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A Comparative Study on Rahul Sadasivan's *Bramayugam* and Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse* through Archetypal Lens

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Abstract:

This research paper presents a comparative analysis of Rahul Sadasivan's *Bramayugam* and Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse* through the lens of archetypal theory, as proposed by Carl Jung, who established this concept as fundamental. Archetypes are universally inherited symbols or prototypes that are common to all humans and influence human behaviour and experiences by providing frameworks through which individuals perceive the world. *Bramayugam* is a thought-provoking Malayalam film that explores the complexities of human relationships and the consequences of our actions. In contrast, The *Lighthouse* immerses viewers in a haunting exploration of the human psyche and the volatile nature of interpersonal relationships. The study aims to explore the literary archetypes that are universal and prevalent in both works and how they contribute to a deeper understanding of the human experience and the collective unconscious. As both movies share the same genre of modern horror set in earlier centuries, they showcase similar traits of archetypes, which will be compared and focused on in the present study. By examining and comparing the narrative structures, characters and their development along with the thematic elements, the paper delves into how these works engage

with the archetypal framework, shedding light on the cross-cultural and timeless nature of storytelling.

Keywords: archetypes, power, cross-culture, mythology, mermaid, folklore, symbol, dominance.

The Female Characters- Mythical Enchantresses

In the works of Rahul Sadasivan's *Bramayugam* and Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse*, a single female character embodies the archetype of the Femme Fatale, symbolizing desire and its potential for destruction. A mermaid in The Lighthouse and a Yakshi in Bramayugam play significant roles in the psychological disintegration of the subordinate male characters. These mythical enchantresses work as catalysts for destroying the mental stability of the subordinate characters. Their archetypal roles are deeply rooted in folklore and myth.

The Femme Fatale archetype represents an enchanting woman whose beauty and charm often lead to the downfall of those who succumb to her. This archetype is characterized by beauty, intelligence, and a manipulative nature, using her sexuality and allure to achieve her objectives.

The mermaid and the Yakshi are two distinct mythical representations from diverse cultural milieus, both encapsulating the Femme Fatale archetype through their seductive and often hazardous demeanour. Present in various legends, folklore, and contemporary media, each brings a distinctive cultural essence to the archetype of the lethal or mythical enchantress. Mermaids are mythological entities with the upper torso of a female and the tail of a fish, featured in the folklore of numerous cultures, encompassing European, African and Asian traditions. Renowned for their captivating beauty and melodious voices, mermaids allegedly entice sailors and fishermen to death beneath the sea. Meanwhile, Yakshis are spirits from South Asian mythology, particularly from the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. They are

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depicted as charming and attractive women who inhabit forests, rivers, and isolated places. Yakshis are allegedly known for their beauty and capacity to seduce men, which frequently results in their demise. They lure their victims with their allure and subsequently unveil their true, perilous nature. Both mermaids and Yakshis epitomize the Femme Fatale archetype through their seductive lure and fatal consequences for those they ensnare. Both entities captivate men with their beauty and charm, leading them into deadly traps. In films such as *The Lighthouse* and *Bramayugam*, the mermaid and the Yakshi play a crucial role in depicting the destructive power of lust and desire.

In *The Lighthouse*, Ephraim Winslow's encounter with the mermaid commences with the discovery of a small, carved mermaid doll in his bed, which subsequently precipitates hallucinations involving sexual interactions with the mermaid by the seashore. Symbolizing the archetype of the Femme Fatale, the mermaid represents a mythical enchantress, enchanting Ephraim into a spiral of lust and insanity. Ephraim gets deeply affected by this mix of terror and awe, which leads to his psychological breakdown. This results in Ephraim breaking the doll in frustration. His obsession with the mermaid increases, which blurs the reality for him, eventually proving her role in his mental breakdown. Her seductive charm takes over his mind, symbolizing that an excess obsession is harmful to his mental well-being. The mix of hallucinations and increasing paranoia shows how the Femme Fatale can be dangerous, as Ephraim's desire further pushes him into madness and insanity.

