

By Archana
Chaudhary/ SATimes

Nikittasha Marwaha isn't just another beauty pageant winner. This reigning Miss India Worldwide is an accomplished Kuchipudi dancer and has performed on stage, theater and television. From winning national level dance competitions to numerous pageants and being a valedictorian, if we had to make a list of Nikittasha's titles and achievements we'd run out of pages. So we let this young go-getter do all the talking.

How did it feel when you were crowned Miss India worldwide?

Nikittasha: Unbelievable, amazing and by far the most surreal feeling—I felt as if one half of me flew to cloud nine and watched the other half stand in front of the crowd taking pictures. I prayed before I was announced the winner, but I prayed harder after winning because I knew this was just the beginning of a very huge responsibility. Deep in my heart, I felt grateful to God and all my loved ones.

What prompted you to participate in the Miss India worldwide contest?



Nikittasha Marwaha Miss India Worldwide 2009 (centre) is flanked by first runner up Kanchan Verma (left) and second runner up Sunaina Bhoendie (right).

Nikittasha: I really enjoy performing on stage and more so when it's for a good cause. I knew that taking part in this pageant would give me a chance to showcase my developing talents, life philosophies and a chance to serve the world community at large. In addition, I grew up watching beauty pageants such as the Miss USA, Femina Miss India,

Person of the Week

Nikittasha Marwaha: A bundle of diverse talents

Miss World and Miss Universe pageants these pageants embedded a pageant girl and a Barbie doll image in a part of my mind, heart, and soul. Beauty queens such as Sushmita Sen, Aishwarya Rai, Lara Dutta and Priyanka Chopra also inspired me to take a challenge, and put my best foot in front of the world and make a statement about my confidence.

Did you have a winning strategy?

Nikittasha: Some past contestants may have been blessed with a "winning strategy" but I believe if you want to be anywhere near to the top you must work hard. Yes, luck also plays an important role in winning but I believe in giving my heart, mind and soul into all preparations. I practiced day and night for a whole month for my dance/talent segment. It wasn't easy because I had to concentrate on my college work as well. My family and I hunted for days to find an Indian dress that suited me (thanks to Sheetal in New Jersey). For the question and answer round I prepared by looking into the mirror and quizzing myself on different topics continuously. I knew that all the through the competition I had to be honest, true and real.

What are your future goals and objectives?

Nikittasha: Currently I am a communications student at Northwestern University near Chicago and this program is training me to achieve a finesse to enter the media and entertainment industry. I enjoy dancing, acting, emceeing and television hosting so eventually I would like to get into the media and broadcasting industry. I am also interested in television and film production. I also want to motivate young girls to be strong women, and be a role model to my generation and the next.

Any plans of joining Bollywood?

Nikittasha: Presently I am still studying but if a golden opportunity arrives then I will definitely be open to it be it in the USA or abroad in India, Canada, UK or anywhere in the world.

What are the things that you are passionate about?

Nikittasha: I am trained in Kuchipudi Indian classical dance



A trained Kuchipudi dancer Nikittasha Marwaha performing at her Kuchipudi Rangapravesam.

and completed my Rangapravesam after years of training. My dance guru Saikantha Raparla ji of the India International School, Virginia instilled in me a passion for this dance and I can never imagine leaving her side or my dance. I am a fan of Bollywood and Indian classical music—a day without harmonious music makes me restless. I enjoy flying and experiencing new cultures so I love to travel, experiment with different cuisines and learn small phrases from the places I visit.

Who are the people that you look up to?

Nikittasha: My parents and my teachers/gurus are always the first on my list—they have taught me all I know. Where I am today I wouldn't have been there without their relentless efforts to polish and improve me. Madhuri Dixit is second my list because she is the epitome of what I consider talent, beauty, humility, and success.

I would like to walk in her footsteps and she is my inspiration. *You won America's Ms Junior Teen pageant in 2006, talk to us about it?*

Nikittasha: The America's Ms Junior Teen pageant was my first national pageant title. This pageant being American and me an Indian girl winning it was a pleasant surprise to me as well as others. This pageant was a scholarship pageant and took into account academics, inter-personal skills and community service—all close to my heart. It was a completely different feeling for a minority South Asian Girl to compete against mainstream and very competitive American girls and win. It was a great exposure and I got to learn a lot from the other participants. I think winning an all American pageant opened the windows of opportunities for many young South Asian young girls to aim higher and higher at various pageants.

Has winning the Miss India Worldwide pageant changed your life?

Nikittasha: I am lucky to have won this pageant, but honestly every competition that I participated in has taught me something. It didn't matter if I lost or won. But now, with this bigger responsibility of a Miss India Worldwide, I have a tangible role in society of motivating my peers and younger generations here in USA, in India and worldwide. My life has seen a change in hope—I have more of it and I have belief in my dreams. I have received substantial attention by newspapers, magazines, TV, my school and college faculty and peers here in USA and in India. I have a chance to participate in more projects and internships as well. My life is becoming pretty busy and event driven but I am trying to keep everything under control.

Some of Nikittasha Marwaha's achievements

Represented USA at the Boogie Woogie International dance competition in London and was first runner up

Chosen best female dancer 2008 by International Modeling and Talent Association, NY

America's Miss Virginia Junior Teen State Pageant Winner 2005

Eagle Award Winner 2004 for Academic Excellence - Fairfax County Public School, VA

Learned Ballet, Tap and Jazz dance courses from Swan Ballet Dance School, Chantilly, VA

Danced in Tina Sugandh's music video "Break Me" Played lead Actress in "Laila," a Hindi/Urdu Short Film "Girl Bride"

Appeared in a series episode of "Voice of America"



After winning the Miss India USA title in New Jersey in 2008, Nikittasha Marwaha represented USA at the Miss India Worldwide pageant in South Africa early this year.