

**Strategies of Resistance in Elizabeth Laird's
*Kiss the Dust***

Dr. Hossam M. Alashqar

Assistant Professor, Department of English
Faculty of Arts, Port Said University, Egypt
hossamalashqar@hotmail.com

doi: 10.21608/jfpsu.2022.121026.1163

Strategies of Resistance in Elizabeth Laird's *Kiss the Dust*

Abstract

Elizabeth Laird's novel, *Kiss the Dust* (1991) traces the fate of a Kurdish family living at Sulamanyia district in Iraq, and is narrated through the perspective of its young protagonist, Tara. Family members have been exposed to continuous raids of aggression by the Iraqi forces that deemed them as persona non grata. Thus, they were fated to a compulsory exile in Iran, and later in London. In their attempts to survive, family members like Rostom, kak Soran and Ashti, practised violent tactics against their oppressors, but later they realized that violence led only to hatred and bloodshed. Accordingly, they opted for nonviolent resistance in terms of immigration and acquiescence. Away from home, as asylum seekers in London, they decided a new turn of resistance based on publicizing their issue to the whole world. Moreover, they believed that wherever they were, it is Kurdistan, a home that is within themselves, even behind borders. In this sense, the current study employs Martin Luther King's three forms of resistance: violence, acquiescence, and nonviolence, as the theoretical framework. The novel abounds in a variety of resistance tactics, but propagates the efficacy of nonviolence.

Key Words: resistance, violence, acquiescence, nonviolence, Kurds.

استراتيجيات المقاومة في رواية اليزابيث ليرد "لثم التراب"

أ.م.د/ حسام محمود الأشقر

أستاذ مساعد - قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

كلية الآداب - جامعة بورسعيد

مستخلص

تتبع اليزابيث ليرد في روايتها "لثم التراب" (1991) مصير أسرة كردية تعيش في حي السلمانية في بغداد وتسردها من خلال وجهة نظر البطلة الصغيرة تارا. يتعرض أفراد السرة لأشكال مستمرة من العنف على أيدي القوات العراقية التي تنتظر إليهم بوصفهم أشخاصا غير مرغوب فيهم. لذلك وجدوا أنفسهم مجبرين على المنفى الإجباري في إيران تارة ثم في لندن تارة أخرى. وفي محاولاتهم المستميتة للحياة فإن شخوصا مثل رستم العم وكاك سوران الب وأشتى افبن يمارسون المقاومة العنيفة ضد القهر، لكنهم فيما بعد يدركون أن العنف لم يولد إلا مزيدا من الكراهية وسفك الدماء مما جعلهم يلجأون إلى نوعا آخر من المقاومة يتسم بعدم العنف في صورة الهجرة أو الخنوع. وفي مفاهيم الأوربي في لندن يجاهدون من أجل توصيل رسالتهم العادلة للعالم أجمع مؤمنين بأن كردستان توجد أينما تواجدوا لأنها تكمن بداخلهم حتى عبر الحدود. والدراسة تستخدم أفكار مارتن لوتر كنج في هذا الشأن كإطار نظري، كما تؤكد ليرد على أن المقاومة السلمية أكثر فاعلية من المقاومة العنيفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المقاومة، العنف، الخنوع، السلمية، الأكراد.

Strategies of Resistance in Elizabeth Laird's *Kiss the Dust*

Elizabeth Laird is one of the contemporary British novelists, best-known as young and adult writer. She wrote *Kiss the Dust* (1991) in a series of other resistance novels such as *A Little Piece of Ground* (2003), *Oranges in No Man's Land* (2006) and *A House Without Walls* (2019). In her novel, she portrays the suffering of a Kurdish family who were destined to live in the foothills of the Zagros mountains, but, unfortunately "The international borders of Iran, Iraq and Turkey (as well as a corner of Syria) run right through the Kurdish areas" (Laird, 1991). In her introduction to *Kiss the Dust*, Laird states that owing to the cruelty of Saddam Hussein against Kurds, they had to escape to Iran across mountains. In 1991, western countries could somehow protect them through a verdict that banned warplanes over their areas. During the US and UK invasion to Iraq in 2003, Kurds could manage their region in a semi-independent way and could keep their Iraqi part peaceful. In 2014, when Isis took over Iraq and parts of Syria, Kurds had joined the Iraqi forces to drive them out. Under all those changes and turbulent conditions, the Kurds remained divided between the three countries. Laird adds:

