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For Sanju Samson, the rhythms of cricket have always carried an echo of the sea.

Long before he became a familiar name in Indian cricket, the ideas that shaped his outlook on success and failure were formed far from stadium lights — in the fishing hamlet of Vizhinjam, on Kerala's southern coast. There, amid the daily departures of boats and the unpredictable moods of the Arabian Sea, Sanju absorbed lessons of grit and perseverance that would later guide him through the uncertainties of professional sport.

At the centre of those lessons was his maternal grandfather Anthonis, a fisherman whose life revolved around the ocean.

Sanju, who lived near Anthonis, watched him and other fishermen push their boats into the water before dawn. Some days the nets returned heavy with fish; on others, they came back almost empty. But the next morning, the boats would head out again.

That cycle of hope, disappointment and persistence left a deep impression on the young boy. "You can't control the sea," Sanju has often recalled his grandfather saying. "You can only control how prepared you are when you go out. Some days you come back with nothing, but you still wake up the next morning and go again."

Years later, as Sanju navigated the highs and lows of international cricket, those words would return to him with striking clarity.

Anthonis was not a man of grand gestures. Life at sea had hardened him, teaching him to face storms and setbacks without complaint. He did not indulge his grandson with gifts or cricket equipment. Instead, he passed on something more enduring: resilience, humility and the ability to remain grounded, regardless of success.

Those values became particularly meaningful during the early stages of Sanju's cricket career.

Like many cricketers trying to establish themselves, he experienced both promise and disappointment: maybe a sparkling innings followed by a string of failures; or opportunities sometimes slipping away as fast as they appeared.

Whenever the young batter felt discouraged, his grandfather had a simple way of explaining things. A poor score, he would say, was like returning from the sea with empty nets. It happens. What matters is going back the next day. The greatest also fail sometimes, he reminded his grandson — even legends such as Sachin Tendulkar.

As a child, Sanju was also captivated by his grandfather's stories about life on the ocean. There were tales of sudden storms, narrow escapes and long nights at sea — stories that stirred his imagination. Those memories remain vivid.

Sanju was born Nov 11, 1994, in Pulluvila, a coastal village near Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram district. The region has long harboured a fishing community, where the rhythm of daily life is closely tied to the sea. Today, Vizhinjam is widely known for the massive Vizhinjam International Seaport project that is transforming the once-quiet town into a major global

# How Sanju's fisherman grandpa shaped his cricketing journey

The T20 World Cup's Player of the Series was shaped by his coastal upbringing, and guided by his fisherman grandfather's lessons on resilience and family support. It all helped him grow as a calm, grounded cricketer admired for hard work and humility



Sanju Samson (left) and his brother, Saly, with their mother, Lijy Samson



Locals cheer Sanju Samson during the T20 World Cup

shipping hub. But during Samson's childhood, it was a modest coastal settlement.

Sport, however, was also deeply embedded in the Samson household. His father, Samson Viswanath, served as a constable in Delhi Police and had represented Delhi in Santosh Trophy football. A disciplined sportsman, Viswanath encouraged his son to pursue sport seriously.

He noticed Sanju's early fascination with cricket and remembers the doubts his son had after returning from Delhi, pointing out how the family never allowed uncertainty to overshadow his talent. "Sanju

wondered whether he could really pursue cricket seriously from here," he recalls. "I told him talent does not depend upon the city you live in. What matters is hard work and belief. If he continued to train sincerely, opportunities would come one day."

Sanju spent part of his childhood in a police residential colony in North Delhi, where his father was posted. He studied at Rosary Senior Secondary School and began training at cricket academies in the city. Yet, it was a setback that would ultimately redirect the family's path.

When he failed to secure a place in a Delhi age-group cricket team, his father

made a life-changing decision. Convinced that his sons would have better opportunities in Kerala, he took voluntary retirement and moved the family back to their home state.

Sanju's mother, Lijy Samson, remembers those early days as a period filled with discipline and sacrifice. She says her son's routine revolved entirely around cricket. "Even as a teenager, he was very focused," she says. "He would wake up early for practice and come home tired after long training sessions. But he never complained because cricket was what he loved the most."

Back in Thiruvananthapuram, Sanju resumed his training with renewed determination. Much of his practice took place at the Medical College ground, one of the few venues in the city where aspiring cricketers could access proper nets and coaching. But structured training sessions were only part of the routine. The local ground near his house in Vizhinjam became another important training space, where he spent hours batting against friends and local bowlers. These informal sessions often continued until sunset.

Among those who closely followed his progress was Renil Arul Das, the secretary and co-founder of Lords Sports Club at Thennoorkonam near Vizhinjam. Renil recalls that even as a teenager, Sanju showed remarkable dedication. "He had extraordinary timing with the bat," Renil says. "But more than that, he had a hunger to keep practising. He would bat for hours and ask bowlers to continue even after others had finished their sessions." Renil recalls that members of the local club often encouraged the youngster by organising matches and giving him opportunities to play against stronger opponents. "Everyone in the area believed he had something special."

The narrow roads and small tea shops of Vizhinjam also witnessed Sanju's journey from a neighbourhood cricketer to a rising star. Locals remember seeing him ride past with his kit bag on the way to practice sessions. Autorickshaw driver Santhosh Kumar says the community still feels proud about the success of the boy who once practised in their neighbourhood grounds. "Even today, he is the same humble person," Santhosh says. "Whenever he comes home, he greets everyone and speaks kindly. Fame has not changed him."

