The Great Gourd from Heaven

(Laos)

Long, long ago the earth was covered with dense forest, except for one enormous vine growing out of the forest and stretching right up to the sky. It had only one gourd hanging from it, and this gourd was very, very big. The gods in heaven had a meeting and decided that the earth should be inhabited, so one of the gods was sent down with his followers. His name was Khoun Bulom, and he had two wives, Yommala and Akkai.

There were no men or animals on earth at this time, just gods and some spirits. The earth was very dark because of the huge gourd that blocked out the light from the sun.

Khoun Bulom sent a messenger to the Great God of heaven asking for help. The Great God, Phya In, ordered some gods to come down to the earth to cut away the vine and to make holes on the gourd, too.

As soon as they cut away the huge vine, sunlight shone all over the earth, and it became a very bright and pleasant place indeed. But making the holes on the gourd was a difficult task. At first the gods used a pointed iron bar heated in fire. As soon as they made the holes on the gourd, many human beings started to crawl out from inside the gourd.

Because these people have to push their way out through the tiny, dark, sooty hole that the iron had burnt on the side of the gourd, they had dark complexions.
The gods saw this, so they made another hole, this time with an axe. The axe made a big clean hole on the side of the gourd. It was not difficult for the humans to get out. The second batch of humans had lighter complexions than those who came out first because the hole was not brunt.

But all humans came from the same place. Those who came first were the big brothers and sisters, and those who came later were the younger brothers and sisters. They were very closely related. The colours of their skin were not a problem for them at all.

These first human beings were the ancestors of all humanity. From that place they spread out all over the world. They adapted themselves to the various climates and natural environments in different places. But the important thing is that they came out from the same place and were the same human beings. They truly loved one another as brothers and sisters.

When all human beings had come out, the gods pierced yet another hole on the gourd and many animals came out – elephants, horses, cows, and so on. The human beings then started to make jewels of all kinds from silver and gold to give more beauty to life on earth.
Supplementary information

• The story shows how the Lao people believe that every tribe is as worthy of honour and as significant as all the others because they are all brothers and sisters who came from the same place.

• The gourd is a type of vegetable that is closely related to the squash. The dried and hollow shell of some varieties of gourds can be used as bowls, bottles, and even musical instruments.