The characters in this book are Kurds, forced to flee from their homes and become refugees, but their story is a universal one. Their fate is that of millions of people in the Middle East and in other parts of the world too, we have no choice but to escape from oppression and war to find peace and safety far from home. (Introduction, 1991)

The story is set in 1980s as the pesh murgas (Iraqi Kurdish fighters) were in fight with the Iraqi government. The novel celebrates a Kurdish family living under the scourge of the incessant turbulent events. It reflects the sufferings of the father Kak Soran and Mohamoud, the uncle, who have confidentially been already pesh murgan. Tara, Soran's daughter, and her Arab friend Leila, are witnesses on the daily occurrences at the street on the way to their school. The son, Ashti, similarly intends to join the pesh murga rather than the Iraqi army.

Michel Foucault argues that “where there is power, there is resistance that is never dissociated from power relations”, (1978, pp. 95-96), and, in much the same way power relations are multiple, so are resistance points. He further states that “one cannot speak of power without speaking of resistance” (1980, p. 142). This holds true of Kurds in their relations with the Iraqi oppression in 1980s. They resort to every possible sort of resistance in their endeavor to remain peaceful and alive. The fact is that they believed in Fanon’s principle that for the sake of “national liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation”, a “violent event” is always in question (1965, p.1)

In this sense, the current study employs Martin Luther King’s three strategies of resistance as a theoretical framework. King believes that resistance takes three forms: violence, acquiescence, and non-violence (Three Ways, 2004). Through history, oppressed people used to resist physically in violent reactions, but Luther King refers to the vainness of this strategy: “The danger of this method is its futility. Violence solves no social problems; it merely creates new and more complicated ones” (“Nonviolence and Racial Justice”, 1957). Violence is a negative strategy that increases people’s sufferings, and adds to their problems. It also might lead to exodus and evacuation, ending up in refugees’ camps or in mountain feet in a severe state of dislocation or forced exits. King, in a humanistic hint says that, the oppressed, in their struggle for survival, ‘must not allow themselves to become bitter or indulge in hate campaigns’ (1957). The ensuing feelings of hate out of retaliation, King believes, lead to more intensity and separateness. King still recommends that “someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate” (1957).

The second strategy of King is that of acquiescence which involves a case of subjugation and normalization with oppression as it becomes part of their lives. Luther King does not encourage or promote this strategy as it seems a negative one which copes with the existing oppression and imposes it as a reality. In addition, acquiescence robs the oppressed their right of dignity before the

oppressor and increases his sense of arrogance. King states that accepting the oppression is merely to “cooperate with that system, thereby the oppressed become as evil as the oppressor” (King, 1958, p. 133).

The third strategy of Luther King is that of nonviolence. The oppressed people may take offensive actions to achieve their freedom and liberate their countries. Nonviolence is expected to be an effective method as it has a way of “disarming the opponent; it exposes his moral defenses, it weakens his morale and at the same time it works on his conscience” (King, 1958, p. 133). Luther further believes that this sort of resistance seeks “struggle without hating” and the oppressed fights a “war without violence” (p.133).

This third strategy is the most recommended by King for three reasons: first, nonviolence aims at winning the ‘friendship and understanding’ of the opponent, not to humiliate him (King, 1958, p. 84). Second, oppression itself should be opposed. Third, nonviolence is devoid of “external physical violence” and “internal violent of spirit” (p. 88). As such, peace would prevail and future would be an arena of good faith.

The Kurdish Crisis: A Historical Perspective

Referred to as “internal minority”, the Kurds have been utilized by Iraq’s enemies as a tool of pressure. Countries like Syria, Turkey, and Iran, which share borders with Iraq, harbored large Kurdish minorities on its borders. Thus, out of their fears of any Kurdish rebellion, they cooperated on the matter. Their cooperation has been crystalized in Saadabad Pact in 1937 and Baghdad Pact in 1955. By virtue of these pacts, the Kurds were denied the right of crossing borders either physically or virtually.