Similarly, in *Bramayugam*, Thevan encounters a Yakshi, a female ghost from South Asian folklore known for seducing, who eventually kills Thevan's friend Kora. This portrays how her dangerous allure can lead to fatal consequences. Thevan's encounters and experiences with the Femme Fatale are portrayed as genuine and realistic in contrast to Ephraim's hallucinations, which heighten the sense of fear and anguish. The Yakshi's presence in the mansion where Thevan seeks refuge deepens his mental anguish. Her seductive tactics and

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Kora's tragic death serve as a constant reminder of her deadly nature. The Yakshi's lustful influence not only physically consumes Kora but also deeply imprints on Thevan's psyche. She is portrayed as an essential character in the narrative due to the fear and trauma she inflicts on Thevan's mental decline.

The influence of these mythical enchantresses is significant and complex on the subordinate characters in both films. In *The Lighthouse*, the mermaid's impact on Ephraim is majorly psychological, as her seductive nature triggers his hallucinations and paranoia. The mermaid depicts how unchecked desire and lust consume Ephraim internally, showcasing her destructive nature. In contrast, the Yakshi in *Bramayugam* depicts a more immediate and physical threat. Her seduction directly leads to Kora's demise. At the same time, her presence instils a deep-rooted sense of fear and trauma in Thevan when he spots her at the mansion along with Kodumon Potti, the dominant male character. The Yakshi has a physical impact on Kora, while the mermaid has a psychological effect on Ephraim. This illustrates the complexity of the Femme Fatale archetype in myths and folklore. The mythical enchantresses lay the foundation for the psychological drama that unfolds further. Ephraim's discovery of the mermaid doll, followed by the hallucinations, is similar to Thevan's encounter with the Yakshi and her seduction of Kora. Both incidents show the female characters as significant to the narrative's tension and the protagonists' mental deterioration.

The Male Characters

1) **The Gluttonous Tyrants**

Kodumon Potti in *Bramayugam* and Thomas Wake in *The Lighthouse* are both examples of The Devourer, The Tyrant, and The Shadow. These characters are defined by their intense desire for power and dominance, which triumphs over other desires, including lust.

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The archetype of The Devourer represents a deep and insatiable hunger that manifests as overindulgence. This archetype symbolizes an endless desire for consumption, which can lead to terrible outcomes for both oneself and other people. The Devourer depicts an actual consumer of food, resources, or even souls, showing the destructive results of uncontrolled greed and hunger for desire. The Tyrant archetype stands for the desire and maintenance of power via dominance and control. This figure uses fear, intimidation and manipulation to force what they want on other people. The Tyrant constantly tries to protect their rule and authority and can go to any lengths to preserve it. The Shadow archetype represents the darker and hidden aspects of the human psyche, which includes suppressed urges, fears, and desires that are considered as socially unacceptable or dangerous.

Both Thomas Wake and Kodumon Potti epitomize individuals with excessive consumption patterns, whether it pertains to food, alcohol, or authority. Their insatiable desires mirror their inner voids and the compulsion to dominate and control their surroundings. Acting as authoritarian figures, Wake and Potti exercise uncompromising control over their subordinates, Ephraim Winslow and Thevan, demanding unwavering obedience and respect while resorting to intimidation and manipulation to assert dominance. The Shadow archetype encapsulates the darker dimensions of human psychology often suppressed and projected onto others, a role embodied by Wake and Potti through their violent outbursts, manipulative conduct, and oppressive demeanour, all of which reflect their internal darkness.

