CHAPTER VI
THE MASTER BUILDER

Over-vaulting streamer in the black firmament.

*The Master-Buiilder* (1892) is one such play as has evoked baffling and bewildering responses from the readers, viewers and spectators. No two opinions about the meaning, content and form seem to be similar. While critics like H.L. Menken, Georg Brandes, Eva Le Gallienne and James McFarlane dwell on the thematic concerns of the play and come to different conclusions, scholars like Professor Weigand approach the play through the study of its characters. However, during its stage performances in various parts of the globe, reactions were countlessly diverse. A sizable number of viewers and critics failed to grasp any precise meaning of the play and those who did try to find the crux of the play, found the play either totally autobiographical or a totally political document. In entire Scandinavia, a very lively discussion took place to explain it in terms of drame a clef. However, soon after its English translations were made available, people started viewing Master Solness as personification of different personalities such as Ibsen himself, Bjornson, as a politician of the left, as a politician of the right. In Germany, people found in Master Solness a portrayal of Bismark, in England, a portrait of Gladstone, despite Ibsen’s firm and repeated assertions that the play has nothing to do with political or social problems. In Sweden, people found everything, every situation and every character as something symbolic. Yet to some, the play was simply unintelligible, wild and even irritatingly obscure. So much so that even the contemporary press took up cudgels against its unintelligibility. To quote a few, *The Daily Telegraph* described the play as, “Dense Mists enshroud characters, words, actions, motives...a play written, rehearsed and acted by lunatics.”¹ *The Globe* reacted as, “Here we contemplate the actions of a set of lunatics, each more helpless than the other...Platitudes and inanities...The play is hopeless and indefensible.”²
The Evening News expressed its shock as, "A feast of dull dialogue acute dementia... The most dreary and purposeless drivel. We have ever heard in an English theatre... A pointless, incoherent and absolutely silly piece." The Stage viewed the play as, "Rigmarole of an Oracle Delphic in obscurity and Gamp-like in garrulity... Pulseless and purposeless play, which has idiocy written on every lineament... Three acts of gibberish." The Saturday Review assessed the play as, "A distracting jumble of incoherent elements. There is no story; the characters are impossible, and the motives a nightmare of perverted fingerposts." The Morning Post labelled the play as, "Sensuality... irreverence... unwholesome... simply blasphemous." And finally The Sporting and Dramatic News went to the extent of saying, "Ibsen has written some very vile and vulgar plays... The Master Builder bids fair to raise a mausoleum in which Ibsen craze may be conveniently buried and consigned to oblivion."

And yet there are certain critics like H.L. Menken, Georg Brandes, Eva Le Gallienne and even Henry James who were able to feel a sense of enthralment and deliverance after having seen the play as the tragedy of a great artist who has passed the prime of his life. In Eva Le Gallienne's words:

In my opinion The Master Builder is a great poem (I think in order to appreciate this it may be necessary to read it in the original), and one does not expect a poem to provide logical explanations of its meanings. It opens up doors in the minds leading to vistas along which our thoughts wander fascinated, occasionally bewildered but constantly stimulated...

And this line of thought was pursued by a large number of broadcasts of the play through B.B.C. radio productions and later television productions not only in Britain but in the entire world. So much so that the top ranking actors like Roger Livesay, Donald Wolfit, D.A. Clarke Smith, Edgar Norfolk have played Master Solness to bring out the essential tragic stature of the Master Builder.
However, when we have a glance at the criticism available to us since 1960s onwards, a plethora of different opinions once again emerges. But none of the modern evaluators of the play finds it fit for the dustbin, although they do find certain complexities here and there. To begin with, the analysis of an eminent critic G. Wilson Knight, *The Master Builder* does raise certain difficulties by its peculiar coalescence of spiritual meaning. But towards the end of his analysis, he indulges in the fallacy of oversimplification, when he states:

> We watch Solness as an aging but powerful genius, without domestic happiness, severed from religion, guilt-stricken and baffled by occult presences, being impelled by a youthful inspirer and ideal love to a creative dying more honourable than books or the life work which has now to be surpassed and left to the younger generation.  

However, Wilson Knight’s analysis remains focussed on the central symbolic action—the climbing of the tower. Similarly, James Walter Mc Farlane finds several forbidding complexities, self-recoiling motives and labyrinthine tensions in the play yet his analysis is based on the thematic concerns. Mc Farlane analyses the play as the one which brings out poignantly the loss of potency on the part of the central character Master Builder. His analysis of the concept of potency is exhaustive because he brings into focus the whole life and the ideals of Master Solness. He sees a distinct pattern in the play based on the possession of potency, the lack and the loss of it, the search for it, the submission to it and the wonder at it. However, Solness’s possession and the loss of potency works out at three overlapping levels, artistic potency, sexual potency and personal, charismatic or volitional potency. There is a clear obstruction of sexual images indicating potency and impotence. Master Solness’s relationships are seen in terms of sexual assault, in the context of women having been abducted by trolls and vikings to be treated like birds of prey, in terms of ascent and descent and the tensions that naturally exist between youth and age. The inability of the Master Builder to build a villa for a young couple at Lovborg is the decline of creative or artistic potency. It results in
private torments and pitiless exploitation and ultimately producing a very strong fear of retribution. McFarlane views Master Builder’s encounter with Hilde Wangel as an attempt to reassert his potency of spirit to revitalise his own domestic happiness. And to prove this point, biographical details like Ibsen’s relationship with Emilie Bardach, Helene Raff, Hildur Anderson are pressed into service. But McFarlane’s focus remains on the distinct pattern which he finds in the play as painful realisation and consequent attempt on the part of Master Solness to come to terms with that hard reality and ultimately reaching the state where suicide, death or fall is the only option left. Similarly F.L. Lucas, in his appreciation of the play, delves deep into the act-wise analysis but his focus remains on illustrating parallels between Ibsen’s biographical details and Master Solness’s predicaments. There is a plethora of details about event, characters and situations in the play that directly corresponds to what Ibsen experienced and lived in his real life. To begin with, Hilde Wangel is said to be no other than Emilie Bardach, a young Austrian of eighteen, with whom Ibsen spent a lot of time at Gossensass in 1889. Ibsen found her possessed with notions of never marrying as it would be much more amusing to hunt other women’s husbands. Lucas states that Ibsen addressed her as princess a number of times in his letters exactly as Solness addresses Hilde in the play. It is also a fact that after the appearance of the play in 1892, Emilie sent Ibsen her photograph signed ‘Princess of Orangia’. Lucas, even finds certain details corresponding to the play, in Ibsen’s relationships with Hildur Anderson, a grand daughter of Ibsen’s landlady in Bergen days. Ibsen first met her in 1874 when she was only ten. And after many years, again when they met, they celebrated September 19 as the ‘memory day’, a day important enough to be inscribed on the diamond ring that Ibsen gave her. And September 19 is the day on which Hilde Wangel comes to claim her kingdom. Lucas even names a few other girls like Laura Kieler, Helene Raff and a young dancer Rosi Fitinghoft who provided stimulus to Ibsen for writing The Master-Builder. As for Ibsen’s personal predicaments were concerned, Lucas brings out details about young writers like Knut Hamsun and August Strindberg.
who had the audacity to jeer at Ibsen’s feminism and his focus on conscious processes of mind ignoring the dark and mystical elements from his plays. Ibsen felt strong threats to his stature from them in the manner Master Solness was mortally afraid of youth in the person of Ragnar Brovik. Even towers and giddiness of Solness are reflections from memories of Ibsen’s personal past. Lucas concludes that the play is particularly full of details about Ibsen’s own life. In Halvard Solness, there is, as Emilie Bardach realised, much of Ibsen himself. Despite a number of parallels between Master Solness and Ibsen, Lucas however makes certain illuminating observations about the play, like the central theme of “the tragedy is the frustrated longing of age for youth.” And yet the analysis remains concentrated on biographical details.

Then, there are critics like Raymond Williams who have attempted to study the play with a specific purpose and that is to place Henrik Ibsen in the slot to fill the vacuum that existed between plays in transition and modern experimental drama as also to evolve certain principles holding together works of Anton Chekov and August Strindberg. His study however remains focussed on his attempt to bridge the gulf between text and performance only to define the changing relations between dramatic forms and methods of performance in the long history of European Drama. An eminent critic Desmond MacCarthy examines the play with spotlight on the mental development of the central character Master Solness and relates that development to the three broad periods of Ibsen’s literary creativity. The phases of Master Builder’s thought process correspond to Ibsen’s literary attempts to find solutions to various problems of life. To quote MacCarthy:

The development of Solness, the Master Builder, corresponds roughly with the three great creative periods of Ibsen’s work, beginning with Brand (1866) onwards. In his first period the chief characters were striving after a religious solution of life. These plays were dramas of aspiration, even when aspiration was shown as failing in the end. (Brand, Peer Gynt, and the double drama Emperor and Galilean.) Then he turned to writing plays in which social problems of the day provided him
with subjects. *(Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882) These were the plays which in England made him famous. In his last period he turned to digging deeper in himself for his subjects, becoming more and more overtly a dramatist of the inner life, and making out what he found within him strange plays, half-prosaic and half-poetic; he began to build houses with towers.¹³

The line of argument which E.M. Forster took way back in 1928 was carried forward in the recent times by an important Ibsen scholar named Errol Durbach. In his book *Ibsen: The Romantic*, Durbach finds that the building up of the entire play is on the most of romantic impulses: the lure of the impossible and the temptation to transcend not only his own physical infirmity but the mortal and temporal limitations of mankind. Durbach views the play in terms of highly romantic questions namely 'sexual sublimity', or 'cosmic orgasm.' Though he finds it difficult to define the nature of erotic ideal that Hilde demands of Solness yet he views her association with Master Solness as a romantic yearning for a kingdom, not of this world. Solness's super human ascent at Lysanger is combined with the nubile adolescent's first sexual experience with angelic intimations of transcendence. The whole play becomes then an act of fantasticiated memory passionately enacted. The analysis of the experience of Hilde in terms of sensational sexual experience is well in keeping with the Norse sagas, romantic tales of rape and seduction by splendid troll-like vikings transcending beyond the flesh, beyond the possible because her longing for castles in the air is nothing but a projection of the visionary imagination. "The two, Solness and Hilde ", in Durbach's schema, "then become the sensationalist who craves super human satisfaction and the dreamer or a romantic flower child who demands paradise."¹⁴ J.D. Dhingra studies the play with focus on the concept of the Ibsenic Woman who shines brightly in the act of self-sacrifice. He comes to the conclusion that, "In *The Master Builder* Ibsen presents a woman who stands behind the Master Builder and holds the pennon high. Though herself a victim of neglect and subservience and painfully aware of the anguish that unstinted adherence implies, she considers her noblest duty to absorb herself completely in her husband
and conform to his wishes. Mrs. Solness has been replaced by Hilda yet her loyalty to him is uncompromising. Gail Finney views the play from the standpoint of Hilde, whom he describes as an emancipated woman with her rejection of the strict division between conventional masculine and feminine behaviour by her disdain for public opinion. To highlight the aggressive behaviour of Hilde, Gail Finney writes, "... in like manner Hilde speaks in a natural, uninhibited fashion, mentioning her filthy underwear to Solness and using expressions like 'hell' and 'Good Lord.' Still more, when Mrs. Solness warns Hilde that people might stare at her if she ventures into the town in her unconventional garb, she responds that it would be fun. Thus Gail Finney's study focuses on bringing out the emancipated self of Hilde. Inga Stina Ewbank dwells upon the dramatic artistry of Ibsen in the play. In his opinion:

In *The Master Builder* Ibsen creates a world where time and space have a remarkable interdependence which also controls our responses to the play. As Solness stands on the top of his tower, Hilde thrusts the past into the present; "At least! Alas! Now I see him great and free again! A visual pattern sports her affirmation: The three acts have moved through settings progressively more appropriate to the protagonist's name, to an end against 'an evening sky with sunlit clouds.'