In 1960, when Iraq was passing through its weakest historical phase, Iran sought an amendment of the 1937 treaty. Thus, in 1975, through Algiers Agreement, Saddam Hussein “had to cede the Shat-al-Arab to Tehran in return for the suspension of Iranian aid to the Kurds, thus putting an end to the Kurdish revolt” (Bengio, 2020).

Accordingly, Iraq had lost a strategic asset and its control over the Persian Gulf had been restricted.

When the United States was a great ally of Iran, Mullah Mustafa Barazani has reportedly told the New York Times correspondent, Dana Schmidt: "Let the Americans give us military aid, openly or secretly, so that we can become truly autonomous, and we will become your loyal partners in the Middle East" (Schmidt, 1974, p.54). Likewise, in 1972, the Shah of Iran demanded the American support against Iraq through consolidating Barazani's position. The PIKE (Unauthorized Publications of House of Representatives) committee approved the project for four reasons: first, the American support comes as a favor to their Iranian ally; second, backing Barazani comes as an act of retaliation for Iraq's treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union; third, pressure upon Iraq would eliminate its ambitious project of getting into conflict with Israel; fourth is Barazani's promise that he would be the '51st state' if he won his conflict against Saddam (Gunter, 1992, p. 9).

In consequence of Algiers Agreement, Iran stopped aids to the Kurds, and Barazani appealed to the CIA: "there is confusion and dismay among our people and forces. Our people's fate is in unprecedented danger. Complete destruction is hanging over our head.....We appeal to you to intervene according to your promises' (Gunter, p.10), and in a similar note he appealed to Kissinger: "We feel your excellency that the United States has a moral and political responsibility towards our people who have committed themselves to your country's policy". In return, the US response was deeply disappointing as they decided that the Kurds had "had no choice but to *acquiesce*" (Gunter, p.11, my italics).

Israel was not far from the scene, as it started to penetrate following 1967 six-day war. It increased its military aids to the Kurds notably and exchanged political visits with them. In addition, it trained Kurdish guerillas so that they might be used as a deterrent force against the Iraqi danger.

During the Iraq-Iran war, Saddam was alert enough not to lose his internal Kurds. Thus, sweeping measures have been taken by the Iraqi government: Kurds accused of anti-government activities and those who fled from the Iraqi army were pardoned, and an agreement was signed between the government and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan). But this agreement failed owing to three reasons: the cooperation between Iraq and Turkey against Kurds in both countries, receiving military aids from the west that strengthened Iraqi army, and the PUK and KDP became allies to Iran. Accordingly, during Gulf War, the Kurdish Leader Talabani declared his standpoint: "If the Arabs forces liberate Kuwait, we would urge Kurdish forces to join them....our fighting would be Kurdish, independent, and separate....not...as part of foreign armies invading or fighting Iraq" (qtd in Gunter, 1992, p. 9).

The highest price the Kurds paid was for their rebellion against Saddam as he waged a sweeping war in 1985 which was viewed by Bengio as the cruelest:

In 1985, his [Saddam's] forces abducted and killed 8.000 members of the Barazani tribe. In April 1987, Saddam began to use chemical weapons against Kurdish villages. From February to September 1988, he waged the Anfal Campaign which had eight stages and killed about 180.000 Kurds, mostly civilians. The war laid waste to thousands of Kurdish villages and communities as well as the social, economic, and ecological infra structures of the whole region. (p.3)

The ensuing conditions have been greatly disappointing to the Kurds who started fleeing in hundreds of thousands to the mountains along the Iranian and Turkish borders. The number of Kurds arriving in Iran exceeded 1.117 million, while those reaching Turkey were around 468.000 (Gunter, p. 13). Viewed as a source of threat to their hosts, the Kurds were granted the privilege of "enclaves" by the British prime Minister John Major which was changed later into "safe havens" in northern Iraq, which was considered by Massoud Barazani as a "great step forward", to be protected from Saddam's forces (p.15). In the same context, and in conformity with the UN

Security Council Resolution 688, April 5th, 1991, George Bush said: "We simply could not allow 500.000 to a million people to die up in the mountains" and condemned "the repression of the Iraqi civilian population...in Kurdish populated areas" and called upon Iraq to "immediately end this repression" (Lyman, 1991, p. 379).

