

Course Name: B.A.L.L.B  
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Topic: The Apple Cart  
(NOVEL)

## Novel – THE APPLE CART

Political Drama: The Apple Cart George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin on 26th July, 1856. He was an Irishman, son of George Carr Shaw. His father was the youngest son in the family of thirteen children. His father was a minor officer in the Dublin law court. Mother was an Irish landowner. His father was a drunkard and couldn't earn enough money for the family. Carr Shaw had three children: one son and two daughters. Bernard Shaw learnt music from mother who was a good singer and musician. He himself became a clerk and cashier in a land agent's office. At the age of 73, Bernard Shaw wrote The Apple Cart, and its first performance was at the Polish theatre, Warsaw in June, 1929. Being a bag of stage tricks, Shaw has subtitled it 'A Political Extravaganza'. There is hardly any plot in it. Shaw has made up the deficiency of the story by introducing two interesting and exciting incidents: the interlude and interruption of the true American Ambassador in the scene. Both these incidents are wholly irrelevant in the play. Plot of the drama Shaw's play 'The Apple Cart' (1929) not only combines the realm of political satire and futuristic visions but is still amazingly topical and accurate in its predictions (Shaw has placed the drama in a removed time—forty years in the future). The plot primarily exists as a framework for Shaw's satire. In the first half we meet two of the king's secretaries who introduce the general setup of the play. Then follows a long interview between the king of England, Magnus and the Labour leader, Mr. Boanerges. The first half culminates (develops) in a stormy meeting of the king, prime minister and cabinet during which the prime minister gives the king the ultimatum to remain as king with no power whatsoever, without even a veto, or else the cabinet will resign in mass. At the centre of the play is an extended interview between the king and his ambitious mistress Orinthia, a model of everything a ruler should not be, no matter how alluring (attracting). Political Drama This part is certainly an amazingly imaginary interesting prediction. The second half culminates in another stormy cabinet meeting during which the king answers the ultimatum with one of his own, declaring his own abdication from kingship and forming a political party and taking participation in the election so that he can win and form a cabinet under his primeministership. The king's ultimatum is so forceful in nature that the cabinet, particularly Proteus, the Prime minister withdraws the ultimatum. Thus, the play ends without any particular result, except the resolution of the political crisis between the king and the cabinet. Significance of the title 'The Apple Cart' George Bernard Shaw has taken the title 'The Apple Cart' to signify the condition of the government under a certain leader, or rather a strong man. 'The Apple Cart' consists of a driver and lots of apples being carried on the cart. The cabinet of ministers functions the same role of the Apple Cart. In the play, there is a tussle between the king and the prime minister (Proteus) as well as other ministers. It is to decide who will drive the Apple Cart (government)—king Magnus or the prime minister Proteus. Both of them are stronger in their position. King Magnus is rather wise and clever than PM Proteus. It is true that if two men are on the same horse riding, only one is allowed to sit on the front. But the question arises who will sit on the

front? In case of resignation from any one of them, it may upset the cart. The title itself is remarkable for political significance. Proteus plans the 'Ace of trumps', i.e. the threat of abdication. In fact, both of them know that they have to keep on driving the cart anyway. Shaw, in his preface, has said for the background of the play. One of his friends, who was an engineer, proposed to transport all the breakages in cheap price if the government assented. The government, instead of giving the tender of the work to him, passed the tender of other person at expensive price. This company was The Breakages Limited. Therefore, Shaw suggests here by the Apple Cart that in a democratic system the government is simply a cart which is used by the prime minister in benefits of own interests. There is no interest of running the cart wisely and with honour of the nation. The cart is full of demagogues (politicians) who humbug the public and all the time they try to upset the cart. **Characterization: King Magnus:** The king Magnus is a wise man. His wisdom is perceived

throughout the play. There has been crisis after crises, but he has been able to tackle all of them actually. The king is well known for his tactics. The new minister Mr Boanerges has heard about him, but yet he is highly persuaded by the cordial approach. The king is the most prominent character in the play. political-drama-apple-cart.. He has been described to be the tallish studious looking gentleman of 45 or thereabouts. His etiquette manner is very skeptical. Boanerges says that the ceremony cuts no ice with him. Yet he is deceived. The king has the upper hand. The king has good experience of politics. He has strong insight and better foresight. For him, a king or any official is only an India rubber stamp, but not wholly, because he or she is a living soul too. So this theory breaks down in every real emergency. He knows that everybody flatters the king, and often he is made a scapegoat and puppet. Though a king has less power than a republican, his position is secure. He is quite clever to impress the new minister by introducing him with the princess. That's the popular tactics known to the ministers, too. They laugh when they hear about the introduction. Proteus says that the king is as artful as the very devil. He is a superior player in the cards game (i.e. politics). Magnus has been exercising the constitutional right of royal veto too. But it becomes a crisis from the cabinet side. He believes that the royal veto is essential for check of any danger, but that is opposed by the ministers. Magnus shows the corruption that often happens in offices, but others ignore. They wish to make the king totally dumb and disabled by the means of ultimatum. The king, very skillfully and diplomatically, diverts the case to the parliamentary decision whether they will approve of cabinet government or monarchical government. He persuades the ministers that certainly he will lose the favor. He speaks splendidly to convince them advantages and disadvantages of different political systems as well as human attitudes. He plays with the affairs of Orinthia just like a young lover, but never lets her have upper hand. He proves his strong devotion to his married queen though she may be a cabbage, not rose, in opinion of Orinthia. He loves his nation with true soul that we can see when he refuses to shift the throne to Dublin. He has victory over the crisis, not by greater astuteness, but because he has the ace of trumps in his hand and knows when to play it. The king stands for royal dignity, respectability and tactics.