Simon Williams highlights the demonic quality of Ibsen's heroines and expresses his elation not at cultivating consistency of Hilde's character but at her capacity to carry the audience into the world of pure fantasy. His study brings out the demonic in Hilde's character.

But to study the play from the angle of the loss and lack of potency of an artist, from the angle of finding autobiographical parallels or to separate the threads of romanticism from the texture of the play, as a mere case study of an Ibsenic woman or an emancipated woman, as a remarkable inter-dependence of time and space or to trace the demonic qualities of Ibsen's heroines is to shut our eyes to the great psychological insights with which Ibsen acquaints us. No doubt, in the plays like *The Lady from the Sea* Ibsen had already started
exploring the deep recesses of mind, yet it is this play *The Master Builder* that he has reached newer heights. To me, an in depth study of the play from the angle of humanistic psychology of Adler, Erich Fromm and Shri Aurobindo reveals much more than reducing the play to a mere case study of a neurotic individual. In fact, it is in this play that Ibsen raises certain thought-provoking questions like: What is freedom? Does it mean ruthless subjugation of others or does it mean abject surrender before others? Do we really want freedom or do we always run away to escape its glow? Can one really attain freedom by denying the same to others? Where does true freedom lie? To all these questions, Ibsen has attempted to give answers by delving deep into the springs of human actions. The key question then emerges: Has Solness really become the Master Builder? Has he attained freedom which he had been so recklessly asking for? Towards the end of the play, where is he and what is he? It is from these psychological perspectives that I intend to go ahead with the central issue which is search for freedom in the play.

The present chapter seeks to examine Master Builder's search for freedom from the viewpoint of Erich Fromm's concepts taken out of his corpus in the field of humanistic psychology. While Fromm's basic thesis in the book *TO HAVE OR TO BE* examines the two modes of life i.e. Having mode and Being mode at detailed lengths, his thesis in the book *THE FEAR OF FREEDOM* dissects the concept of freedom from purely psychological point of view and must be understood in terms of socio-economic conditions in which an individual is placed. It will be worthwhile to give an all too brief summary of Fromm's basic concepts related to the search for freedom. To begin with, Having mode is that mode of life which is characterised by an absolute tendency to acquire, possess and retain at all costs whatever one has possessed in terms of material gains like power, wealth and status etc. In this mode, acquisition, possession and retention of things is controlled by the sole motive of lust, greed and selfishness. The person who follows the having-mode of life does not believe in any sort of moral considerations, social obligations
and ethical questions. Such a person becomes a part and parcel of his acquisitions at positions and shudders at the very thought of parting with them because he can't imagine living without them. In Fromm's own words:

In the having mode, there is no alive relationship between me and what I have. It and I have become things, and I have it because I have the force to make it mine. But there is also reverse relationship: it has me, because my sense of identity, i.e., of sanity, rests upon my having it (and as many things as possible). The having mode of existence is not established by an alive, productive process between subject and object; it makes things of both object and subject. The relationship is one of deadness, not aliveness.

A person who leads such a life in the having mode finds himself so enmeshed in his acquisitions that any thought of parting with them becomes a nightmarish experience. Such a thought produces immense anxiety, tension and insecurity in his mind that he begins to lose control over the coherence of his daily life activity. In Formm's words:

But most people find giving up their having orientation too difficult; any attempt to do so arouses their intense anxiety and feels like giving up all security, like being thrown in to the ocean when one does not know how to swim. They do not know that when they have given up the crutch of property, they can begin to use their own proper forces and walk by themselves. What holds them back is the illusion that they could not walk by themselves, that they would collapse if they were not supported by the things they have. They are like the child who is afraid that it will never be able to walk, after it has fallen the first time. But nature and human help prevent human beings from becoming cripples. Those who believe that they would collapse without losing the crutches of having also need some human help.

In such a state of mind, persons in the having mode of life fall slaves to the illusions of insecurity and therefore attempt to busy themselves by sticking to what ever they have, more firmly and strongly. They begin to lead joyless lives because of eternal danger to their being, the danger which they perceive to be imminent. So much so that they even run away from their primary bonds of life.
which are indispensable for all human beings to lead a productive and useful life. The relationships become stiff, hard and deadening because they view each relationship from the point of view of marketing orientation. The basic human instincts and urges vanish from their lives which make them alienated human beings not only in the sense that they become cut off from nature and natural relationships but they become morally alone also. It is because all along they had been leading their lives without any set of ideals, morals or ethics. Predominantly, ‘having’ relationships are heavy, burdened and filled with conflicts and jealousies. Fundamental elements in relation between individuals in the having mode of existence are competition, antagonism and fear. These antagonistic elements in the having relationship stem from its very nature. If having is the basis of his sense of identity because ‘I am what I have’, the wish to have more leads to the desire to have much, to have more, to have the most. In other words, greed is the natural outcome of having orientation. In addition to greed for fulfillment of physiological needs such as hunger that have definite satiation points due to physiology of the body, mental greed has no satiation points since its consummation does not fill the inner emptiness, boredom, loneliness and depression it is meant to overcome. With the result that persons in the having mode cease to feel the joy of life, success or achievement. It is the lack of joy that makes it necessary to seek ever new, ever more exciting pleasure. Moreover joy is the concomitant of productive activity. It is not peak experience which culminates and ends suddenly but rather a plateau, a feeling state that accompanies the productive expression of one’s essential human faculties. Joy is not the ecstatic fire of moment. It is a glow that accompanies the being. According to Fromm:

Pleasure and thrill are conducive to sadness after the so-called peak has been reached; for the thrill has been experienced, but the vessels have not grown. One’s inner powers have not increased. One has made the attempt to break through the boredom of unproductive activity and for a moment unified all one’s energies—except reason and love. One has attempted to become superhuman, without being human. One seems to have
succeeded to the moment of triumph, but the triumph is followed by deep sadness: because nothing has changed with oneself. 21

That way, howsoever hard a person in the 'having mode', may try to free himself from shackles which block his realisation of self, he fails to attain even an iota of freedom because he loses his self only to love his pseudo-self which is a self miles away from real perception of life. The more he struggles to become free, the more enslaved does he become and therefore the whole thesis turns out to be:

That man, the more he gains freedom in the sense of emerging from the original oneness with man and nature and the more he becomes an "individual", has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else to seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroy his freedom and the integrity of his individual self. 22

To sum up Fromm's basic thesis, it may well be said that a person in the having mode views everything from viewpoint of self-aggrandisement, self-glorification and self-benefit. In the process he ceases to remain human because he cuts himself from his primary bonds and primary emotions such as love, care, responsibility and concern for others. Very naturally such a person falls into the abyss of moral isolation which is natural concomitant of lack of meaningful ideals. He becomes a victim of anxiety, fear and insecurity. Instead of carrying on his search for freedom, after having overcome the impediments which have hitherto been blocking his self realisation, he creates new enemies to his freedom such as illusory living, moral depravities and pseudo-self and finally ending his life in his vain attempt to recapture the moments of old glory.

Seen in this context of Erich Fromm's concepts, Master Solness's search for freedom begins right from the moment when he wills that Aline's house should become a heap of ashes through fire. It is because the whole being of the Master Builder has been cast in the 'having mode', in which greed for money, fame and power have become dominant pursuits of his life. In the
having mode of existence, Master Builder’s relationship to the world is one of possessing and owning, one in which he wants to make everything and everybody his personal property. To him, this mode appears to be the most natural and the only acceptable mode of life, despite its being based on inauthentic and deadening relatedness to the world. Whatever he has gained through his exploitative and coercive methods, he wants to possess firmly and strongly and can’t dream of parting with that. He becomes rooted in the fixed clusters of thought, which his long spell in the having-mode of life have stored firmly in his mind and he wants to hold on to them. He feels upset and disturbed by new thoughts, new ideas about new subjects or issues because the new puts into question the sum of fixed information he has. Since having is the only mode of relatedness for him, new ideas that do not correspond to the fixed clusters of his mind are frightening. It is with this bent of mind that he views his relationship with Ragnar. When Ragnar wants to stand independently on his own feet, Master Solness simply disagrees with him and refuses to approve the new designs done by him. Thus Master Builder fails to develop a productive relationship with him. Instead of allowing his mind to be stimulated by Ragnar’s new ideas, he simply sticks to his guns stating that Ragnar is still a child and therefore unworthy of the tasks ahead. Master Builder simply shuts his eyes to the possibility that Ragnar may be having new ideas, new perspectives and new questions. He just does not want to indulge in the alive process of listening through active and productive responses. He views Ragnar not as a human being with his own inner urges, ambitions or cravings. Instead, he treats him as a commodity to be kept in the four walls of his house or as a cog which is a well-fitted in the machine of his own personal benefits. In his heart he knows that Ragnar’s services are of immense value to him not only because Ragnar draws the designs for him but also because Ragnar is the one who helps him in hiding his basic fatigue, lack of creative potency which has almost become non-existent due to the unproductive orientation of his life. When Ragnar tells him that the young couple, who wants the villa to be built out at Lovestrand, has been coming time and again to ask for the drawings,
Solness hides his inner impotence and dying creativity by projection, "Yes, yes! We know that they are prepared to make do with anything. Find themselves ... something to live. Any kind of place to move into, that's all. But not a home. No thank you! If that is how it is, let them go to somebody else. Tell them that the next time they come" (MB.p.359).

Such a harsh way of snubbing Ragnar has, in fact, not sprouted from his heart but out of his necessity and compulsion. Master Solness knows if Ragnar is encouraged and patted at the back by him for his proficiency, he is sure to run away from him, leaving him alone and helpless just as he had left Ragnar’s father in the lurch many years back. Despite telling his father that Ragnar has not really learnt anything worthwhile except how to draw, Solness offers to pay him more salary so that he stays on with him. Solness simply does not want to recall that once upon a time, when he himself worked under Knut Brovik, Ragnar’s father, he had left him to start on his own. Therefore, he adopts a multi-pronged strategy. On the one hand he tells Knut Brovik that Ragnar is yet to learn the niceties and intricacies of the profession, on the other, he offers him incentives. At the same time, when Brovik asks for Master Solness’s permission for Ragnar to build that villa at Lovestrand, Solness rejects it out rightly. He even refuses to have a look at the drawings, site plan and estimates which Ragnar has drawn after a lot of hard work. Instead of permitting Ragnar to go ahead with all his zeal, Solness describes labour of Ragnar as old fashioned rubbish he generally builds.