Thus stated, a reality has been created on the ground as Kurds were still fighting for their independence on the borders of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Stories of Kurdish refugee camps abound in tragic crises and inhuman calamities, of which *kiss the Dust* is a minor reflection.

Kiss the Dust

Kiss the Dust uncovers the daily life of the Kurds on the Iraqi – Iranian borders, and demonstrates the incessant oppression that they were exposed to. Of all the forms of this oppression is that example at the opening pages when Tara and her friend Leila were on their way home from the school. While they were at the street with its daily rhythms, they were stunned at the moment "two army jeeps, horns blaring, came screeching down the road and squealed to a stop outside the mosque. A dozen soldiers, rifles in hand, leaped out" (Laird,1991,p. 4). Both Tara, from whose vision the novel is seen, and her Arab friend Leila, bore witness to the inhuman aggression of the troops.

Every movement at the street came to a halt as the officer cries out: "Enemies of the state! Spies! Shoot them" (Laird1991,p.4). Their targets were a group of young Kurdish boys gathered near the mosque reading a newspaper. When the Mullah appeared out of the Mosque, begging their pardon for the boys and crying that "They're only boys! Don't shoot" (Laird, 1991,p. 5), they immediately shot him. A bit later, while some of the boys could escape the scene, one of them was caught and shot mercilessly and the office cries afterwards:

Look at this traitor! I'm warning you, anyone who helps the Kurdish rebels will die like him, only it will be more painful, look at his blood! Go on! Stare at him! Don't forget, any of you. (Laird, 1991,p.6)

The influence of the scene on Tara was immensely unbearable. Under such cruel exercise of power, Tara, as a Kurdish girl, felt that whatever the circumstances, they (the Kurds) should not be treated inhumanly. The cry of the boy: "I die for Kurdistan" (Laird,1991,p.5) is still echoing and will continue recurring and echoing in her mind.

In *Kiss the Dust*, the family of Tara is fated to dislocation, suspicion, and unsettlement. When Tara returned home and told her mother about the shooting of the young boy, she was surprised by the cool reaction of her mother, Teriska Khan. The fact was that Kan Soran, the father and her mother have concealed the matter of Iran-Iraq war from Tara.

Thus, things started to unravel for Tara, particularly, when her uncle, Rostom, the pesh murga fighter, has arrived at their home secretly as he was injured. Simultaneously, her father Kan Soran arrived with Ashti, her bother from Baghdad. Ashti was supposed to join the pesh murga with his uncle while Kan Soran had to hide as the police were behind him for suspects of supporting the pesh murgas.

Consequently, Tara, with the image of the "boy's head lying on the pavement, with the bullet hole in it", started to juxtapose causes and effects and "couldn't shut her mind to things any more" (p.11). She has also been fed with notions set by the mother like: "they're scared of Kurds, even of boys like the one you [Tara] saw today" (p. 10), and even worse is her mother's warning that "if it got out that we're sheltering a wounded pesh murga, who's wanted by the police, God knows what....It's a matter of life and death for all of us' (p.17). Not only have these facts been engraved in Tara's mind, but her vision of the future started to be in doubt.

As a result of this oppression, the family had to leave for the Iranian borders, where they had to live in a mountainous village, deprived of basic living needs. This first phase of dislocation has impressed Tara deeply as she had to adapt to a different type of living at the feet of Zagros mountains which abound in several risks. In the refugee camp on the Iranian border, the mother fell ill while Ashti decided to go back to Iraq for fear that he be conscripted into the Iranian army. Tara viewed their existing status as: “when you’re refugees you haven’t got any choice” (Laird,1991,p. 145).