From the onset of the films, Thomas Wake and Kodumon Potti are driven by an unwavering quest for power, establishing themselves as dominant figures over Winslow and Thevan and distinctly asserting their authority through the immediate enforcement of orders. Kodumon Potti demands, "Can you sing the 'Manikyacharitham'?" (*Bramayugam* 00:16:07), expecting an unyielding compliance right from the initial moment of encounter. Similarly, As Winslow responds, "Yes, Sir." (*The Lighthouse* 00:09:08), Wake immediately corrects him

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sternly, "Aye, Sir!" (00:09:10). Symbolizing knowledge, power, and vulnerability, the light each character guards – Wake the lighthouse's light and Potti the lamp in *Bramayugam* – illustrates their obsession with control. Wake is adamant and obsessed with holding the access to the lamp as he exclaims, "I tend the light." (*The Lighthouse* 00:09:32) and "You don't go in there!" (*The Lighthouse* 00:18:58). Their obsession with control is also depicted by their habit of drinking excessively and overeating, which reveals their deep hunger for power and the emptiness that they carry.

Ephraim Winslow and Thevan deal with extreme physical and mental distress under the dominance of Thomas Wake and Kodumon Potti. Lack of empathy, along with a willingness to cause suffering, are characteristics of their tyrannical behaviour. Both characters display minimal consideration for the well-being of Winslow and Thevan in order to establish control, subjecting them to mental manipulation and physical intimidation. Wake and Potti are easily agitated, especially when their authority is questioned, which displays their dominating behaviour.

Wake and Potti represent their control over power and knowledge since they hold the keys to the hidden rooms that contain light. This role of gatekeeping allows them to solidify their dominance over Ephraim and Thevan and also over the mysterious light. Through manipulation of the narrative to fortify the power, they contend that their previous subordinates descended into madness, as claimed by Wake from 00:22:14 to 00:22:40 and Potti from 00:48:39 to 00:49:18, eventually bestowing the same label upon Winslow and Thevan. Wake says, "And I knew ye was mad, when y'smashed up that life boat just now,…" (*The Lighthouse* 01:20:44) and "I'm probably a figment of your imagination." (*The Lighthouse* 01:22:01), implying that Winslow has lost his mind.

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Wake and Potti exhibit a profound disregard for the lives of their subordinates, viewing them as expendables and insignificant. This lack of empathy and devaluation of human life are hallmarks of their tyrannical archetype, evident in their harsh treatment and the disposability assigned to Winslow and Thevan. As Thevan praises God for food and shelter, Potti exclaims, "But I gave you all that, right? Then why are you thanking God?" (*Bramayugam* 00:29:26-00:29:36). They deny the existence of God or any higher power while considering themselves supreme because they see the subordinates' faith as a threat to their power. Both characters reveal that they have dealt with and gotten rid of their previous assistants as Wake confesses to killing his assistant over alleged madness, while Potti hints at the deaths of his former doctor, dancer and servant. These confessions reveal how manipulating, controlling and deadly they are. Both characters practice alert sleeping and stay on guard, showing how determined they are to remain in control while also being paranoid about losing their dominance. This practice ensures that Thevan and Ephraim do not resist or escape from their clutches and helps them to stay in control while also showing how trapped the subordinate characters are in these helpless situations.

Thomas Wake in the film *The Lighthouse* and Kodumon Potti in *Bramayugam* are compelling representations of the Devourer, the Tyrant, and the Shadow archetypes. Their constant pursuit of power, oppressive rule of their subordinates, and their role as gatekeepers of the light show their complex characteristics and personas. Through their behaviours and interactions with characters like Winslow and Thevan, these authoritative figures demonstrate how uncontrolled and unchecked powers can reveal the dark and deep side of the human mind.

2) The Weaklings

In *Bramayugam* and *The Lighthouse*, the characters Thevan and Ephraim Winslow represent the archetypes of The Innocent or Naïve Youth, The Victim, and The Underestimated.

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This section looks closely at how these archetypes are portrayed in terms of their actions, interactions with the dominant characters and their struggle for liberation and self-empowerment.

