

'Superman Sanju' toast of India after win

AFP
Kolkata

India yesterday hailed **Sanju Samson** as a "game-changer" after the opener's batting masterclass in Kolkata took the defending champions into the T20 World Cup semi-finals.

Samson's unbeaten 97 led India's chase of 196 against the West Indies in the last Super Eights match to set up a semi-final against England in Mumbai on Thursday.

Samson paced his innings to perfection and had more than a billion India fans erupting in joy on Sunday night when he hit Romario Shepherd for a six and four to complete the chase at Eden Gardens. "Handling the final overs well in both innings gave us the edge," India's batting great Sachin Tendulkar wrote on X.

"Sanju Samson's calm presence at the crease was wonderful to watch. That kind of presence lifts a side. Brilliant effort from everyone. On to the semi-finals!"

Former India batsman Mohammad Kaif said: "Sanju Samson the man for India in a do-or-die game. Focus is never on him but he proves to be the game-changer."

The 31-year-old Samson has been in and out of the Indian team and played just one group match

against Namibia in the absence of opener Abhishek Sharma.

India brought back Samson in their Super Eights match against Zimbabwe to break up the all left-handed opening partnership of Abhishek and Ishan Kishan.

India's media were lavish in their praise for Samson, who saved India from a humiliating early tournament exit on home soil.

"Superman Sanju rescues India," blazed the *Times of India*.

India coach Gautam Gambhir called Samson "world-class".

"We all know how good a player Sanju is and it was all about backing him," Gambhir told reporters.

"Today was a day where he probably showed his true potential."

Veteran spinner Harbhajan Singh also hailed Samson, saying it has made all of us proud. He also highlighted India's ace seamer Jasprit Bumrah's crucial breakthroughs.

In an X post, Harbhajan Singh wrote, "Today @IamSanjuSamson has made all of us proud. Critical breakthroughs by @JaspritBumrah93 also helped Team India. Congratulations #MenInBlue for the wonderful win. Our hearts stopped several times throughout the match, but all is well that ends well. Happy for #TeamIndia. Best wishes for the ultimate one." Former Indian all-rounder Irfan

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Pathan termed Samson's gritty 97* as the best innings of his career and highlighted his maturity throughout the innings.

"The best innings of his career, considering the match situation. The maturity he showed throughout was outstanding. A top-class,

match-winning knock from Sanju Samson," Irfan Pathan wrote in an X post. Former Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan heaped praises on

Samson's masterclass fifty, saying he stepped up when it mattered most. "@IamSanjuSamson stepped up when it mattered most. Highest score by an Indian in a T20 WC run chase, brilliant effort with the bat, supported by @IamShivamDube's cameo, and the bowlers led by @JaspritBumrah93 doing the hard work early. Semi-finals, here we come," Dhawan wrote in an X post.

Former Indian star Suresh Raina hailed India's clinical performance and labelled Samson's innings as 'pure dominance!'

"Well played, boys! Clinical performance, unstoppable spirit, and a true champion's mindset on display. One step closer to glory - let's bring it home! Pure dominance from @IamSanjuSamson," Raina wrote in an X post.

West Indies veteran seamer Ian Bishop also lauded Samson's innings, "Respect the name: Sanju Samson!!!" he said according to a report in *sports.ndtv.com*.

Samson, who made his debut in 2015, has played just 60 Twenty20 matches for India since.

"I always say, good things happen to good people who wait, who have a lot of patience," said India captain Suryakumar Yadav. South Africa face New Zealand in the first semi-final tomorrow in Kolkata.

The final is in Ahmedabad on Sunday.