For a better chance of living, the family decided to transfer their camp to London. Using their remaining savings they could arrive in London where their friend Latif could afford to their needs. Like any diaspora community, family members started a new and a different phase of adaptation through acquiring language and the new European life style. Gradually, Tara’s English improved, new friends were found, and school -going was resumed. In short, things turned out to be better as Ashti rejoined them in London completing the family circle. He represents all sorts of resistance. He joined his uncle in his violent adventures, got injured, resumed his military confrontations, gave up violence, and finally could join his family in London. By so doing, he embodied the incessant resistance against oppressors, even if it takes a new nonviolent approach.

We’re Kurdistan, you and me, and Baba and Daya and Hero...Where we are, it is. Kurdistan is its people and they can’t take it away from us, even if they lock us out of our homeland and throw away the key. (Laird, 1991,p.243)

Violence

Kiss the Dust abounds in occasions of violent resistance. The scattered nation of the Kurds on the Iraqi-Iranian borders stands as a clear evidence of humiliation and oppression. In retaliation, characters like Rostom, the uncle, Kan Soran, the father and Ashti, the son, represent the violent resistance which is ensued of the oppression and lack of justice. They believe that “structures of injustice do not just fade away”, but, it “must be confronted,

witnessed, attacked, and if necessary burnt to the ground” (Allen, 2013, p. xi). Moreover, in Fanon’s view “violence [is] a necessary therapy for a cultural disease brought about by the colonial subjugation” (cited in kebede, 2001, p. 539), and in case the oppressor uses inner psychological powers against the oppressed, Fanon believes that this “inculcation of inferiority” will turn into “self-empowerment” (cited in Young, 2001, p. 275). The violent tactics have been adopted by the three pesh murga fighters, either in private or public.

The first reference to violent resistance takes place when Rostom, out of ‘confrontation’ with the troops, arrives injured at Kan Soran’s house as police were chasing him. When his sister Teriska Khan sees his injury, she put her enquires into context:

Rostom, she said, ‘they’ve hit you! Oh, my God, however did you get here? Tara, go to the medicine cupboard in my bedroom and get some lint and a bandage. Your uncle’s wounded. (Laird,1991,p.14)

Although Teriska Khan is quite certain of the risks of sheltering a pesh murga fighter who is wanted by the police, yet she, unquestionably, affords every possible help regardless of the consequences as she believes in their right to resist and survive.

Kan Soran handles the matter of his son, Ashti, with his wife. He gives first priority to resistance, even prior to education. In the light of the oppressive circumstances on the ground, Ashti’s future has been planned, and his choice now is limited to ‘either get drafted into the army, and then he’ll be sent off to the front”, or to join the pesh murga to fight for their just cause (Laird 1991,p.15).

Another occasion that highlights the violent resistance and carried through a pesh murga tactic of ‘attacking’ was when Rostom and his fellows could blow an army truck, as he put it:

There were ten of us stung out along top of the cliff, and a few more in a cleft of the rock on the corner where the road zigzags down the mountainside. When the first five

army trucks had gone past we let them have it. We took them completely by surprise. (Laird,1991,p.26)

Rostom and his fellows have 'witnessed', 'attacked', and 'burnt' the trucks to the 'ground'. Not only have they achieved a notable success, but proved that they adapted themselves to the surrounding geographical environment and made a maximum use of its hard nature. Ashti, the younger symbolic figure of violent resistance finds himself a successor of his uncle's strategy which has been formulated and transferred from a generation to another. In addition, joining pesh murga with his uncle, Ashti has been left with clear physical marks that changed his childish nature. His sister Tara was surprised to observe the change that came over him as she perceived that he has "grown at least a couple of inches since she'd last seen him....looked harder, and more muscular, and years and years older" (Laird,1991,p.75). When she wondered and asked him about the reason, he spontaneously relied that it was "military business" (Laird,1991,p.75), as he put it: "[They] have ambushed an ammunition convoy" and added that his uncle Rostom was a hero because he "took the most incredible risks" (Laird,1991,p.76).