The Innocent or Naïve Youth is an archetype that represents someone who is pure, hopeful, and inexperienced in the ways of the world. This archetype includes qualities such as trust, hope, and also a sense of wonder about the world. Their inexperience makes them vulnerable to manipulation or harm because they tend to ignore or miss the potential dangers around them. The Victim is an archetype that represents someone who endures suffering or hardship, typically due to circumstances beyond their control. This archetype shows how vulnerability and resilience can lead to transformation and growth amidst difficult experiences. Victims often suffer physical, emotional, or psychological pain due to external or internal sources. They feel trapped or helpless because they perceive themselves as the one who lacks control and is vulnerable. The Underestimated is an archetype about characters who are initially overlooked or undervalued by others but later eventually prove that they have great strength and talent. These characters have abilities, intelligence, or qualities that are not immediately visible to others. Even though they are underestimated, they display inner strength and persevere through the challenges that they face.

The characters Thevan and Ephraim Winslow are shown as naïve, powerless and inexperienced when they first arrive at their respective locations. Their innocence and inexperience make them vulnerable to the dominance and manipulation of the more powerful characters in the story. As victims, both Thevan and Winslow suffer relentless torment and oppression. Thevan expresses to Kodumon Potti's son, "Whoever wields power will be corrupted. Commoners like me are always its victims" (*Bramayugam* 02:04:36). Both physically and mentally tormented by their dominant counterparts, they are initially perceived

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as weak and inconsequential. This underestimation ultimately leads to a dramatic reversal as they begin to assert themselves and rebel against their oppressors.

Ephraim Winslow, initially assigned as an assistant to Wake, carries a vulnerable mind due to a dark past, haunted by the trauma of letting his cruel foreman drown and assuming his identity. Ephraim confesses, "I'm Thomas. Tommy" (*The Lighthouse* 01:12:24). Thevan, on the other hand, is inherently subordinate due to his lowly caste of Paanan, "I am a lowborn Paanan. Am I allowed to step inside?" (*Bramayugam* 00:21:35), and his desperate need for refuge at Potti's house after losing his friend, Kora while they were trying to escape from the clutches of slavery. When Winslow says, "But I'm God-fearin', if that's what you're askin" (*The Lighthouse* 00:35:52) and similarly when Thevan expresses, "Everything is God's grace. Praise to God for providing me shelter and food" (*Bramayugam* 00:29:14), it is evident that both characters possess a belief in God, which contrasts with the atheistic tendencies of Wake and Potti, adding another layer to their innocence and serving a sense of peace amidst their torment.

From the moment they arrive, both Thevan and Ephraim begin to mentally break down, haunted by nightmares whenever they manage to sleep rarely. Due to this ongoing turmoil, they lose their sense of identity and track of time as a result of their worsened unstable mental states. The sleep deprivation they experience contributes to their deteriorating mental health and increasing madness, with Thevan losing track of essential details such as time, his own and his mother's name. When Kodumon Potti's son questions Thevan, "A few days or months? You cannot believe it, can you? Do you remember you name?" Thevan further admits, "I cannot remember anything" (*Bramayugam* 01:19:59-1:20:31). Winslow, too, struggles with his sense of identity, given his assumed name and hidden past along with losing track of time. As Wake claims, "It's been weeks ago since we missed her, Winslow. And I've been askin' ye to ration fer weeks now, too." (*The Lighthouse* 00:53:38-00:53:48)

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The characters Thevan and Winslow in the films *Bramayugam* and *The Lighthouse* are depicted as having little significance in the eyes of the dominant characters. One example is when Potti tries to kill Thevan, he exclaims, "The hour of reckoning has at last arrived, marking the end of your futile existence!" (*Bramayugam* 01:43:10). They endure both mental and physical harm inflicted by the characters of Potti and Wake, as well as the psychological trauma caused by the archetypal Femme Fatale figures present in both films. These encounters contribute to the already fragile mental states of Thevan and Winslow, further driving them into madness. Thevan asks Kodumon Potti's son, "What is upstairs?" (*Bramayugam* 00:24:14) and Winslow's persistent attempts to reach the lighthouse's lantern throughout the film demonstrate how both characters' unreasonable and desperate curiosity eventually leads to their downfall. Their curiosity drives them to cross boundaries, such as exploring forbidden areas, and also to disobey authority figures, which ultimately leads to their tragic outcomes. Winslow's curiosity about the lighthouse's light and Thevan's urge to explore the mansion bring them into direct conflict with Wake and Potti. Winslow seeks power and tries to overthrow the dominance of Wake, while Thevan fights to escape from the clutches of Potti. Their journeys show a shift from submission to rebellion.

