Two Aspects with the Same Meaning in Different Stories

Have you ever come across someone who can express his feelings and thoughts very clearly, whereas another person with a silent manner is rarely noticed? These two types of people, who differ in their manners as closed-minded and open-minded, exist both in real life and in books or novels. It is often difficult to understand people who seem to conceal something inside themselves, as it is hard to predict how their actions or thoughts will unfold. First of all, being closed-minded means not being willing to consider ideas and opinions that are new or different from one's own, whereas being open-minded refers to being receptive to a wide variety of ideas, arguments, and information and being able to express what comes to mind. In my view, I will focus on these two manners through two stories: *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *The Man in a Case*. *The Yellow Wallpaper* represents self-expression and can be considered open-minded, while *The Man in a Case* reflects closed-mindedness.

To begin with, my impression of *The Man in a Case*, written by Chekhov, is that it represents people who live inside a case, just as we sometimes do ourselves. The story is gripping because it describes a challenge that humans face within society every day. This challenge is embodied in the main character, Belikov, who is tortured by his fear of the outside world and is portrayed as detached from society. To sum up the character, Belikov is an extremely anxious man who is keen on controlling everything through strict rules, which he considers a priority. He believes that rules are essential and that everyone must obey them. For instance, when he sees someone disobeying rules, he becomes furious, as he cannot tolerate such behavior. He is not liked by people, even after his death at the end of the story. Moreover, he is so closed-minded that he neither smiles nor appears happy in front of others, but instead remains pale and distant. In terms

of appearance, Belikov is an odd man who wears galoshes and a coat, carries an umbrella, and seems as if he is already enclosed in a case. This appearance itself reflects his closed-minded nature, beyond his manners. He is enclosed within himself, covered by dark clothes, which symbolizes his inner isolation. Being such a person prevents him from forming close friendships or marriage, as he never reveals his preferences or desires. For example, Belikov is doomed from the beginning in his relationship with Varinka because he remains trapped in his own box, where feelings of love or affection are never revealed. The reason he is closed-minded may be his desire to protect himself from social brutality by placing a shell around himself, rather than facing reality and learning to live with the imperfections of society. Clearly, when these facts are considered, Belikov's closed-mindedness is unquestionable, as he carries both figurative and literal shells that reflect the closed-minded nature of many people in the story.

Another contrasting aspect that I would like to explain as open-minded is presented in the short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. However, the background of this story is essential to understanding its theme. Women have long tried to escape the restrictive roles imposed on them by society, yet before doing so, they were expected to conform within marriage. Women were treated as objects to be used and discarded, while husbands held the active role. At the time the story was written, women had limited roles and faced numerous restrictions in society. Their unequal status in marriage was becoming increasingly evident, and women lacked entitlement to education and the freedom to express their thoughts publicly. They were expected to obey and remain silent, unable to choose whom they wished to marry or whether to accept or reject a man. When these social conditions are considered, the significance of the story emerges as a reflection of women's place in society.

The main character is a young middle-class woman who is married and has children, yet she is not given a clear name, which reflects women's anonymity in society; her name may or may not

be Jane. Haunted by the boredom of domestic life, she becomes mentally ill and is denied the right to make her own decisions. She becomes obsessed with the yellow wallpaper in the room where she stays with her husband, John, until her illness is supposedly cured. The wallpaper symbolizes her trapped inner life and the ideas she cannot express. Her only means of self-expression is writing, through which she gradually becomes open-minded. However, her husband, who is also her doctor, forbids her from writing, believing it worsens her condition. In contrast, she finds relief through writing and gains a sense of openness by expressing the thoughts she has long suppressed due to fear of her husband. Although she does not fully understand whether writing truly heals her, she believes it does, while John disapproves of her expressing herself. His discouragement of her writing represents the suppression of self-expression and open-mindedness. Consequently, the lack of women's entitlement to self-expression in the nineteenth century is clearly reflected in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, highlighting male dominance and female submissiveness of the time.

In conclusion, even though *The Man in a Case* and *The Yellow Wallpaper* present opposing qualities of closed-mindedness and open-mindedness, the characters in both stories are shaped by social pressure. Belikov becomes closed-minded due to both societal oppression and his strict adherence to rules ignored by others. Similarly, the woman in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is driven toward open-mindedness through writing, as social pressure and marital dominance force her into silence. These two stories remind us that there are many Belikovs and Janes around us—friends or relatives whose inner worlds remain hidden, making it difficult to understand how they truly approach life and the unspoken thoughts they carry within their minds.