**The Prime minister proteus:** Proteus is a fool and very aggressive personality in the play. He has been subdued by the corruptive attitudes of the ministers. As all the ministers are indulged in unacceptable and disgusting manners of tempers, bullyings, sneerings, swearing, kickings and vulgar other activities, the prime minister is seen as useless horsetamer. No any horses are in his command. He is over ambitious for power. That's why Proteus and Boanerges argue sometimes for power. He is conscious of the king's tactics, and tries to overcome him. He often threatens for resignation, and tries to hold the situation in his favour. Crisis, ultimatum and bitter and sometimes unreasonable arguments are brought ahead to reduce the king's power to the India rubber stamp. Magnus flatters him, and makes him believe that he is really superior: Political Drama: The Apple Cart. He holds his claim that there must be restriction in the king's side. He loses no opportunity of disparaging the throne 'once for all'. His counter article in newspaper usually brings a crisis against the king. Proteus has over confidence and as he has defeated all other parties and while the country was run by the king, he wants to bring the king into his confidence. But he has no right sense of right decision in right time. He is proved as democratic humbug, not responsible to the king, the public or the kingdom. Solution of the crisis is not brought out in the hall, but walking out in tempers and having private discussion. Private meeting and talk with king Magnus in the second act of the play brings up the resolution. The king and the prime minister's privacy is scandalous. Magnus believes that Proteus is clever fellow and he is to beat him, but it would give him no satisfaction to beat him. This statement reveals Proteus's true nature. There is cynical tone that he is really very foolish. He is responsible for going to upset the Apple Cart. Finally, he is easily defeated. The game turns in favour of the tactful king. The same threat of resignation, ace of trumps applied by Proteus is used by the king in turn. Proteus realizes that the king is able to make a treachery in the scene, and therefore, he surrenders himself. He tears out the ultimatum and quits the meeting. Also face the election rather than staying as weak and dumb king. He also surrenders himself helplessly. The king's response to the cabinet's ultimatum as revealed in the Apple Cart The ultimatum contains three conditions: 1. The king should not make any speeches 2. The

king should not talk about the veto power anymore 3. The king should not give any articles to the newspaper or he should not run the paper from behind the palace. This ultimatum is given by the cabinet to make the king merely a puppet. When the king realizes that they are determined and insist on the ultimatum, he talks to the prime minister in private. Then he comes back to address the cabinet frankly that he is a human being. He is a king, not a puppet, and the king must work unlike the puppet. The cabinet should consider their own situation where they will be without the king. The king himself has only two options—either he should abdicate or accept the conditions and become a puppet in their hands. He is obliged to decide the same day. Most of the things that he spends are to convince the cabinet that their position is stronger than the king. He convinces them that their success is certain if they insist. The king encourages their excitement and when they are going to lose their patience, he surrenders. He asks time until five o'clock to consider his decision. Policy behind this speech and time is only to prepare the situation favourable to him. He uses his skill for the card that the prime minister has already applied. That's why he does not alert them with any hints that he is going to play their own trick. After lengthening the time for decision, he finally brings them into unexpected confusion by the declaration of the abdication. He uses the same conventional treat-tit for tat, and he is successful too. Humorous argument between Sempronius and Pamphilius on the death of Sempronius's father The beginning conversation between Sempronius and Pamphilius is very humorous and ironic as well. Sempronius's father was a naturalist. He attended and arranged many ceremonies. He had arranged the last two coronations. He was behind the scenes with all royal people. Though he was behind, he believed they were all real. His father died of solitude. He could't bear to be alone for a moment. It was his death to him. It so happened that he swam to an uninhabited island after the yacht (boat) struck a reef. He was alone in the island, no one to play cards with and no church to go to. Pamphilius recites a poem in praise about nature of uninhabited island. But, says Sempronius, nature to him meant nakedness and nakedness only disgusted him. He relates the argument with politics. They say that where there is nothing the king loses