As their mental states deteriorate and their desperation grows, Thevan and Winslow change from seeming weak and helpless to becoming strong and threatening opponents. They reach a point of madness where they start to rebel against their oppressors and question the authority of the dominant characters. Their transformation shows The Underestimated archetype, which reveals that the most underestimated individuals can become powerful when they are pushed to their extreme limits. The turning point of both narratives is marked by Thevan and Ephraim's rebellion. Their intense and desperate conflicts with the dominant characters highlight their journeys from helplessness and victimhood to active resistance, ultimately leading to terrible fates.

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Ephraim Winslow in *The Lighthouse* and Thevan in *Bramayugam* represent the archetypes of the Innocent or Naïve Youth, the Victim, and the Underestimated. Their shift from vulnerable and helpless subordinates to rebellious figures shows the deep impact of oppression and the human capacity for resistance.

Remote Ruins

This section focuses on the structures in which the characters reside or carry out their everyday activities. The importance and significance of the deteriorating and isolated structures are examined, along with how they affect the characters as well as the plot development in both films. In *Bramayugam* and *The Lighthouse*, the archetypes of The Haunted House and The Tower are used to enhance the psychological and supernatural elements. Looking from an archetypal perspective, remote ruins have deep symbolic meanings that resonate with themes of isolation, psychological distress, and supernatural forces, exceeding their actual physical locations.

The Tower is a powerful archetype deeply rooted in literature and mythology that represents isolation, ambition, enlightenment as well as a fall from grace. Its vertical structure symbolizes a journey towards higher consciousness or knowledge. Towers are usually depicted as distant, remote and inaccessible, which emphasizes the isolation and solitude of the occupants. Reaching the top of the Tower represents the pursuit of knowledge, power and also spiritual enlightenment, but this quest is dangerous and often characterized by arrogance. The Haunted House archetype embodies fear, the past, and the supernatural, where the lines between the living and the dead are blurred and where unresolved traumas and problems are confronted. These houses are frequently associated with past tragedies, unresolved conflicts, or cursed histories, which in turn still have an impact on the present. They are usually filled with ghost apparitions, eerie noises, and a sense of dread. The haunted house creates a space

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for psychological investigation and confrontations while also reflecting the characters' innermost fears, guilt, and suppressed memories. The haunted house serves as a metaphor for the human mind, especially the subconscious, where suppressed fears and unresolved traumas manifest, which forces the characters to face their deepest fears.

The Tower and The Haunted House both serve as isolated, confining spaces that significantly impact the characters who inhabit them. These locations create powerful psychological and frequent paranormal experiences that drive the characters to either self-discovery, madness, or both. These structures are difficult to access and escape, which symbolizes both physical and psychological entrapment.

In *The Lighthouse*, the archetype of The Tower is used, like a symbol associated commonly with madness, isolation, and ascension. The lighthouse dominates above the landscape. It stands as just a towering structure since it is situated on such a remote island that is surrounded by chaotic, unforgiving waters. It guides as well as imprisons since its confined space strengthens some psychological tension between Thomas Wake and Ephraim Winslow. The light at the top signifies unachievable knowledge or enlightenment. Meanwhile, the lighthouse's vertical structure suggests a hierarchical struggle that drives the characters even further towards insanity as they move away from reality.

On the other hand, *Bramayugam* depicts the archetype of the Haunted House. It is an isolated and decaying structure filled with mystery and supernatural elements. The house is surrounded by land but is equally inaccessible, which represents the protagonist's internal fears and traumas but in tangible form. The character's decisions and emotional states are influenced by the supernatural through the haunted house in Bramayugam, where the boundaries between the real and the paranormal blur. An atmosphere of dread and foreboding is created by the house's decaying state, which includes dark, unlit corners and leaking walls.