To Brovik’s revelation that the young couple at Lovestrand wants Solness to withdraw in Ragnar’s favour, his reaction is non-productive as it comes out of his anguish over his ever-waning creativity. He takes no time in rejecting the proposal, “It comes to same thing! (laughs bitterly) So that’s it! Halvard Solness - he’s to start backing down now, eh! Making way for younger men? Much younger men, may be? Just get out of the way! Out of the way!” (MB.p.362).

Solness tells Brovik very firmly, “But I am never going to back down! I will never
give way to any body ! Never of my own free will . Never in the world will I do that"(MB.p.363).

It is to be noted here that while dealing with Ragnar or his father Brovik, human aspect of relationship is completely missing. As the boss of Ragnar or Brovik, Solness should have given at least a patient hearing to Ragnar and his problems. The fact that he had sketched the drawings in Solness's absence, goes to his credit that while working under Solness, Ragnar has not wasted his time or frittered away the skills which Solness's office offers to both Ragnar and clients. After having a look at Ragnar's drawings, Solness should have tried to develop a productive relationship in the 'being mode' with Ragnar. And it would have helped Solness further in maintaining his supremacy as the Master Builder. But Solness can't come out of his phobia of the youth as well as his decaying mental powers and therefore, shuts the doors on him and his potentials. Far from uttering any word of encouragement which would have added to the joy and creativity to the emerging new relationship between Ragnar and him, he simply busies himself in finding out ways and means to curb the emergence of Ragnar as a convenient tool to promote his own self-interest, notwithstanding the fact that it is Ragnar and his father who work as grass-root designers in his office. Solness refuses to recognise the essential bond that binds Ragnar and Brovik together. Callously, Solness denies the father the joy of seeing his son doing something worthwhile during his life-time. For Solness, certification given to Ragnar would automatically mean like digging his own grave. That is the reason, he refuses to treat Ragnar and Brovik on human level. To all the entreaties of the father that he should at least be allowed the satisfaction that he has faith and confidence in the abilities of his son, Solness offers a firm refusal, "You must die as best as you can"(MB.p.363). And asks Ragnar to take his father home for rest. Going back to the employment history of Ragnar and Brovik, it is to be noted that the two were employed by Solness not out of any charitable consideration or sympathy as the old Brovik had become jobless then. Instead, Solness had
appointed them purely out of practical considerations. He tells Dr. Herdal that he had taken Ragnar and Brovik in his employment just after the old man had failed in his business. Since both of them were very clever and had abilities in their different ways they could be of immense value to him. While Brovik had lot of experience with him, Ragnar was extra-ordinarily clever at working stresses and strains and cubic contents and all that damned rigmarole. It is to harness the energies of the two for his self-interest that Solness had employed them. Therefore, the relationship between Solness and Ragnar or Brovik was born out of utilitarian requirements, allowing no scope for development of productive relationship.

Since, such an unproductive relationship has no scope for dynamism or growth, it is natural that it can break any time. And Ragnar, on his part finds himself sufficiently equipped with intricacies of his profession, his decision to quit the slavery of Solness is natural. The more Solness tries to curb Ragnar’s desire to branch out on his own, the stronger his wish becomes. And more over, he being emotionally attached to his father does feel that his father should die with the satisfaction of seeing his son standing firm on his feet. And yet he wants to take his own time while separating himself from Solnesss. May be, he is hoping against hope that Master Solness may some day agree to issue him the required certificate. That way, Ragnar wants to set himself free from the clutches of his master but not by breaking off unceremoniously as Solness had himself done. Even while being independent, he wants the relations to be cordial so that as and when he requires some help, he is able to go back to Solness without any hesitation. That is why Ragnar stops his father many times to take up the issue of his freedom in an abrupt manner. He shows an immense degree of patience.

On his part, Solness fully aware of his waning potentialities of mind and creativity, begins to realise the need of Ragnar more and more. Therefore he devises a number of strategies to keep Ragnar with him, solely with the
motives of maintaining his supremacy as Master Builder. He employs both positive and negative strategies like snubbing Ragnar one moment and offering him a hike in the salary the very next moment. He even tells him that time is not right yet and there is much more in store for him to learn to start on his own. His fear of Ragnar’s decision to quit his job is so true and gripping that the moment he finds a teenager Miss Kaza Fosli in a happy and jocund company of Ragnar, he at once gets jubilant and finds himself transported into an entirely new world of trance-like forgetfulness and offers a suitable job to Kaza. It is a piece of good luck to him when one day Kaza enters his office, Solness sees Kaza and Ragnar completely infatuated with each other and then utters quickly, “I had an idea: If I could somehow get her into the office here, maybe Ragnar stay too” (MB.p.371). But he never drops even the slightest hint of his plans about her at that time. Instead, he stands and looks at her wishing with all his soul that he wants her here. He makes one or two pleasant little remarks to her about one thing or the other and then the next very day, after Ragnar and Brovik had gone, she comes to him and acts as though she has come to some sort of arrangement with him and he wants to know what she will be doing in his office. Initially, he thinks that Kaza has come to Solness to be near Ragnar but after sometime she seemed to drift right away from him.

In fact Solness inspires such an awe in Kaza Fosli that the moment he goes near her, she starts shaking and trembling. So great is his influence on her that she begins to believe that Solness has spoken to her the things he had only wished for silently and inwardly. And things come to such a pass in their relationship that Kaza begins to think that she just can’t leave Solness or his service even if Ragnar asks her to do so. She has come to develop an occult relationship which binds her to him very tightly. It is very interesting that Solness develops and cultivates his relationship with Kaza again in the ‘having mode’. It is because he is quick to realise that he can use Kaza to promote his own interests. He makes Kaza feel that she is really wanted in his house. The more Kaza comes near Solness, the more she feels impressed by him. Solness
hides his real intentions but makes her feel that she is the one whom he was really looking for his office work which is badly suffering due to lack of a stenotypist-cum-personal secretary. In fact, the motive behind keeping Kaza in his employment is certainly not the dire need of her professional skills but the fact is that Ragnar will feel convenient and happy with Kaza around. He thinks that Ragnar will forget the idea of leaving Solness's service when Kaza offers him her lively company. Kaza will serve the important purpose of retaining the services of Ragnar. It is with this purpose in mind that Solness goads Kaza by giving her more importance than due to an office employee. On the one hand, he offers her more than required love and attention, on the other, he tells her that she should so manoeuvre that Ragnar stays on with him. On learning from Kaza that she has been engaged to Ragnar for four to five years, and now that Brovik and Ragnar want the marriage to finalise, Solness gets panicky. He at once plans that such a thing does not happen and if it is to happen, it must happen as per his plans. He attempts to win Kaza's sympathy by posing as a person who is essentially lonely in this world. He entreats before Kaza that she should not go and leave him alone. He entices Kaza and plays upon her feelings that she must not leave him and in case she has no option but to marry Ragnar, she must dissuade him from leaving his service, "Then see if you can't get Ragnar to drop these stupid ideas. Go and marry him as much as you like ... (changes his tune). Well, what I mean is - get him to stay on in this good job he's got with me. Because then I will be able to keep you too, Kaza dear" (MB.p.365). He even pampers Kaza by telling her that he can't do without her, he must have her near him every single day.

It is with such personal warmth he talks to Kaza that he makes her feel that she is indispensable for him whereas deep seated in his heart is his selfish, inner motive of retaining the services of Ragnar. Taking advantage of Kaza's innocent and naive nature, he produces in Kaza's heart such a feeling as makes her utter, "Oh how good you are to me! How incredibly good you are!"(MB.p.365). So much so that under his influence Kaza even toys with the
idea of breaking off her ties with Ragnar, if the latter does not agree to stay on 
in the service of Solness. So hypnotising is his influence over Kaza that she 
utters, “Yes rather that than ... I must ... I must stay here with you... I can’t 
leave you ! It is utterly ...utterly impossible”(MB.p.366). How big and 
overpowering is his influence over Kaza she can’t even suspect that it is out of 
purely selfish and practical considerations that Solness has been so kind and 
affectionate to her. That is why, at times, she appears to be drifting away from 
Ragnar. But there is the other side of the bruised psyche also because Solness 
has to struggle very hard to keep up appearances both before Kaza and also 
before his wife Aline along with her sympathisers like Dr. Herdal. It is no easy 
task for Solness to maintain his supremacy as Master Builder by means which 
are more or less foul. In this respect, Kaza is certainly not the one who can help 
Solness in any way other than Ragnar because unlike Hilde, Kaza is a goody-goody 
girl with all her youthful exuberance. She can, at best, provide some 
physical comfort to Solness. And yet under the circumstances Kaza is 
indispensable for him for obvious reasons. Even keeping Kaza in his office 
,after others are gone, is not an easy task. He has to tell lies before everybody 
that Kaza should stay for typing a letter etc., much to the chagrin of Aline. 
Therefore, once in a while, he feigns to share his agony with Dr. Herdal who is 
sure to talk such like matters to Aline Solness. Solness tells Dr. Herdal... “But 
now you see, it is becoming such a damned nuisance. Day after day I have to 
walk about here pretending ... And it’s not fair on her, poor thing. (Vehemently) 
But there is nothing else I can do! Because if she runs away from 
me... Then away goes Ragnar too” (MB.p.372).

Thus Kaza is nothing more than an object which serves a useful purpose 
of blocking the way of Ragnar to branch out on his own, away from Solness. 
And his refusal to issue a certificate to Ragnar should be seen in this context 
only. Therefore, Solness builds his relationship with Kaza, Ragnar and Brovik 
in the having mode, which is primarily exploitative in nature, i.e. eating that 
orange and throwing the peals away. It is more or less a confession before
Hilde when he tells her the reason why he has been refusing to sign the drawings done by Ragnar. He can't do so simply to please Ragnar's dying father because it was him he had once broken and smashed to make room for his own self. There is a lurking fear in his mind that once Ragnar settles independently, he will surely throw him in the dust, because Ragnar represents youth standing there ready to beat upon his door ready to finish off Master Builder Solness. There is yet another reason. In the words of Solness, "It's cost me enough already, this battle I have fought. Besides, I am afraid the helpers and the servants might not obey me any more... sooner or later retribution is inexorable" (MB.p.416).

It is out of inner phobias born out of his excessive application of having mode of life that he refuses to acknowledge the very humanness of Ragnar or his father. And finally, when Hilde comes to acquaint Solness with the 'being mode of life', he at once puts his signatures on the sketches and frees Ragnar from his grip. Regarding the being-mode of life, it will be worth while here to give a direct quote from Erich Fromm:

The mode of being has as its prerequisites: independence, freedom, and the presence of critical reason. Its fundamental characteristic is that of being active, not in the sense of outward activity, of busyness, but of inner activity, the productive use of our human powers. To be active means to give expression to one's faculties, talents, to the wealth of human gifts with which - though in varying degrees - every human being is endowed. It means to renew oneself, to grow, to flow out, to love, to transcend the prison of one's isolated ego, to be interested, to "list", to give. Yet none of these experiences can be fully expressed in words. The words are vessels that are filled with experience that overflows the vessels.23

No wonder, Kaza is released automatically because it is for Ragnar only that he valued her and for no other reason. He is frank enough to tell Kaza that from now he has no more use of Ragnar as well as for her also. In fact, in his relationship with Ragnar and others, instead of 'being an authority', Master Builder prefers to lead a life in the 'having mode' i.e. having an authority over
others. Instead of exerting rational authority which is based on competence, which helps a person who lives on it to grow, Master Builder believes in exerting irrational authority which is based on power and serves to exploit the person subjected to it. He fails to realise that when the qualities on which the authority rests, have disappeared or weakened, the authority itself ends. Master Solness is poles apart from the concept of being mode as enunciated by Walt Whitman in his "Song of Myself". Regarding the teacher-pupil relationship, whitman's vision is far more expansive than the shruken one of Master Builder. Whitman writes:

I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast,
Than my own proves the width of my own,
He most honors my style who learns
under it to destroy the teacher.  

