Indian-American hip-hop artist, has been crowned Miss India USA 2016, according to a report in the PTI. The 19-year-old is a student at George Mason University, Virginia, majoring in music and communication.

With 14 singles already recorded, Valli's ambition is to become the next biggest star in the music industry, according to a media release issued by the organizers of the India USA pageant.

This is the 35th year of the popular beauty pageant for Indian-Americans.

The Mrs India USA title went to Sarita Pattnaik, an interior designer and mother of two from Texas. Pattnaik wants to be a social activist and a voice for women's empowerment.

Rhea Manjrekar of New York was crowned Miss Teen USA. Manjrekar has been working for children who are homeless, and has raised over \$50,000 in the last two years for the cause.

For Valli, this was the fourth pageant title. She won Miss Piedmont Region's Outstanding Teen title in 2014, the Miss Capitol Region in 2015, and Miss India DC in 2016.

"The Miss India USA 2016 Pageant was amazing!" she told DLA Times in an email. It was a culturally enriching experience. "Every girl who competed on that stage deserved the crown. I walked in representing DC and walked out representing the United States, and that was the most beautiful and humbling feeling in the world."

She gives God the credit for her win.

Valli says the title comes with a responsibility: to be a leader and role model in the community. "This is something that I've been doing regardless of my possession of the crown and sash. But being Miss India USA has opened up many more venues for me and has helped expand my network vastly so that I can reach out to hundreds and thousands of people in the Indian-American community, and that truly means the world to me, she says.

She wants to convey to the people the important message of unconditional love and ser-



Miss India USA **MADHU VALLI** *a message of love and service*



vice, the need for women's empowerment, and the determination to follow their dreams. "I've learned that the first step in changing the world for the better is to BE the change that I want to see in the world," she says. "And it's my responsibility to add positivity and to shine a light in as many dark places as I can." She adds: "It is my responsibility to inspire and encourage the youth in the Indian-American community, and I intend to do so successfully."

Valli says her dream is to become the next biggest star in the music world. She is working toward that goal by building a strong marketing team and is currently trying to expand her network. "As we all know, in the music industry our 'network' is our 'net worth,'" the 19-year-old says. "I'm in the middle of creating a brand new album, and I can't wait for you guys to hear it!"

Valli plans to graduate from GMU with a double major in communication (with focus on public relations) and music (focus on vocal performance). "Later in life when I choose to settle down, I would like to be an entertainment manager, which is why I highly value



my degree in music and communication." She also wants to be an ambassador for UNICEF like two of her role models, Priyanka Chopra and Shakira. "Right now, my main goal is to keep the Miss India Worldwide 2017 crown in the U.S."

Madhu Valli was born in Orissa, India, and came to the United States when she was 2 1/2 years old. Her mother is from West Bengal and her father is from Bangalore, which makes her half Bengali and half Kannadiga. All of my family is in India, she says, with very few relatives in the U.S. She hasn't been to India since she was about 12 or 13 years old. "And I miss my family there very much." Everything that she does, all her successes, are not for herself, but for her family. "I am the oldest didi (sister) whom all of my little nieces and nephews look up to," she adds. "I have to give them something incredible to look up to so they know in their hearts that they can strive for and achieve anything that they want to in their lives."