In much the same way bombardment over the village was sweeping and aggressive, resistance was fierce and varied. Ashti and his uncle always remain in focus. Tara's sight and vision continued recording events on the ground with a mind sprouting in the severest conditions a human being might encounter. Her previous interests were sidelined and her dreams stopped streaming at the current moment. One more resistance event is when Ashti came back home with his army injured. He gives an account of what happened:

I was doing what he [Rostom] told me, bringing up the ammunition even though we were in a really exposed position and getting shot at all the time, but the boxes were so heavy....we were in a dugout kind of place, and it was the usual kind of ambush, but this time they were ready for us, must have had a tip-off or something. We used up all our mortars, and I was bringing up more....one of their mortars fell right near me. ...It was horrible- made me feel sick...(Laird,1991,p.91)

Unfortunately, this violent resistance failed to put an end to the oppression of the troops, neither could it save the souls of the Kurds. It only continued as a sort of obligation and moral duty. Violence has proved to have led to more violence, blood to more blood, destruction to more destruction. Hatred increased between parties and no final solution emerged on the horizons. The oppressed/oppressor relationship deteriorated with no hope of regaining peace. Violent resistance has “generat[ed] intense feelings of hatred and vengeance that it threatens to undermine trust and the possibility of future coexistence” (Kant, 1983, pp. 109-110).

Acquiescence

Martin Luther King views acquiescence as a sort of paramount yielding to the oppressor’s will. Under such a condition, the “oppressed get used to being oppressed” (King, 1958, p. 136) and are robbed the traits of knights who carry the honour of defending land. Accordingly, the act of acquiescence is believed not to be a “moral way”, but rather a way of the “cowards” (p.136). Acquiescence leads to silence as a form of non-violent resistance, and those silent people, under their submission, only seek life even through accepting oppression. Their submission is due to various factors: the sweeping power of the oppressor, lack of defensive means, sense of minority, fear of devastation and worries over their children, in addition to their being so “worn down by the yoke of oppression that they give up” (p. 137). In dire circumstances, in spite of their submission and total yielding, they are deprived even of the right to be existing human beings, and viewed as *persona non grata*.

In *Kiss the Dust*, non-violent resistance proceeds side by side with violent one. Characters like Ashti, Rostom, and Kak Soran keep violent resistance, but, at the same time, they plan a departure from the risky areas to a more hazardous one on the borders. Keeping body and soul has been the basic demand under the heavy bombing of the villages and houses. They decided not to wait for the danger to approach them. In addition, they accepted their *fait accompli* and preferred silence. They are viewed by Paulo Freire as “The

oppressed [who] are silenced. They have no voice and no will" (cited in Young, 2004).

Thus being the case with the Kurdish family, immigration has been the sole way out of their crisis. When Kak Soran tells his wife about the devastation of the neighbouring valley whereas no "single house was left standing", and expects that it was a "matter of time before they come [there] again" (Laird, 1991, p. 95), it is only at this critical phase of oppression that the idea of immigration came up. For kak, being refugees seems a humiliating status, but "at least [they'll] be alive" (Laird, 1991, p. 95). The plan of departure is summed up by Kak to his wife:

Thousands of Kurds have gone through into Iran. What do you want to do? Stay here so I can be executed and you can be blown up?. We could do the journey all right. It's a long way, through the mountains, and you have to go by night, but there are good guides, and we'd have horses. (Laird, 1991, p.95)

Family members received the idea of immigration from different perspectives in terms of its consequent impact. Kak believes that as danger is approaching, it would be a foolish idea to stay waiting for their inevitable end. Teriska, the mother, is in full submission to her husband's plans out of her worries about her children. She shares him the responsibility of preparations for the journey. The idea of being refugees does not fully appeal to her, but there is no other alternative to keep them alive. Tara views the idea of crossing into Iran as a sort of separation with all her favourites. She believes going into Iran means:

Leaving everything behind, everything she knew, home, school, friends, Granny, the special place under the oleander in the garden which had been her favourite hideout since she was little, old Mr Faris's shop in town where she and Leila had always gone to look for new records and posters. (Laird, 1991, p.97)

In spite of the painstaking plan to depart and the loss of every human connection, Teriska tries to eliminate the burden of the experience over her daughter Tara. When Tara shivered and said: "I'm scared", Teriska agrees with her in principle, but invigorates her stating: "I'm more scared of what they'll do to us if we stay here" (Laird,1991, p.103). Thus, immigration as a tactic of acquiescence remains the appropriate option for a family facing the unprecedented aggression of the oppressor.

