

Why The Lessons Of Sam-Il-Jeol Remain Important Today

The first time I heard about the March 1st Movement, or Sam-Il-Jeol, it sounded like something far away—another country, another time, another world. It felt like just another date in a history book. But the more I learned, the more it started to feel strangely close to my own life. It made me think about what it means to stand up for what is right, even when you are scared, and how ordinary people can shape history just by refusing to stay silent.

Back in 1919, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Koreans were not allowed to rule themselves, and many felt their culture and language were being pushed aside. Yet instead of giving up, a group of students and leaders wrote a Declaration of Independence and secretly planned a huge protest for March 1. On that day, people poured into the streets, reading the declaration aloud and shouting for freedom. They did not bring weapons or start fights. They brought their voices and their courage. Many were beaten or arrested, but they kept going. To me, that part is the most powerful: they knew the risk, and they marched anyway.

When I imagine myself in their place, I am not sure what I would do. Would I be brave enough to stand in that crowd, knowing soldiers could come at any moment? Or would I stay home and hope someone else would speak up for me? Thinking about Sam-Il-Jeol makes me realize that the people in history were not superheroes. They were regular people—students, shopkeepers, parents—who had fears and doubts, just like I do. The difference is that they chose to act in spite of those fears. That makes me question how I react when I see something unfair, even on a much smaller scale.

One thing that stands out to me about the March 1st Movement is that it was peaceful. The protesters did not fight back with violence, even when they were attacked. That idea of nonviolent resistance shows up again and again in history, like with Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. These leaders shared the same belief: that justice achieved through peace lasts longer than power gained through violence. It makes me think about times at school when staying calm and speaking clearly is actually harder than yelling or walking away.

These lessons are not just part of distant history; they connect directly to what is happening in the world today. Even in my own community, I notice smaller moments that echo the spirit of Sam-Il-Jeol. It might be a group at school starting a campaign against bullying, or students organizing a fundraiser for refugees or families in need. No one is declaring independence, but there is still this idea of standing together to protect someone's dignity. They are part of a much larger tradition of people refusing to accept that cruelty or unfairness is normal.

Personally, the story of the March 1st Movement challenges me the most when I think about staying silent. There have been times when I see someone getting teased and pretended not to notice. I told myself, "It's not my problem," or "I don't want to make things worse." But the people of 1919 did not have the option to quietly hope things would change. They realized that silence would only help the system that was hurting them. When I remember that, it becomes harder to excuse my own silence. I start to ask myself: if they could risk prison or worse, can't I at least risk an awkward moment by speaking up?

Another lesson from Sam-Il-Jeol is about patience and hope. The protesters did not see Korea become independent right away. Many of them never got to live in a free Korea at all. But their

actions still mattered. They inspired others, drew attention from the rest of the world, and planted seeds that grew into later movements. That teaches me that doing the right thing is not always about instant results. Sometimes you stand up for something and nothing seems to change—at least not right away. The March 1st Movement reminds me that change can be slow yet still be real.

When I think about all of this together, Sam-Il-Jeol stops being just a date on a timeline. It reaches across time and place. It becomes a kind of question that history is asking me: What will you do when you see something unfair? Will you use your voice, even if it shakes? Will you stand with others, even if you could stay comfortable by staying out of it? As a seventh grader, I may not be leading a national movement, but I can decide and choose what kind of person I want to be. If I carry even a little of the spirit of March 1 into my own life—by speaking up, standing with others, and believing in dignity for everyone—then the legacy of Sam-Il-Jeol is still alive, shaping not just nations, but individual hearts like mine.