Réca Lakatos: Friendship

Translated from the Hungarian by Joe Bates

The author of this text is one of the long-term local contributors of our participatory research projects in Tiszavasvári. She lives in a busy part of the Roma neighbourhood and supports some of her adult sons and looks after her grandchildren who share a household with her. She has participated in writing a Romani storybook, translating and authoring texts in local Romani, and in writing the volume summarising the outcome of our translanguaging project (Heltai, J. and Tarsoly, E. (eds.). 2023*. Translanguaging for Equal Opportunities. Speaking Romani at School*. Berlin: De Gruyter.)

To begin with I'll describe the past. The past was tough, we couldn't work back then, there was no kind of salary. Women mainly had casual jobs. We struggled to look after our children because of the lack of work. We lived off little, but even then, my family was happy. But now that there are jobs, we can send our children to school, thank God. Now gypsies have their trades too. The only reason Hungarians don't employ them is because they see them behaving like gypsies, and most of the time Hungarians aren't accepting of gypsies.

I used to go apple picking. Four Hungarian ladies, and three gypsy ladies. There was this young lady among them. At the start she was very unpleasant, you could tell that she didn't like working with gypsies. But within three or four days we had become friends, she was my partner, and we picked apples together. She had become so friendly that every day she would ask me not to stay home because she'd miss me. Every day she brought me a chocolate. We always put a little apple into her bag for us to take home. But my bag was small. The next day she brought me a bag. Once she complimented my top. That evening, I washed it, and out of love and friendship the next morning I gave it to her. It was good working with her, I miss her a lot.