On their journey, not only oppressors were behind, but cruel nature has added much to their agonies as they had to cross and get through mountainous areas with hard rocks and misleading valleys. Parts of them were left behind and are now diminishing and fading away as "the fields and orchards were already behind them, and the ground was beginning to rise steeply" (Laird,1991,p.109). For them, the bitterness of the unknown was better and more acceptable than the sweetness of staying at shaky home. Thus, they "decided to fight their war without violence" (King, 2004), rather to "avoid physical violence" (King, 1958, p. 88)

In Iran, they were exposed to a new oppressor of new procedures. They were subjects to suspicions, continuous investigations, regular questioning, and inhuman treatment. At the refugee camp, they realized what home means as conditions there were not opportune and time started to be of heavy rhythms. Even the habit of being together was robbed under the strict regulations of the Iranians that imposed separation between sexes. The only occasion that broke the stream of acquiescence was when Ashti decided to go back to Iraq to join his uncle Rostom in his violent tactics instead of accepting recruitment in the Iranian army. Simultaneously, life proceeds in the refugee camp with serious attempts to adapt. Kak Soran finds a job in Tehran, and all of them have to learn Persian. They believe that they "would make a go of it as long as they are all together" (Laird, 1991,p.137). The last straw for Kak was when Hero, the child was carrying water and Tara put it precisely: "we haven't got any choice" (Laird, 1991,p.145).

Non Violence / Endurance

Non-violent resistance in *Kiss the Dust* does not mean submission to the oppressor, but a way of peaceful resistance that sends off their message without bloodshed or physical violence. Kak's family cannot continue confronting a fully-equipped army. They tried hard to evade escalating their tactics towards the oppressors and tended to non-violent techniques, either through 'endurance' or of 'non-violence'. They believed that "nonviolent action is not an attempt to avoid or ignore conflict. It is one response to the problem of how to act effectively in politics, especially how to wield powers effectively" (Gene Sharp, 1973, p. 64). Endurance falls mid-way between submission and violence. It takes place when people are incapable to continue resisting owing to the supremacy of the oppressor. In *Kiss the Dust*, although Kak Soran has participated in violent adventures against the oppressors, yet he still has the wisdom of a balanced man who could evaluate situations on the ground. He tells his son Ashti:

'Guns and bombs aren't the only weapons.....this is my weapon'. Kak Soran tapped his head with his forefinger. 'Brains, Ashti. Words, pens rather than swords. It's about time the rest of the world knew about what's going on over here'. (Laird,1991,p.120)

This significant change in kak's strategy of resistance does not refer to any submission, but he altered his technique because of the unequal statuses. He also believed that propagating their issue might be of more remarkable impact than achieving minor intermittent victories every now and then. kak Soran has been aware of the inevitable subsequent losses. Thus, in preaching endurance in the face of dehumanizing oppression, he seems in full conformity with Luther King's view that:

Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys communities and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the

destroyers. (1964)

By endorsing endurance, kak Soran rejected violence and preferred evading bloody confrontations. He tended to find a new area to continue living in peace. He decided to bear the brunt of refugee camps instead of useless clashes with his enemy. Accordingly, as camp dwellers, they are categorized as “unlucky” by Young (2003):

If you are unlucky- like the Somali refugees in Kenya, the Palestinian refugees in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, or the internally displaced in Sri Lank or the South African of the 1970s- you may find that you are to be there for a decade, or for several. (p.10)

Another case of non-violent resistance is that of Tara, the young daughter. Among family members, she suffered most from the situations in the refugee camp. At the beginning, she could not imagine the life-turn that had driven away from her favourites: school, Leila, house, Sulumnayia, life rhythm at home, to throw her in the severest conditions a human being might confront. In spite of the grimness of the experience at the camp, she could make a new self-discovery:

Tara began to understand things that had always vaguely puzzled her in the past. It was like fitting together the pieces of a broken jug. Things that Baba had let fall, Rostom’s stories, the piece of paper boys outside the mosque had been reading, the unexplained disappearances of friends’ fathers and brothers, the arrests and beatings, the propaganda and terror all added up to a new idea of what it meant to be a Kurd, and she felt proud and angry at the same time.(Laird,1991,p.160)