Even Jung says that in the initial stages, relationship with the teacher is personalistic but there must be shift from the personal to the archetype. Guru ceases to be the teacher but becomes the pervasive principle. But all this essence is utterly greek to the Master Builder. That way Master Builder is miles away from being authority because being authority is grounded not only in individual's competence to fulfill certain social functions but equally so in the very essence of personality that has achieved a very high degree of growth and integration. Such persons radiate authority and do not have to give orders, threaten or bribe. They are highly developed individuals who demonstrate by what they are and not by what they do or say what human beings can be. Having an authority over others and being an authority are the two ways before each one of us to unite with others. Out of these two ways Solness chooses the one of domination rather than that of submission i.e. by having and exerting power over others, by making others a part of himself and thus transcending the individual existence by domination. The nature of such relatedness turns
out to be symbiotic. In such a situation, Solness loses his integrity and freedom as well as causes the same loss to others. The realisation of sadistic passion can never lead to freedom or satisfaction. The ultimate result of this passion is defeat. Master Solness, driven by the passion of domination actually becomes dependent on others. Instead of developing his own individual being, he is dependent on those whom he dominates. It is because he lacks the inner security which exists only on the pedestal of genuine affirmation. Instead of considering Ragnar as his assistant, he is afraid of him as his master. By refusing to sign the drawings of Ragnar, he is only keeping up the illusion of being the centre of the world and yet he is pervaded by an intense sense of insignificance and powerlessness. While dealing with Ragnar and Knut Brovik, his relationships with them assume an altogether different character. The concrete relationship of Master Builder to them has lost the direct human touch and has assumed the spirit of manipulation and instrumentality. He applies the rules of the market in the human relationships. Therefore, the relationship with Ragnar in reality becomes sadistic one, as it is born out of sheer lust for power and supremacy. In his book *The Fear of Freedom*, Erich Fromm sums up such a situation as:

To be sure, power over people is an expression of superior strength in purely material sense. If I have the power over another person to kill him, I am “stronger” than he is. But in a psychological sense, the lust for power is not rooted in strength but in weakness. It is the expression of the inability of the individual self to stand alone and live. It is the desperate attempt to gain secondary strength where genuine strength is lacking.

The ‘having mode’ way of life makes Solness exploitative not only in general social dealings but also on the level of nuclear family relationships. It is an open secret that as civilization advances, it destroys a large number of concepts, beliefs and rituals and even institutions. But one institution that has stood the test of time is the institution of family, although its form may have undergone drastic changes. It remains an established fact that man has always felt of the need of the family, i.e. wife, children whom one can call
one's own. This need has been described by various names by various psychologists. Fromm calls this need as the need for relatedness, Adler defines this need as the need to fill the gap which arises when a child grows and begins to drift away from physical dependence of the mother and yet he can't surmount the psychological dependence on the mother and others. Abraham Maslow views this need as a natural sprout of shift from basic needs to meta-needs. Even the great Indian Seer Shri Aurobindo dwells upon the need on the part of man to rise from physical vital to higher mental and even supra-mental. In this context, mother of the childhood days is substituted by what we call our life-partner or children in different roles. In other words, such a need refers to the significance of primary bonds in life. And the institution of family flourishes well if it is allowed to grow in the being-mode of life i.e. the mode in which each member is allowed freedom of action, thought and vocation according to one’s potential but at the same time well within the limits of socially acceptable norms. But Solness, being firmly rooted in the having mode, fails to develop creative or productive relations even in the family which is an institution to nurse and cradle an individual to much-needed comforts. Such is the inordinate ambition of the Master Builder to maintain his number one position that his relationships with his wife Aline and children become fragmented, stiffening and exploitative. Nowhere do we find any warmth of relationship which normally exists between husband and wife as parents of children. Solness, though married to Aline for a good number of years fails to perceive her as an independent human being or as his life partner who is always on toes to provide strength and succour to man by virtue of her being his wife. For him, she remains an object of exploitation despite the fact that she has mothered his two children, though for a short span of time. For him, Aline Solness is not the better-half but a person who has brought with her a huge ancestral house and landed property. Very soon, he begins to view her ancestral house as something which is going to transform his luck from an ordinary man to the one, known all over as a towering Master Builder. He sets his eyes on her house dreams and wills that someday the house may be reduced to ashes, much to
his gain because after the house is burnt to ashes, a large space will emerge on which he will be able to build houses for sale to claim that he is a Master Builder. So powerfully does he wish the house to be set on fire that he simply forgets that Aline's emotions are attached very firmly to it. After all, it is her paternal property in which she has spent her childhood with a number of memories. Rather Solness, turns a blind eye to such emotive aspect of the house and like other relationships, weaves a net of wishful dreams. Like all other relationships he views his relationships in the having-mode, in which Aline with all her property is a very handy object of exploitation at his hands. As in case of his wish that Kaza should stay on with him in his office, such is his wish and will in respect of the fire. Knowing fully well that there is a crack in the chimney which can be very fatal not only to his house but to his wife as well as children, Solness is so lost in his selfish goal that he turns a blind eye to it. Even when he thinks of repairing it, he simply can't go beyond the thought of repairing it. In his own words, "I thought about it...but never got any farther than that. Every time I thought I'd get on with it, a hand seemed to reach out and stop me. Not today I'd think. Tomorrow. So nothing ever got done" (MB.p.410).

He keeps on putting it off because it is through the little crack in the chimney he might make his way to success as builder. It is very exciting for him. Instead of bridging the gap, he rather wishes for something else. His dream of becoming Master Builder transports him to the world of wily crafts in which he wants everything to happen and yet he should appear innocent. He wills that everything should look so casual and abrupt that in case of any accusing finger raised at him, he is able to steer clear off the crime. He may not be afraid of any social accusation or stigma but he definitely wants Aline to be with him so that he is able to retain the trust of his family. During the times when he wishes and wills very strongly, he describes his mental state as, "Irresistible almost. Utterly irresistible. At that time the whole thing looked so simple, so trivial. I wanted it to happen in winter sometime. Just before dinner. I would be out for a drive in the sleigh with Aline. The people at home would
have had great fires going in the stoves” (MB.p.410). He visualises the entire scene of fire at once when he and Aline would be coming back after a walk as, “First the smoke. But when we reached the front gates, the whole of that wooden box would be a roaring mass of flames...That is how I wanted it to be...you see”(MB.p.410).

The occult dimension of Solness’s personality comes out when everything he wills comes out to be absolutely true. He shares with Hilde, “Don’t you believe too, Hilde that you find certain people have been singled out, specially chosen, gifted with the power and ability to want some thing, to will some thing...insistently...so ruthlessly that they inevitably get in the end? Don’t you believe that?”(MB.p.411). Incidentally, it so happens that the fire takes place exactly as he had willed. He ponders over the existence of the house as there was an old house up there that belonged to Aline’s mother. He and Aline had inherited that house along with the whole of that enormous garden. There was no tower on that house and it was a great ugly dark barn of a place to look at. But it was pretty cosy and comfortable inside. Not that he pulled the whole thing down but it burnt down. On the night of the fire his two sons were brought safely out of the house but Aline suffered a terrible shock. The alarm... The scramble... to get out...the pandemonium and the freezing night air...The children had to be carried out just as they were, both she and the children. Since, the trauma was a little too big for her, Aline started running fever and that affected her milk. While she insisted on breast feeding her children as it was her duty, so both the little children could not survive. It was a very hard experience for Solness but ten times harder for her. From the day he lost his sons, he never wanted to build another church and falls into a state in which he just cannot understand why such things in the world happen.

The whole incident of fire and the death of the children is such an unbearable shock that Aline never recovers from the fever but it is definitely an opening for Solness. It is a piece of good luck for him because the wide
spacious ground over which the house had stood once is readily available to him now to build houses for sale. However, to assuage the hurt psyche of Aline, Solness orders an enquiry to ascertain the cause of the fire and it comes out that it was not the crack in the chimney but some short-circuiting of fire near the cupboard. Apart from dwelling on the physical factors of fire, Solness attempts to transport Aline into the world of inescapable fate. And Solness then builds a new house for Aline, thinking that things will be better for her in the new house, little realising that there is going to be no impact on her. He thinks that she will find everything nice in new house because in her old house there were all sorts of things which reminded her of what was once her father's and mother's and that which was all burnt down and that was a dreadful blow to her but Mrs. Solness tells him, “Build as much as you will, Halvard, you can never build another real home for the me” (MB.p.393).

Thus, for Master Solness, the most significant relationships i.e. relationships with life-partner, with his children become subordinate to his personal interest which is to reign supreme as Master Builder. The ambition, no doubt, is Macbethian in nature and even the methods employed to achieve are more or less the same. It is from the king that Macbeth derived his sustenance, despite his being an able army general. Similarly it is the territory of trust between husband and wife that is to be preserved by both the partners and it is essentially that territory of trust that Solness has tried to usurp, intrude and destroy and that too, through foul means. Even if he is not directly responsible for fire, the fact remains that he has willed it and willed it so strongly and earnestly that the fire takes place exactly in the manner he has willed it. Therefore, his relationship with Aline, from now onwards, falls on crude rocks causing immense pain, anger and then sorrow to Aline. Such is her sorrow that almost on all the counts, she is reduced to a miserable wretch—-a mother without children in her lap, wife without the warmth of her husband's arms. There seems to be no recluse for her now, except that she begins to live the memories of her childhood days spent in the company of her parents, her
playthings and dolls but essentially in the grip of deep seated hypochondria, which no power on earth can bring her out from.

