Methodology

The conflict in Arun Joshi’s novel plays a decisive role. However, the “conflict”, as theme itself, is multidimensional and has theoretical background and historical significance in various authors. Having defined the bounds of the term post-colonial, one must determine how the works of these authors utilize such a construct. Such constructs are created and utilised by the writers using the conflict--necessary elements of the fictional work. It is often classified according to the nature of the protagonist or antagonist. Conflict is the struggle between the opposing forces on which the action in a work of literature depends. There are five basic forms of conflict: person versus person, person versus self, person versus nature, person versus society, and person versus God.

Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy once commented that all happy families resemble each other, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own unique way. Tolstoy’s observation may be the reason why no one writes stories about perfect harmony. Conflict is simply easier to scrounge up, and it is almost always more interesting.

Person verses self is the theme in literature that places a character against his own will, confusion, or fears. It can also be where a character tries to find out who he is or comes to a realisation or a change in character. Although the struggle is internal, the character can be influenced by external forces. The struggle of the human being to come to a decision is the basis of person verses self.

Person verses person is when, in a novel, there is a conflict of two forms of like beings. An example is the hero’s conflicts with the central villain of a work, which may play a large role in the plot and contribute to the development of both characters. There are usually several confrontations before the climax is reached. The conflict is external.
Person versus society is a theme in fiction in which a main character’s, or group of main characters’, main source of conflict is social traditions or concepts. In this sense, the two parties are: a) the protagonist(s); b) the society, the protagonist(s) are part of. Society itself is often looked at as a single character, just as an opposing party would be looked at in a person versus person conflict.

Person vs. Supernatural is a theme in literature that places a character against supernatural forces. When an entity is in conflict with his, her, or itself, the conflict is categorized as internal, otherwise, it is external. Such stories are often seen in Freudian Criticism as representations of id verses superego.

As with other literary terms of conflict, these have come about gradually as descriptions of common narrative structures. Conflict was first described in ancient Greek literature as the agon, or central contest in tragedy. According to Aristotle, in order to hold the interest, the hero must have a single conflict. The agon, or act of conflict, involves the protagonist (the “first fighter”) and the antagonist (a more recent term), corresponding to the hero and villain. The outcome of the contest cannot be known in advance, and, according to later critics like Plutarch, the hero’s struggle should be ennobling.

Even in contemporary, non-dramatic literature, critics have observed that the agon is the central unit of the plot. The easier it is for the protagonist to triumph, the less value there is in the drama. In internal and external conflict alike, the antagonist must act upon the protagonist and must seem at first to overmatch him or her. For example, in William Faulkner’s The Bear, nature might be the antagonist. Even though it is an abstraction, natural creatures and the scenery oppose and resist the protagonist. In the same story, the young boy’s doubts about himself provide an internal conflict, and they seem to overwhelm him.

Similarly, when godlike characters enter, correspondingly great villains have to be created, or natural weaknesses have to be invented, to allow the narrative to have drama. Alternatively, scenarios could be devised in which the character’s godlike powers are constrained by some sort of code, or their respective antagonist.

While writing in conflictual mode and all about conflict, one should understand the various facets of the conflict. The analysis of the conflict requires identification of the conflict as it appears in the literature, at the same time distinguishing between internal and external conflict followed by placing the conflict in one of the three subcategories:
Internal conflict is a struggle that takes place in a character’s mind. It is not a visual or tangible opposition but a character deals with his or her own mixed feelings or emotions. It is often referred to as the conflict with the self because the base of the conflict is in one’s own head and mind.

An external conflict is a struggle between a character and an outside force, which could be of several types. It could be another character or the community or the forces of nature.