The family’s non-violent journey of immigration continued owing to tightening measures in Iran. This time, their movement takes the shape of asylum seekers. After long negotiations and discussions, they decided upon London as a final destination. Their dilemma is reflected upon Tara’s mind who finds the coming

experience extremely ambiguous: "How on earth would they get started in this country when they couldn't even speak the language?" (Laird,1991,p. 208), but, owing to the pressing circumstances, she "wasn't going to let this place beat her" (Laird,1991,p.226). Concisely, Tara could evaluate the situation when she followed the interview with her father by the English immigration woman and concluded that: "They *despise* us.....They think we're rubbish" (Laird,1991, p.218), but in spite of these disappointing anticipations, they did not give up their nonviolent tactics. They decided to defend their cause peacefully, and their full adaptation in London has been the major step.

Nonviolent resistance continued even through Tara's subconscious. The fact is that once she started to feel "forgetting home....forgetting Kurdistan" (Laird, 1991,p. 242), she could recollect her recalcitrant memories at home through her dream that closes the novel. She is left with remains of wishful ideas that are inadequately resisting, but at least, sprouting a new hope of survival. It is finally her brother's words that mark the essence of nonviolent resistance: "We're Kurdistan, you and me, and Baba and Daya and Hero...Where we are, it is. Kurdistan is its people and they can't take it away from us, even if they lock us out of our homeland and throw away the key (Laird,1991, p.243). Thus, their virtual presence on a foreign soil may be of a louder cry than being domestically confined and silenced.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Laird's novel *Kiss the Dust* is an attempt to highlight the unjust case of the Kurds. It underlines the nonviolent resistance of a community who seek survival under the severest conditions on border lines. Although they tried violent tactics against their oppressors, they realized the vainness of their endeavor under supreme military powers which left nothing unharmed. They have been utilized for political rapprochements and been used as pressing objects, but never been considered as people of will. Laird has

successfully voiced the unspeakable desires of a scattered nation who struggles for survival and peaceful coexistence.

References

- Allen, L. (2013). *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Bengio, O. (2020, December 2). The Kurds and the Iran-Iraq war: Have the lessons been learned?. *BESA Center Perspectives Paper*, 1836. Retrieved from <https://besacenter.org/curds-iran-iraq-war/>
- Fanon, F. (1965). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grave Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *The History of Sexuality*. (Hurley, R. Trans). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gunter, M. (1992). Foreign influences on the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq. *Conflict Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15068q>
- Kant, I. (1983). *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. (Humphrey, T. Trans). Library. Retrieved February 5, 2015
- Kebede, M. (2001). The rehabilitation of violence and the violence of rehabilitation: Fanon and colonialism. *Journal of Black Studies*, 539-562.
- King, M. L. (1958). *Stride Toward Freedom*. New York: Harper and Row/Perennial Library. Retrieved February 15, 2015.
- - - . (2004). Three ways of meeting oppression. *Daily Times*. Retrieved December 20, 2014.

- - - . (1957). nonviolence and racial justice. *The Christian Century*, February 6, 165-167. Retrieved December 15, 2014.
- - - . (1964). The quest for peace and justice. *Noble Lecture*. Retrieved December 17, 2014.
- Laird, E. (1991). *Kiss the Dust* .London: Macmillan
- Lyman, P. (1991, May 27). Update on Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. *US Department of State Dispatch*, p. 379.
- Schmidt, D. (1974). "The Kurdish Insurgency", *Strategic Review*, 2 (summer).
- Sharp, G. (1973). *The politics of nonviolent action*. Boston: Porter Sargent.
- - - . (1989). The intifadah and nonviolent struggle. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 19(1), 3-13. Retrieved January 10, 2015.
- Young, R. (2001). *Postcolonialism: a Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- - - . (2003). *Postcolonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Young, I. (2004). *Five Faces of Oppression*. In L. Heldke and P. O'Connor (eds.), *Oppression, privilege, and resistance*. Boston: McGraw Hill. Retrieved March 4, 2015.