F.L. Lucas sums up her bruised psyche as:

When her old house burnt, with portraits and addresses of past generations, it was for her as if the very foundations of her own life had perished. She felt like an orphaned child. And yet though broken-hearted, she still persisted, with her fatal sense of duty, nursing her twin-boys, a few weeks old; but her milk had been affected and martyrs to her Moloch of a conscience -- the little ones died and yet even that loss pierced her less than the loss in the fire, of nine little dolls of her childhood -- that were like little unborn children under her heart.²⁰

It is Solness who has reduced her to such a state that now she looks thin and drawn, in her elegant black dress, of course retaining traces of her former beauty. Her body language speaks volumes of her inner sorrow which sometimes finds expression in slow plaintive voice. She spends her time in the company of one Dr. Herdal who appears to provide her some help. She silently bears agony and pain while living with Solnesss who is always busy in his own pursuits and relationships which, to him are of paramount importance. That way Solness causes her immense harm by striking at the very roots of Aline's personality and being, both in terms of burning of her house and death of her two small breast-feeding children. Erich Fromm in his book The Sane Society, describes the mental state of such a person as Aline:

If man loses his natural roots where is he and who is he? He would stand alone without a home; without roots; he couldn't bear the isolation and helplessness of his position. He would become insane. He can dispense with the natural roots only in so far as finds human roots and only after he has found them can he feel at home in this world.²⁷

There is yet another aspect which causes a lot of pain to Aline Solness and that is attention paid by Solness to Kaza Fosli. She is an eyesore for Aline but she just does not do anything. It is in Aline's physical presence that Solness spends most of his time with Kaza under one pretext or the other, like typing a
letter or asking her to persuade Ragnar not to leave his service. As a husband, he simply ignores the claims of a mother who has lost her children. On her part, Aline doubts Kaza Fosli and even asks for some searching and taunting questions because the relationship between Kaza and Solness was not to her liking especially her husband spending all day long with Kaza. But when Hilde Wangel, whom she has met earlier during one of her stays in some hilly resort, comes to her house, Aline finds in her a natural ally. She is able to share with Hilde her inner agony. During her sojourn in the hilly resort, Hilde had impressed Aline to such an extent that Aline invited her to her house. Therefore, when Hilde comes to her house, she wastes no time to welcome her. But as in case of Kaza, the needle of her suspicion does start moving when she learns that Solness knows Miss Wangel's first name even. Therefore, after night's sleep, the first question she asks Solness is, "Is it Miss Wangel you are sitting there thinking about?" (MB.p.392). However, she knows that before she opens up her heart before Hilde, it will take some time. Therefore, in the absence of any creative company, she starts spending her time watching the flowers in the garden, gossiping and sharing her thoughts with Dr. Wangel and in trying to find some thing or the other to keep herself busy. She involves herself fully in whatever she undertakes to keep herself busy because the emptiness is dreadful. The more she thinks of the loss of her house, associated with memories of father's and mother's articles, the gloomier she becomes. But the terrible blow that followed the fire, that is something she can never forget. So unbearable does that loss become that she develops a sense of guilt that she can't forgive herself because, "Yes because really I had two loyalties. One to you and one to children. I should have been hard. Not let the horror of it overwhelm me. Or grief either because my home was burnt down. (Wrings her hands) Oh, if only I could have, Halvard!" (MB.p.394).

In such a state of mind, she tells Solness, "This is no home, Halvard." (MB.p.394). That way she becomes totally withdrawn these last few years. She
even stops going to the garden where earlier she used to water the plants etc. She just does not visit that spot and there she does not know whether flowers are blooming in her garden. She just does not rush any more because it has become so remote that she is afraid to look at it again. In her own garden, she feels a stranger. This feeling of unrelatedness springs from the fact that:

Not like it was in mother's or father's day. They have taken such an awful lot of garden away, Miss Wangel. Do you know they split it all up and gone and built houses on it for a lot of strangers. People I don't even know. And they sit in their windows looking at me. (MB.p.423)

And to cap it all, Solness just does not share anything of the loss with Aline. Instead he talks about Aline's mental suffering with Hilde and avoids talking directly with Aline. Such circumstances produce in Aline's heart such feelings of being secluded, cut off and lonely that she feels, "That was an act of destiny. One must learn to accept such things and be thankful" (MB.p.424). She even begins to believe that it was punishment because she was not resolute enough in her misfortune. There is yet another aspect of Aline's sorrow and that is the feeling that small losses in life also cut deep into the heart. Losing things that people think nothing of, can also be very unbearable. She tells Hilde about these things:

Just little things like I said. All the old portraits on the walls were burnt. All the old silk dresses were burnt. Things that had been in the family for years. And all the mother's and grandmother's lace---that was burnt too. And even the jewels (sadly). And all the dolls (MB.p.425).

She advises Hilde not to laugh at her because, "In a way they too were living beings. You know I carried them under my heart. Like the little unborn children" (MB.p.425). Thus Solness is solely responsible for bringing Aline to such a state which can be described as hypochondria. Living by the memories of the past and living by the thoughts of irreparable losses, transport her to the state of mind where Aline begins to live like a child in the company of toys and
possessions. He becomes responsible for blocking her mental growth which could help her lead a fully productive life making use of her creative powers, rearing up her children in the best possible traditions. At one point Solness himself confesses that Aline, too, was builder in her own way and her building talents lay not in construction through brick and mortar but in building of human souls. But before such a realisation comes to Solness, he spends time in the most jubilant manner, planning and executing the designs to build houses both with and without towers for people to live and enjoy the warmth of closely living together. He makes full use of the space created out of the burnt house and usurps a major portion of the garden also to build houses for sale. It is then that he employs Knut Brovik and his son Ragnar to cope up with the growing demands of his new business deals and very shortly reigns as supreme Master Builder. Here it has to be stated that in all his relationships, Master builder fails to develop relatedness through love, which is the only passion which can satisfy man's need to unite himself with the world, while at the same time retaining a sense of integrity and individuality. According to Fromm, "Love is union with somebody or something, outside one self, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of ones own self." It is an experience of sharing, of communion, which permits the full unfolding of one's own inner activity. The experience of love does away with the illusions. But since Solness cannot develop love which integrates fully with others, he lives in illusions both about himself as well as about others. His relationship with others remains inactive, non-productive and therefore selfish, a sort of greedy concern for himself which springs from the lack of genuine love for himself. The love and concern which Solness shows for others is not at all productive because it does not include care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. In Fromm's words:

If I love, I care — that is I am actively concerned with other person's growth and happiness; I am not a spectator. I am responsible, that is, I respond to his needs, to those he can express and more so to those he can't or does not express. I respect him, that (according to the original meaning of re-
There is a complete failure on his part to relate productively with others — be that is outside society or his wife. Therefore, he may have become Master Builder in the eyes of the people but in his heart of hearts, he has become the master-destroyer. He destroys anything and everything if it helps in paving the way for his success as Master Builder. In fact, what is this destructiveness? Psychologically speaking, it is the outcome of unlived life. It, too, is rooted in unbearableness of individual powerlessness and isolation. Erich Fromm, in his book *The Fear of Freedom* throws light on destructiveness:

It would seem that the amount of destructiveness to be found in the individuals is proportionate to the amount to which expansiveness of life is curtailed. By this we do not refer to the individual frustration of this or that instinctive desire but to the thwarting of the whole life, the blockage of the spontaneity and expression of man's sensuous, emotional and intellectual capacities. Life has an inner dynamism of its own, it tends to grow to be expressed, to be lived. It seems that if this tendency is thwarted, the energy directed towards life undergoes a process of decomposition and changes into energies towards destruction.

But he does not go on with his phase of destructiveness for ever because he never forgets his ultimate goal. Therefore he begins by building churches with high towers. It is because he was brought up in a family of God-fearing people, which taught him that building churches was the worthiest thing to do. He builds humble little churches with such honesty, sincerity and devotion that God should have been pleased with him. But it comes out to be otherwise. Scornfully he utters:

He pleased with me! How can you say this, Hilde? He who has let loose the troll within me to rampage about as it will. He who bade them all be ready night and day to minister to me ... all these ... these devils of both kinds... (MB p.438).

Very soon Solness realises that God is not pleased with him because that is why he let the old house burn down. The crowning glory of his achievement as
Master Builder then comes out to be the feat of placing a wreath on the scaffold up at Lysanger, in the presence of a large number of men, women and children. Placing the wreath on the scaffold up on the tower is a very eventful happening. There is a band in the churchyard and hundreds of people have gathered. School girls dressed in white are holding flags in their hands. It is against this background that he climbs straight up the scaffolding right on the top and hangs the wreath on the top of the weather-cock. Undoubtedly, it is an exciting event as he stands right up at the top singing and his songs being to sound like harps in the air. Besides being the crowning hour of his life, it is also a turning point in the course of his life. Suddenly, a realisation dawns on him after he has built the church tower up at Lysanger. He tells Hilde:

You see Hilde, up there in a strange place where I had time to think, I was able to turn things over my mind. It was then I realised why He had taken my two children away from me. It was so that I should have nothing to cling to. No love, or happiness or anything like that, you see. I was to be a Master Builder and that was all. I was to spend my whole life building for Him. [Laughs] But that idea didn't come to much (MB.p.439).

The realisation that he has nothing to cling to, compels him to examine and scrutinise himself. And after doing the impossible, he realises that never before he was able to stand heights. He stands bewildered at his realisation and decides to break away from his chosen path of building churches. Like Dr. Faustus, he challenges God. In his own words:

And as I stood there on high, at the very top and as I hung the wreath on the weather cock, I spoke to him: Listen to me, Almighty one! From this day forward, I too will be free. A Master Builder free in his own field, as you are in Yours. Never again will I build churches for you. Only homes for people (MB.p.439).

Such is his fall and declension that he dares to sever his relationship and dependence on God. Instead of having a bit of introspection as to why things have come to such a pass, he basks in the glory of his temporal achievements and therefore shuts upon himself all doors of common-sense and morality.
Overwhelmed by the big public response, applause and ovation of the people who have seen Master Solness perform the impossible and breath-taking event of placing the wreath on the weather cock, he loses his sense of proportion and stoops to performing such acts as are unbecoming of a man of high stature. He falls for a small 10 years old girl who could well be his daughter and looks upon her as 'a little devil', lively as a little princess in her white dress.

When ten years old Hilde stands near him, he feels light and free and entices her by transporting her into a world of dreams. He tells her that when she grows up, she should be his princess. But she has to wait for ten years, after which he will come like a troll to carry her off to Spain or somewhere and even he will buy her a kingdom to be called a kingdom of Orangia. After making such a promise, he implants a number of kisses on her face, takes her into his arms and then leaves her free when other family members arrive there in the room. Thus, he makes her firmly believe that after ten years he will surely come and like a troll carry her off with him. She comes to believe if Solness can build the highest church tower in the world, surely he will be able to arrange some kind of kingdom or the other for her. Such a mean act with such a small girl speaks volumes of loss of his basic moralistic decency, especially when he has come to be accepted by society as a man who has achieved the greatest heights in his professional field. But his attitude towards the girl, when seen in the 'having-mode' of life, reveals a very interesting fact that it is only through this small girl that he has the first inkling of his fading physical potency. Instead of possessing her and taking along with him, he retraces his steps by making bright promises for the future. He gives her a span of long ten years when he will come back. Perhaps in his heart of hearts, he is sure about the question: who has seen the next ten years? It is the inadequacy of his physical strength that makes him sell the dream of future so that he is able to retain his image of towering personality. He knows fully well and he has seen with his own eyes how enthusiastic was that particular
child Hilde when she kept on flipping flags when he was at the height of tower, placing wreath on the weather cock. That Solness had become, at that time, a public celebrity was a very proud event both for the public at large and Hilde in particular. Such was his joy and elation that he needed someone with whom he could share his joy. Aline Solness was always there but how could he share his heart’s contents with her? It is on the heap of her burnt memories that he has built his huge empire. Whatever he has achieved—all his glory, name and fame, has been at the cost of losing his small innocent children and the essential vitality of his wife. Kaza was there but she was about to marry Ragnar and she does not suit his larger purpose of life. Moreover, Aline has become more or less a dead woman to him now with the result that he feels lonely with a growing sense of inner emptiness. He even becomes obsessive about the things which do not really exist. At times he appears to be sick, wavering and confused. Even his body language changes as he begins to view everybody with suspicion. One such person is Dr. Herdal, who he thinks has been planted by Mrs. Solness to have a reconnaissance of his activities. Whenever Dr. Herdal comes near him, Solness thinks that he has come snooping there to keep an eye on him on behalf of Aline, who in turn thinks that Solness is either ill or mad. When reminded by Dr. Herdal that Solness is one of the luckiest man on earth because first that fortress of a house went and burnt down. And it was a real piece of luck for him as prior to the fire, he was only a poor country lad. Soleness quickly pours out his inner fears. He tells Dr. Herdal that he is afraid of that very luck. McFarlane attributes such a compulsive outpouring of his feelings to the numbing realisation on the part of the Master Builder. He opines:

He is conscious of draining the energies of others and applying them to his own purposes; he is secretly filled with a sense of his own inadequacy, though he tries hard to conceal it; and with this growing awareness of the realities of the present, he sees even more clearly the way he has used, exploited, misapplied others in the past, especially his wife Aline. He torments himself with the reproach that his own creative life has been based on the destruction of Aline’s; that her vocation, her ‘talent for
building children’s souls’, lay like a charred heap of ashes and all in order that his own career could go marching on. His kind of creativity seems to demand the lives of others to feed on; imposes the severest sacrifices on others; leaves a trail of victims. And fears a terrible retribution. 31

His very position as a Master Builder now terrifies him because of the fear that some day that luck must change and this change is to be brought about by the youth. He has become a victim of his own growing fears about insecure future. He himself utters:

The turn is coming. I can sense it. I feel it getting nearer. Somebody or the other going to demand: make way for me. And then all others will come storming up, threatening and shouting. Get out of the way. Get out of the way! Yes, just you watch. Doctor! One of these days youth is going to come here beating on the door (MB p.375).

And in the event of such things happening, it would mean the end of the Master Builder Solness. Solness even tells Hilde that, of late, he has been so alone, staring at everything so utterly helpless, so terribly afraid of youth. And to overcome this fear, he has locked and barred himself in because he fears that youth will come here and beat on his door and force its way in. He even starts having dreams of falling down from a terribly high steeped cliff now and then and makes him feel as if his blood is running cold. Seen in the conceptual framework of Erich Fromm, a person in the having-mode believes in the permanence of youth and views old age as something depressingly horrible because the faculties of body and mind begin to fade. Such a person falls prey to bouts of hypochondria and terrible dreams. He sees himself as ‘a tattered coat upon a stick,’ to borrow a phrase from W.B. Yeats, devoid of youthful energy, fully enmeshed in the sterility of impotence. He fails to view his life and future with Browning’s Rabbi Ben Ezra who stands firm like a rock when he states:

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
Each string that bids not sit nor stand but go!
Be ours joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe! 32

The 'having mode' conditioning is in fact an anathema to all creativity because it does not enjoin upon its practitioner to take up cudgels against barriers to his self-realisation. Such a man stands poles apart from the place where W.B.Yeats stands in his "Sailing to Byzantium" or in his "An Acre of Grass." While in the "Sailing to Byzantium", 'an aged man is but a paltry thing 'yet he has the option to enter the world of intellect and spirit'. And if he is strong enough, he as in "An Acre of Grass", can still express his rage against all types of infirmities to experience the whole of life to "pierce the clouds" or to shake the dead in their shrouds'. The depressive state of mind and activities of Solness make Aline and Herdal consider Solness as sick, mad and even lunatic and therefore sometimes Solness has to assert that actually there is absolutely nothing wrong with him and yet guilt begins to engird his soul. Certain acts which he has committed in the past now loom large on his heart and soul. Out of his fears and obsessions, he feels as if he is cracking under the terrible burden of guilt. He tells Aline. "There is nothing behind it. I have never done you any wrong. Never knowingly, never deliberately, that is. And yet—I feel weighed down by a great crushing sense of guilt" (MB.p.396). And yet this sense of guilt stems from another factor, which again is of paramount importance to his psyche. No doubt, he is thankful to the fire for helping him to make his way to the top and yet he is not a happy man because he simply can't forget those two little children. They weigh very heavily on him. He says with great emphasis:

That fire and that alone, was the thing that gave me the chance to build homes. Warm, cheerful, comfortable homes, where fathers and mothers and their children could live together, secure and happy and feeling that it is good to be alive. And more than anything to belong to each other—in great things and in small (MB.p.405).
Therefore, his sadness stems from the fact that he cannot come out of that sense of loss. It is because his entire career has been built on infanticide. Perhaps, there is the beginning of a realisation that he has already become someone like a Moloch, besmeared with blood of his own children and tears of his wife. And the noise created by the band and bugles, beating of the drums and timbrels to worship Moloch so that the cries of the sacrificial children may go unheard, directly corresponds to the music produced at the time when he first placed the wreath on the scaffold. To be able to build homes for other people, he has to renounce any hope of having a home of his own, a home with children in the company of their father and mother. Such is his sense of loss that he thinks that things can never be brought to the normal because for a home, the essential requirement is the presence of the housewife, where as in his case Aline has already become a psychic wreck owing to her losses. Therefore, Master Builder's own achievements begin to terrify him. He tells Hilde in a low voice with inward emotion, "Mark well. What I am telling you. Everything I have managed to achieve, everything I have built and created...all the beauty and security, the comfort and the good cheer—all the magificence, even—(clenches his hands) oh, the very thought of it is terrible" (MB.p.406).

Such poignant and haunting thoughts occur to him because he feels that he has to make up for, pay for not in terms of money but in terms of human happiness, not with his own happiness but with others' also. That is the price his status as an artist has cost him and others. And every single day he has to stand by and watch the price being paid for anew, over and over again—endlessly. Such a state of mind produces in his heart a keen desire to have the warmth of the family and the lack of that warmth makes him feel obsessively guilty. In his own words:

Yes. Above all of Aline. You see Aline had her vocation in life too. Quite as much as I have mine. (His voice trembles) But her vocation had to be ruined...crushed...smashed to pieces...so that mine could go marching on to...some kind of victory. Because you know, Aline...had talent for building, too (MB.p.406).
And Aline’s talent lay not in building houses or towers or spires but in building souls so that they might grow straight and fine, nobly and beautifully formed to their full human stature. He regrets that now there is no earthly use of her talents because they are like a charred heap of ruins. In fact Aline, with all her talents is a product of being made. She has abundant creativity at her command to ennoble human souls. But her creativity stands marred by overly concentrated and possessive pursuits of Master Solness. Had Solness taken even an iota of her creativity, things would have been very different for him and the two together would surely have worked wonders.

Solness becomes at once introspective and a strange feeling engirds him. Despite his being not directly involved in the fire, a sense of guilt looms large on his face. After all, the troll in him had willed the fire to take place and it came to be true. And yet he tells Hilde that one does not achieve such great things alone. One has to have helpers and servants—if anything is to come out of it but they never come out of their own accord. One has to summon them imperiously, inwardly. If Knut Brovik had owned the house, it would never have burnt down quite so conveniently because he does not know how to call upon the helpers nor upon the servants either. Solness gives a full vent to his inner anguish, “You see Hilde—I am actually the one to blame for those two little boys having to pay for their lives. And perhaps I’m to blame too for Aline never becoming what she could and should have been. And what she most of all wanted to be”(MB pp.411-412). So deep in his anguish that he even makes a bold confession:

Who called on the helpers and servants? I did! And they came and did my bidding. (In rising excitement.) That is what people call being lucky. But let me tell you what that sort of luck feels like. It feels as if my breast were a great expanse of raw flesh. And these helpers and servants go flaying off skin from other people’s bodies to patch my wound. Yet the wound never heals... never! Oh, if only you knew how it sometimes burns and throbs (MB p.412).
Such is his inner grief and such are his limitations that he finds himself absolutely dismayed, defeated and broken under the grip of neurotic dementia. F.L. Lucas throws light on such a traumatic situation, with the help of abnormal psychology. He writes:

The human infant, waited on hand and foot by mother and nurse, appears regularly to develop in its early days a belief in the ‘All macht der Gedanken’ – the omnipotence of thoughts. Whatever it wants to happen, must happen. Normal persons are quickly cured of this delusion by running their heads against the ruthless stonewalls of reality. But with neurotics the delusion can, in certain ways, persist; as it did with Blake, for example. Thinking makes it so. And the persistence of this notion can lead to further neurosis, the form of irrational sense of guilt. For such a person, may for example, wish in exasperation that a parent, a brother or a sister would die. Perhaps it so happens that they do die. And then the wisher becomes tormented by a guilty, more or less unconscious feeling that his wish actually caused the death. In short, he is murderer. Then he may find neurotic ways of self-punishment.

Therefore, he does not share his inner predicament with Aline due to reasons best known to him. But as and when he makes any attempt to share something with her, she at once moves out to some other place to avoid him. She does not sit near him although it hurts him, yet he does not take it to heart because it gives him a feeling of self-punishment. This feeling is a kind of relief also. Because if he talks to her, she will be continuously reminded of her unbearable grief. It is a relief that he does not have to face her. Also it is a relief from another angle. After all, he is the husband of Aline and he does owe an explanation of his actions to his wife. Since he can’t afford to be very straight forward before her, he puts up a public face saying that, "Because I somehow ... enjoy the mortification of letting Aline do me an injustice" (MB.p.372) because it is like paying off a tiny instalment of a huge immeasurable debt to his wife. This feeling eases his mind and he can breathe more freely for a while.
Actually Solness has come to develop a very selfish vision of life which is based on personal development only. The way he treats his wife and children or a very closely related persons is a clear evidence of the fact that he regards primary ties as those which block his full development of his reason and critical capacities. He feels, if he is enmeshed in the family ties, he will not be able to realise himself as a human being while he may be recognised as a husband, a father or a member of his clan. Even Tantra also refers to primary ties blocking the full development of the individual but in this mundane world such ties provide not only security but also a place, a status and a sort of recognised definition of the individual. It is an established fact that the moment an individual attempts to sever his primary ties, he either becomes a saint in search for ‘Nirvana’ or becomes a deranged individual groping in the darkness of proplessness. The case of Christopher Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus is a point. As long as Faustus remains attached to his primary ties, his friends, family etc., he remains sane and sensible but the moment he severs his connections to merge himself completely in necromancy, he loses his coherence of life and becomes a petty juggler, a trickster or a conjurer. Life loses all meaning and purpose and therefore towards the end of his life, cries out most pathetically, though in vain:

Ah, pythagoras’ metem psychosis,
were that true,
This soul should fly from me and
I be changed unto some brutish beast: all beasts are happy
For when they die
Their souls are soon dissolved in elements:
But mine must live still to be plagued in hell. 34

Similar is the plight of Macbeth. He too, chops off the very tree from which he drew his strength and sustenance. He was, in fact, the closest confidant of the king. And the moment he severs himself from the king, he loses the grip over his life and spills immense bloodshed. He indulges in murder after murder only to realise that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing. In Aurobindonian terminology, living on the physical vital
or lower vital level is no good unless such level transcends itself to have interaction with psychic or higher mental. But Master Builder conveniently forgets that his identity with family gives him abundant individual security. He belongs to, he is rooted in a structuralised whole in which he has an unquestionable place. In the family, he may suffer from hunger or suppression but he does not suffer from the worst of pains—complete aloneness and doubt. In Erich Fromm’s words:

Primary bonds once severed cannot be mended. Once paradise is lost, man cannot return to it. There is only one possible productive solution for the relationship of individualised man in the world, "his active solidarity with all men and his spontaneous activity, love and work, which unites him again with the world, not by a primary ties but as a free and independent individual."  