Another local driver, Manoj K, says Sanju's achievements are celebrat-

ed collectively in the locality. "Whenever he scores big, many of us gather to watch the match," he says. "It feels like someone from our own family is playing." Manoharan S, another autorickshaw driver, says Sanju is grounded despite his growing popularity: "He speaks to everyone with the same simplicity he had as a young boy."

One of the coaches who helped shape Sanju's early career in Thiruvananthapuram was Biju George. George remembers the teenager as a player who combined natural flair with an eagerness to learn while training at the Medical College ground. "Sanju had tremendous talent," he says. "But what impressed me more was his willingness to listen and improve." According to George, Sanju's dedication, hard work, and punctuality in training distinguished him from many other young players. "He had both the talent and patience to work hard every day. He sacrificed a lot, and thoroughly deserves this stature," George adds.

For the fishermen living along the Vizhinjam coast, Sanju's rise represents a source of pride that extends beyond cricket. Local fisherman Varghese T remembers watching the youngster practise, years before he became famous. "He was always respectful to elders," Varghese says. "Even now, he smiles and talks to everyone. That is why people here feel so close to him."

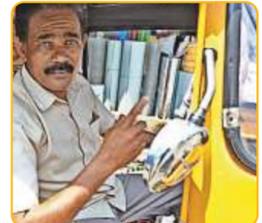
Even today, as Sanju plays before packed stadiums and television audiences across the world, the lessons of Vizhinjam remain close. In many ways, cricket resembles the sea he grew up around — unpredictable, unforgiving and impossible to control. And like the fishermen he once observed from the shore, he has learned that the only thing one can do is prepare, go out, and try again.

That temperament also sets him apart from another cricketer Kerala produced earlier — S Sreesanth.

Both emerged from the same state but projected strikingly different attitudes. Sreesanth was known for his emotional and expressive personality. His celebrations, sledging and animated appeals made him one of the most colourful characters in Indian cricket — a 'temperamental showman'.

Sanju's personality is markedly restrained. He is calm, composed and understated, rarely showing anger or emotion during matches. His leadership style is often compared to the quiet composure associated with M S Dhoni.

If Sreesanth's career often reflected cricket's volatile drama, Sanju's journey has largely been defined by patience and gradual growth — a temperament shaped long ago on the shores of Vizhinjam, where fishermen know that success is never guaranteed, but the sea must still be faced again the next morning.



It feels like someone from our own family is playing. Sanju speaks to everyone with the same simplicity he had as a young boy

— MANOHARAN S  
AUTO DRIVER

# Currents of Commerce

READER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

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India's maritime sector is undergoing a significant transformation as the country invests in modern ports, dedicated freight corridors and multimodal logistics hubs to support rising trade volumes. With nearly 95 per cent of India's trade by volume moving through maritime routes, strengthening port connectivity has become central to improving logistics efficiency and export competitiveness.

Government-led initiatives such as the Sagarmala programme, alongside new freight corridors and logistics parks, are helping link manufacturing clusters to ports more efficiently.

## CORRIDORS CONNECTING THE HINTERLAND

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) are emerging as a key backbone for India's logistics network. The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (1,337 km) connecting Ludhiana to Sonmargar and the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (1,506 km) linking Delhi to western ports have together reached over 96 per cent operational status, covering nearly 2,741 km of track.

These dedicated rail networks allow freight trains to move faster and carry heavier loads without interfering with passenger traffic. The Western DFC is particularly important because it links the northern manufacturing and consumption centres with western maritime gateways, improving cargo flow to ports on the Arabian Sea.

## PORTS EXPANDING CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY

India's major ports are also witnessing steady capacity growth to accommodate increasing cargo traffic. In FY 2024-25, the country's major ports collectively handled 855 million tonnes of cargo, a 4.3 per cent increase over the previous year,

reflecting rising trade activity. Among them, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, India's largest container port, recorded 7.3 million TEUs of contain-

## Anchoring India's trade future

As cargo volumes continue to grow, investments in modern ports, freight corridors and logistics hubs are reshaping the maritime backbone and strengthening the country's position in global supply chains

er throughput in 2025, marking double-digit growth compared with the previous year.

Capacity upgrades, deeper drafts and advanced cargo handling equipment are enabling Indian ports to accom-

modate larger vessels and manage higher container volumes, strengthening their ability to compete with major global maritime hubs.

## BUILDING DOMESTIC TRANSSHIPMENT HUBS

By developing larger container terminals and integrated logistics zones near ports, policymakers aim to retain more cargo handling within

the country. Multimodal Logistics Parks (MMLPs) are another key component of this strategy. These facilities integrate rail, road and sometimes inland waterways, enabling cargo aggregation, warehousing and distribution in a single location.

The future of maritime trade increasingly depends on integrated logistics ecosystems where ports function as part of a broader connectivity network. While port infrastructure plays a critical role, efficiency is ultimately determined by seamless linkages with rail corridors, highways and logistics parks that enable faster and more cost-effective cargo movement.

As India expands its maritime gateways and strengthens inland connectivity, the combined impact of ports, freight corridors and logistics hubs is expected to significantly reduce logistics costs and enhance export competitiveness, laying the foundation for a more resilient and efficient trade infrastructure.

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