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Both structures are characterized by abandonment and the challenge of reaching or escaping them alive. While Thevan experiences an unsuccessful attempt to escape, Kodumon Potti's son reveals, "No one who crossed that gateway has ever left. This is a trap. The more you try to untie it, the tighter the noose becomes" (*Bramayugam* 01:09:02-01:09:15). The lighthouse is isolated by the sea, that both traps as well as protects. This creates a feeling of being trapped in a place that is impossible to escape. Similarly, the house in *Bramayugam* is isolated by land with a sinister history, which makes it equally inescapable. The weather in both films is unpredictable, which increases the sense of isolation and helplessness in the subordinate characters of Ephraim Winslow and Thevan.

Both the structures have excessive storage of alcohol that creates a temporary means of escape from reality, as well as the characters' spiral into insanity. The interaction of darkness and light plays a crucial role in these structures. Both the haunted mansion and the lighthouse are dark from within, with occasional flashes of light that provide a brief break but also heighten the tension. In *The Lighthouse,* the light represents forbidden truth or knowledge that is eagerly pursued but is ultimately harmful to the subordinate characters. Meanwhile, in *Bramayugam*, the lack of light in the mansion emphasizes both literal and figurative darkness. This triggers the characters' emotional and mental states.

The upstairs areas of these structures contain mysteries that are protected by the dominant characters. In *The Lighthouse*, Thomas Wake fiercely protects the lantern room at the top of the lighthouse from Ephraim Winslow, trying to hide the light and the secret behind it. Similarly, Kodumon Potti's deceased body is kept on the upper floor of the mansion in *Bramayugam*, which gives it an eerie feel. Additionally, the goblin, who has taken the appearance of Kodumon Potti, guards a lamp in an underground chamber of the mansion that is constantly burning due to some magical abilities. This guarded light, much like the lantern in The Lighthouse, symbolizes hidden truths and authority.

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In *The Lighthouse*, the characters spiral into insanity due to the restricted setting and constant isolation. Similar to this, in *Bramayugam*, Thevan dives into madness due to the eerie atmosphere and dark history of the haunted mansion. The supernatural elements of this house and its decaying state show the characters' psychological breakdown, which makes them more vulnerable, fearful and violent. Both films show their structures in a state of decay, symbolizing the characters' emotional and mental deterioration. Past deaths, body traces, crumbling ceilings and ongoing leakages add a sense of impending doom, which reflects the characters' decaying mental state.

These structures are filled with evil spirits and supernatural elements that worsen the effects of the evil forces by making the days shorter and nights longer. The characters in *The Lighthouse* are pushed to their limits by the long nights and suffocating lights. This creates an atmosphere where hallucinations and reality blend together. In Bramayugam, due to the eerie elements of the haunted house and the impact of the previous deaths, the characters are pushed to the verge of madness and are constantly haunted.

As these structures continue to decay, the interactions between the characters become increasingly aggressive, which leads to absolute madness. In both films, the remote ruins function as archetypal symbols that capture the themes of isolation, mental anguish and the struggle for sanity. Through the use of these archetypes, *Bramayugam* and *The Lighthouse* provide insight into the human conditions using archetypes that are universal and culturally specific.

Conclusion

Rahul Sadasivan's *Bramayugam* and Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse* both skillfully explore the depths of human psychology and myth through the use of archetypal criticism by creating intricate and multi-layered narratives. By using the archetypal lens of these films, it is

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possible to see how these timeless symbols and motifs go beyond the geographical and cultural borders. This not only enriches storytelling but also provides a universal language that the audience can relate to.

In conclusion, the archetypal analysis of Bramayugam and The Lighthouse effectively showcases how these films make use of mythic structures to delve into the depth of human emotion and conflict. Through the lenses provided, we can gain insight into the psychological landscapes of the characters and the enduring power of archetypal storytelling in contemporary cinema.

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