But then this course of action is not possible for him because all along he has been treating human beings as commodities to be seen and dealt with only in the market oriented mode of life. He has been looking at everybody as an object only, worth-interacting if useful. Moreover, he has risen to such a tall position not through any set of positive ideas, moral principles or dictates of ethics. All along he has been believing in knocking others down by hook or by crook. And the same negative methods he wants to employ to retain his status as Master Builder. No doubt he claims to have become Master Builder but then it is of no avail as he does not act as a beacon light for others. All his life has been devoid of any productive meaning both for himself as well as for others. His position as the Master Builder has made him sit at a place where he has no companion, no equal, no peer. He becomes alienated and alone. It is this aloneness that he dreads and therefore, he cannot get rid of the old methods of subjugating others by force for his selfish ends. Even in an utterly religious environment, he breaks away from that environment for his petty gains, concentrating on his personal comforts and it is very natural for him to become a slave to illusions. In his new role and position as Master Builder he loses contact with reality to which he belonged. Therefore, to feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to
death. It must be mentioned here that relatedness to others is not identical with physical contact because an individual may be alone and yet he may be related to ideas, values or at least to social patterns that give him a feeling of communion and belonging. This lack of relatedness to values, symbols, patterns, we may call moral aloneness is as intolerable as physical aloneness or rather that physical aloneness becomes more intolerable if it implies moral aloneness. Such is the condition of the Master Builder. He has become alone both morally and spiritually. This spiritual aloneness can assume many forms – the kind of relatedness to the world may be trivial or noble but even being related to the basest pattern is immensely preferable to being alone. This compelling need to avoid moral isolation has been described very forcefully by Balzac in the passage from *The Inventor's Suffering*:

But learn one thing, impress it upon your mind which is still so malleable: Man has a horror for aloneness. And of all kinds of aloneness, moral aloneness is the most terrible. The first hermits lived with God, they inhabited the world which is most populated, the world of spirits. The first thought of man, be he is a leper or a prisoner, a sinner or an invalid is: to have a companion of his fate. In order to satisfy this drive which is life itself, he applies all his strength, all his power, the energy of his whole life. Would Satan have found companions without this overpowering craving? On this theme one could write a whole epic which would be the prologue to *Paradise Lost* because *Paradise Lost* is nothing but the apology of rebellion.  

Seen in the conceptual frame work of Erich Fromm, two courses are open for the Master Builder to come out of his myriad-headed aloneness. By one course he can progress to “positive freedom” by relating himself spontaneously to the world in love and work in the genuine expression of his emotional and intellectual capacities. By the other course he can give up his freedom by falling back after eliminating the gap that has arisen between him and the world. As for the expression of his intellectual capacities is concerned, here too, he suffers a series of setbacks. People have already started demanding explanations of Solness as to why he has been delaying the designs beyond the stipulated time. Also, Solness has realised that even his new chosen field of
building homes and houses is no more lucrative. He has realised that building homes for the people isn’t worth a brass-farthing because now people have no use for these homes of theirs. It does not help them to be happy. A realisation dawns on him that so far he has built just nothing. Desmond MacCarthy finds direct parallels between Ibsen’s personal life and Master Builder’s realisation. He feels that the play is nothing but a dramatised expression of Ibsen’s deep uneasiness born out of his conscience which was at war with itself. A direct quote from Mac Carthy is in order:

Had not he paid, and made others pay too great a price for his achievement as an artist? What was after all, this mission of him to which he had sacrificed everything? Fame was no consolation; For, though it is hard for the young to believe it, by the time a writer has won the esteem of mankind, mankind has usually lost it. And when Solness, the Master Builder looks back on his life’s work it seems of little worth. He had turned from building churches to building houses; as Ibsen himself had turned from writing Brand and Emperor and Galilean in which he hoped to reach some religious re-conciliation, to writing domestic dramas. Vanity, vanity, all had been vanity.  

But reading too much between Ibsen’s biography and Master Builder’s inner anguish will be to shift the focus on reducing the play to an autobiography. Master Builder is much more and much less than Ibsen himself in many respects. Therefore, to shift the focus on the textual Master Builder will be more rewarding. Thus on all these counts, Master Builder now stands as a deflated and dismayed individual, in dire need of some prop. Having-mode of life, which so far he has been living in, does not come to his rescue because of its exploitative, shrinking and self-centred nature. He has, now, seen the futility of possessing and exploiting whosoever and whatsoever comes before him. Such a style of life has made him isolated to such an extent that he becomes neurotic in strictly Adlerian sense. Adler fervently believed that human beings are social beings and must act and interact in socio-cultural context, motivated by innate social instincts which cause them to relinquish selfish gain for community gain. In other words, Adler strongly believed that after one has
achieved security and power, the shift must take place i.e. the individual must cooperate with and contribute to society’s goals represented by German neologism ‘Gemeinschaftsgefühl’. Stated differently, it is an innate human attitude towards life of giving and serving which is expressed in The Bible as it is more blessed to give than to receive.

However, the shift does not take place automatically overnight or all too suddenly. It needs to be consciously developed. It has to be nourished to fruition through proper guidance and training. And Adler observed that ability to engender ‘sub specie aeternitatis’ can be better realised by a person who feels comfortable with the three major tasks of life—occupation, friendship and love and marriage. This ability depends upon the ‘social interest’ which an individual develops during his life time. Adler himself defines this social interest as:

Social interest means... feeling with the whole, sub specie aeternitatis, under the aspect of eternity. It means a striving for a form of community... as it could be thought of if mankind had reached the goal of perfection. It is never a present-day community or society, nor a political or religious form. Rather the goal...would have to be a goal which signifies the ideal community of all humanity, the ultimate fulfillment of evolution.35

Master Solness needs some one’s help who can introduce him to some other mode of life, preferably being-mode which is conductive to healthy living. When Hilde Wangle, a girl with creative energy and robust conscience comes to his house, he is at once delighted but when he learns that she is the same whom he had promised a kingdom after making her princess, he at once withdraws. Despite her best efforts to remind him of her old productive relationship when she was barely 10 years old and when he did the impossible, he prefers to keep mum and opts for denying all that which happened between him and her at the time. He feels that he must have made her certain promises out of euphoric state of mind, without realising that one can’t remain at the top for all times to come. Moreover, Solness is already guilt-ridden and has experienced many fits of depression, therefore, does not want that Hilde should
show him the mirror by reminding him the old details. Still more, Solness now fully aware of his weaknesses and enervated state of body and mind, his first reaction is that he does not remember anything at all. But finding her a free, determined and fully-grown up girl, he does feel that she is the one who can come to his help by changing his thinking. The fact that she has come to his house without any bag and baggage or paraphernalia of her past is a strong indication of her freedom spirit and her search for a freer and fuller life. Hilde tells Master-builder that she has left the house of her father. The decision, no doubt was difficult, leaving her father's house was no easy but then her father's house was a cage while she herself was a forest bird and therefore, "A forest bird never wants a cage as it prefers to swoop through the empty sky upon its prey" (MB.p.429).

Therefore, she has taken this decision once and for all. No doubt, she has come to Master Builder for her promised kingdom. She tells him to build a castle for her because every kingdom has a castle. It is through his prolonged conversation that he learns that Hilde has a viking spirit and a robust conscience. She has no regrets to quit her father's house because, before her is the dream of tempting promised kingdom. Solness ascribes her inner urge and drive to leave everything behind to the presence of a troll in her, "There you are! There you are, Hilde! There is a troll in you too. Just as in me. And it is the troll in us that calls the powers outside. Then we have to give—whether we like it or not" (MB.p.413). But Hilde feels strongly if one has a really tough and vigorous conscience, devils dare not dictate. Hilde even tells Solness that she has read a good number of sagas about vikings who sailed to foreign lands and plundered and burned and killed and carried off women to hold them captive to take home with them in their ships. They behaved with them like the worst of trolls. Hilde regards such experiences as 'being-taken' very exciting. And these women never think of leaving them. Solness is so much impressed by her viking spirit that quickly describes her that she is like some wild forest bird and there may be more of the bird of prey in her. Solness showers a lot of
words of praise on her, "You are like early dawn. When I look at you, it is as though I were looking at the sun rise" (MB.p.415). Solness feels overjoyed to see Hilde wearing on her breast a bunch of small garden flowers. She has been walking up in the garden and is happy to see a large number of flowers because this is very unlike Aline who has forgotten to look at the flowers. And yet more joyous is to listen from Hilde’s lips that when Master Builder stood right at the very top of the tower, it was a marvellously exciting experience. It is out of this joyous state that when Hilde comes before him, he utters, "Ah! Now things look brighter" (MB.p.396) and frankly tells her that at least, he has somebody he can talk to. Thus the initial reluctance to recognise her and confess his relationship with her gives way to a new thinking that Hilde’s youthful energy, bounce and creativity of life may help him to restore his sense of proportion and balance. It is with this thinking that he comes closer to her and pours out his wounded heart before her. To him, she represents something as the very ‘essence of being’, a sort of anchor. The secrets which he has hidden close to his chest, come in quick succession to his lips to be shared with Hilde. He gives her fullest freedom to examine his life style and even his predicament, both by sharing and by making himself available before her. He acquaints Hilde even with his limitations. Hilde, on her part, is quick enough to understand that Master Builder has fallen a victim to such circumstances as are solely of his own making and even realises that he can’t be of much help to her. Therefore, at first, she identifies the problems facing him. The first one is that of Ragnar’s desire to leave Master Builder’s service. And then, of his wife who has become more or less a living corpse. And still more, Master Builder has his own past and its gripping impact on his mind and heart.

Regarding Ragnar, she understands his woes vis-a-vis Master Builder’s limitations. But she finds much weight in Ragnar’s arguments and comes to his rescue. She is bold enough to tell Master Builder his decision not to put a seal of approbation on Ragnar’s work is nasty, cruel and wicked. Although she is impressed by drawings made by Ragnar yet she doesn’t express her
satisfaction outrightly before Master Builder that Ragnar has done something worthwhile. Therefore, in the first instance, tells Master Builder, "Nobody but you should be allowed to build. You should do it all alone. Do everything yourself" (MB.p.400). At the same time, she can’t permit him to continue to behave and deal with others in such a frigid and cruel manner as he has been doing with Ragnar. In such a situation, he will not be able to give her the promised kingdom, she feels. Therefore, she comes closer to him and offers him her company more and more so that he becomes inclined and dependent upon her. No wonder, she succeeds in getting his signatures on Ragnar’s papers and assumes the responsibility of delivering the same to him. Since Hilde herself is strong votary of freedom and free play of imagination, she can’t let Master Builder become an impediment in the fulfilment of Kaza-Ragnar relationship. And yet another service she does to Ragnar. When Ragnar speaks out his venom against Master Builder over the subject how Solness had been behaving with his fiancee Kaza, she at once offers to set the record straight. Ragnar feels that Master Builder had been unfair both to Kaza and him. He tells Hilde that he had held him down year after year. He made his father lose his faith in his son. He even made Ragnar lose his faith in himself, for the simple reason that he wanted to keep Kaza. This he did by having a complete control over Kaza’s mind and by hypnotising her, took possession of all her thoughts.

