



Ms Pilavullakandi Thekkeparampil Usha

Pilavullakandi Thekkeparampil Usha (born 27 June 1964), popularly known as P. T. Usha, is an iconic Indian athlete. She was born in Koothali, a village in the Kozhikode District of Kerala. Considered one of the greatest athletes India has ever produced, Usha is often called the "queen of Indian track and field." She is also known by the sobriquet "Payyoli Express."

P.T. Usha's journey into the world of athletics began in the year 1976 when she was chosen to represent her district in the then newly founded Sports School for Women run under the aegis of the Kerala State Government. In 1979 she participated in the National School Games, where she won the individual championship and came into the limelight. Her first international performance came in the 1980 Pakistan Open National Meet at Karachi where she won 4 gold medals for the country. In 1982 at Seoul World junior athletic championship she won a gold medal in 200 meters and bronze medal in 100 meters. The same year at New Delhi Asian Games, she won silver medals in both 100 and 200 metres. In the 1983 Asian Track and Field Championships in Kuwait, she won gold in the 400 metres setting a new Asian record. By 1984, the Los Angeles Olympics, she had improved tremendously. She won the 400 M hurdles heats and semi finals, and missed getting India's first track-and-field bronze medal in the 400m hurdles finals by 1/100 sec, in a dramatic photo finish. She put her faith in her natural talent and trusted in God almighty, with the strength from the people of India. She emerged a winner becoming the first Indian sports woman to enter the Olympics final at the age of twenty. She had set a Commonwealth and Asian continental best, 55.42 seconds for the event which still stands today as a National Record. In the 1985 Jakarta Asian Championships, she won six medals, five gold and one bronze. Such a spectacular performance created an all-time record for most gold medals won by an individual at a single event in the history of the championships. This track record of Usha in the world of athletics has not been matched or surpassed till date by any athlete, in the world, surprisingly the only world record held by an Indian in the world of athletics. Usha nearly replicated her superlative performance of the Jakarta Championships in the 1986 Seoul Asian Games with a tally of one silver and four gold medals. In the 1987 Singapore Asian Championships, she won three gold and two silver medals. In 1989 at the New Delhi ATF, she won 4 gold and 2 silver medals. In her 24 years of active career from 1976 to 2000, she won 103 international medals and 1042 national medals, to her credit.

In her stellar athletic career, P. T. Usha has been the recipient of many national and international awards and recognitions. The Indian Government decorated her with the Arjuna award in 1984 and the Padma Shri in 1985. She was chosen the best woman athlete in the 1985 Jakarta Asian Athletic Meet. Usha was conferred the Best Asian Athlete Award in the years 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1989. She was also honoured with the World Trophy for the best Athlete during the years 1985 and 1986. She retired from competitive athletics in 2000, and started the Usha School of Athletics in her native, for the promotion and practice of athletics with state-of-the-art facilities in athletic skill development. Her mentees at the Usha School of Athletics include Tintu Lukka, who qualified for the women's semi-final 800 metres at the 2012 Olympics in London and Jisna Mathew, 17 years old, who

represented the country in 2016 Rio Olympics and 8 international athletes with 69 international awards from 2006 to 2016.

By honouring Pilavullakandi Thekkeparampil Usha, IIT Kanpur is celebrating the success saga of one of the finest sportspersons of this country, who is a role model and a source of inspiration for millions of young men and women in all walks of life.