But Hilde explains before Ragnar that it was not so. It was only to keep Ragnar in his service that he wanted to keep Kaza in his office. Thus Hilde frees Ragnar from Master Builder’s clutches and sees to it that Kaza and Ragnar are able to spend the rest of their life without any misunderstanding whatsoever. At the same time, she frees Master Builder from the dependence of Ragnar or Kaza. But there is yet another dimension as given out by Mrs. Aline about Solness, sending Kaza away. She tells that Master Builder has sent Kaza or Ragnar away only when Kaza’s place has been taken by Hilde. Had Hilde not come in Master Builder’s life, things would have been difficult.
The second major step that Hilde takes is to offer herself freely both to Aline as well as Solness so that she is able to free both of them from the crushing mental burden they are in. Within a very short span of time, she endears herself both to Aline and Master Builder to the extent that both of them start taking her into confidence. The things which Master Builder dare not discuss with anybody come quickly to his lips in Hilde's presence. His sense of guilt regarding burning of his house, loss of his children and even maltreatment of Aline, he shares with Hilde. He makes certain confessional statements regarding his conduct in the past vis-a-vis Aline and other persons who came in his contact. He even tells her how he lost his touch with human happiness and how his achievements as Master Builder come out to be bubble-like. But when he finds that Hilde has come to him with abundant faith in him and his potential, he at once decides to do what ever Hilde asks for. This may be the second course of action. Erich Fromm suggests that one may fall back to submit and give up his freedom to relate himself to the world by eliminating the gap that has arisen between him and the world. But his submission or surrender is not going to be an easy thing. After all, it has to have some frame of orientation. When Hilde learns about the agony of Aline from her own lips, she herself begins to feel guilty. This is despite her 'robust conscience' and bird-of-prey image. She feels, to borrow a phrase from F.L. Lucas, 'too pitiful to prey on the living-dead in the person of Aline'. Martin Lamm too, opines that after her moving meeting with Mrs. Solnees, she renounces the intention of using her claws against rather reserved Master Builder. On being told that Master Builder has been a down-to-earth, practical selfish brute who has not even spared his wife or children to further his own personal ends, she decides to leave him once and for all. Therefore, Hilde feels that she just can't stay there anymore. She at once comes out with the reason behind her decision to quit Solness's house, "I can't hurt some one I know! Can't take what belongs to her" (MB.p.428). For Master Builder, Hilde's decision is simply baffling but at the same time, it is well in accordance with the having mode. At this, Master Solness expresses his inner grief that life will become meaningless without her
but Hilde, at once, reminds that he has his duties towards his wife. But, for Solness responding to the call of duty towards Aline is a little too late because of the power of the devils. He confesses before Hilde, "Yes, the devils and the troll in me too. They have drained her of all her life blood. (Laughs despairingly) It was for my sake they did it! Yes! (Heavily) And now she is dead—on my account. And here I am chained alive to this dead woman" (MB.p.428). And it is out of wild anguish that he expresses his inability to respond to Hilde’s suggestion, "Me ---a man who cannot have a joyless life" (MB.p.428). Having realised this, Master Builder now thinks that he can’t and won’t be building any more, ‘No more happy homes. Seeing such a miserably, wretched state of Master Builder , Hilde feels the necessity of re-examining whether she herself will be able to get her kingdom of Orangia. After all, she has spent full ten years waiting for her promised kingdom and position as princess. But when she finds that Master Builder is now exactly the opposite of what she had seen him ten years ago. She drops the idea of asking for a kingdom. She becomes willing to settle for a castle only but with a condition, “My castle shall stand on high ground .Very high it must stand and open to all sides. So that I can see into the far , far distance. A tremendously high tower. And at the very top of the tower, there’s to be a balcony .And out up there I shall stand” (MB.p.432). Since Master Builder can no longer build anything concrete, therefore Hilde offers a fresh idea and that is her assistance to him. The two, she tells him, should together build the loveliest in the world and that is to build castles in the air because in the words of Hilde, “Yes, yes of course! Castles the air ---they are so easy to take refuge in. So easy to build to...[Looks scornfully at him] Particularly for Master Builders with... weak nerves” (MB.p.432). Such a proposal is immediately acceptable to Master Builder because,

Castles in the air are the residences not only of those who have finished their lives but of those who have not yet begun them. Another peculiarity of castles in the air is that they are so beautiful and so wonderful that human beings are not good enough to live in them: therefore when you look round you for somebody to live with you in your castle in the air, you find nobody glorious enough for that sanctuary. So you resort to the
most dangerous of all the varieties of idolization: the idolization of the person you are in love with; and you take him or her to live with you in your castle. And as imaginative young people, because they are young, have no illusions about youth, whilst old people, because they are old, have no illusions about age, elderly gentlemen very often idolize adolescent girls, and adolescent girls idolize elderly gentlemen.

It is through mutual idolisation that Master Solness and Hilde Wangel can enter the castles in the air. All along Solness has come nowhere near human happiness and therefore, he develops a notion that castles in the air may contain human happiness. When Hilde asks him to stand on high again, his first reaction is that he can't do anything like that everyday. But with Hilde, hand-in-hand, his phobia that his mind will reel before he reaches half way, vanishes. He tells Hilde that this time he will place the wreathe with a difference. Earlier he had dared God, this time he will say to Him, "Hear me, Great and Mighty Lord! Judge me as you will. But henceforth I shall build one thing only, quite the loveliest thing in the world" (MB.p.441).

Therefore, despite all his physical, mental and psychological limitations, he dares to climb the tower to place the wreath once again as he had done in the past up at Lysanger. Little does he understand that now there are no more servants or helpers at his command. There can still be a saving grace for him, if he makes even the slightest attempt to heed to what Aline says or even what Dr. Herdal feels. Even Ragnar feels, who has come to settle his old score with him, that Master Builder just can't repeat his performance because it is nature's justice. Ragnar is sure that Master Builder will be dizzy even before he has got half-way. He will have to crawl down again on his hands and knees. Mrs. Solness is too terrified to see him climbing. While for everyone who had gathered to see the event, it was a moment of blood-curdling silence, Hilde at once snatches white shawl from the Doctor and waves it about and shouts up. "Hurrah for the Master Builder" (MB.p.444). No wonder, the inevitable happens and Master Builder can be seen plunging down among the trees, dashed to pieces and is killed instantaneously. While for critics like G.B.Shaw, Master
Builder's climb is nothing but an act born out of delirious madness, yet the fact remains that this is the only choice left both before Hilde and the Master Builder. In Shaw's opinion:

He is a man no longer young, but healthy and vigorous, with closely cut curly hair, dark moustache, dark thick eye-brows, also he is daimonic, not sham daimonic like Molvik in *The Wild Duck*, but really daimonic, with luck, a star and mystic, "helpers and servers" who find the way through the maze of life for him. In short, a very fascinating man, whom nobody, himself least of all, could suspect of having shot his bolt and being already dead. Therefore, a man for whom a girl's castle in the air is a very dangerous place, as she may easily thrust upon him adventures that would tax the prime of an unexhausted man and are mere delirious madness for a spent one. 41

While Hilde has come all the way after weaving Penelope's web for ten years not to 'possess' a man with enervated nerves and bamboozled mind who is afraid of dizzy heights, she certainly can't carry the burden of the living dead on her body. Therefore, sending him high up, is nothing but an absolutely wise act. There can be no amusement as Shaw feels, in her killing the Master Builder. On the other hand, it is rather a service done to the Master Builder to make him a do or die attempt. What Mrs. Alving was afraid to offer her sick Oswald, Hilde has offered the same with sparkling intelligence. It is she who offers him the full dose of freedom. After all, both Hilde and the Master Builder had set very big ideals before themselves. But Hilde, when she first felt harps in the air, was a little too young to understand the full implication of those harps and therefore she can be exonerated of her inordinate ambition but when it comes to Master-Solness, we can't possibly sympathise with him. All along Master-Solness, like Brand, wills more than he can, always on his toes to respond to the troll-call in him. Therefore, there is no question of pain or sorrow at the tragic end of The Master Builder. Bardach's comments are appropriate in this context:
What each becomes, it seems to me is the complementary response to the troll-call in the other: minister and server to the most insistent demands of the romantic temperament, for an absolute satisfaction of man’s drive to freedom, ecstasy, timelessness and godhead. To yield to the implications of troll within, is to yield finally, to death—the only guarantee of absolute freedom, from entanglement in time and limitations of human possibility.

The tragedy of Master Solness must be looked at from occult perspective. Before this dimension is explored, it is important to realise that occult is a very vast, varied and multi-layered realm between the mundane, the material and the spiritual. This viewpoint of intermediacy is outlined by Sri Aurobindo in his *Future Poetry* while examining Coleridge’s supernatural world. In meditation too, one encounters this domain through certain breakdowns of schizophrenic kind. This realm intrudes and sometimes possesses a person. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

... there come presences and aweful shapes:  
Tremendous forms and faces mount dim steps  
And stare at times into his living-rooms,  
Or called up for a moment’s passionate work  
Lay a dire custom’s claim upon his heart:  
Aroused from sleep, they can be bound no more.  
Afflicting the daylight and alarming night,  
Invading at will his outer tenement  
The stark gloom’s grisly dire inhabitants  
Mounting into God’s light all light perturb.

Wilfully, Master Solness opens himself to the trolls, to derive strength to achieve, knowing fully well the trolls as disincarnated entities, are the spirits of warriors who persist in the will to death to enter Valhalla. He shares a secret relationship with the trolls with Hilde and is proud of the fact that he has become the Master Builder and not his colleague Knut Brovik, who if no more talented, was no less than him in architecture. In a word, Master Solness gloats over his connection.
Trolls, gnomes, genii constitute the lowest rung of the occult and in that, they are regarded as divine. For the distinction between the divine and anti-divine, one should turn to Sri Aurobindo for illuminating clarifications:

There are two kinds of Asuras- one kind were divine in their origin but have fallen from their divinity by self-will and opposition to the intention of the Divine: they are spoken of in the Hindu scriptures as the former or earlier gods; they can be converted and their conversion is indeed necessary for the ultimate purposes of the universe. But the ordinary Asura is not of this character, is not an evolutionary but a typal being and represents a fixed principle of the creation which does not evolve or change and is not intended to do so. These Asuras as also the other hostile beings, Rakshasas, Pishachas and others resemble the devils of the Christian tradition and oppose the divine intention and the evolutionary, purpose in them for which they exist which is evil, but have to be destroyed like the evil. The Asura and Rakshasas etc. do not belong to the earth, but to supernatural worlds; but they act upon the earth life and dispute the control of human life and character and action with the Gods. They are the powers of darkness combating the powers of light.

In terms of this quote, Master Builder belongs to the Assuric family of Rakshas, Pishachs. He is the power of darkness, combating the powers of light. The only way he could have sealed the trolls that he has given entry into himself is through prayer, not just building a church for his own magnification, through humility, love, devotion but he can enter the demesne through penance and mortification. That is the gate that the power-obsessed must go through. Even the thought of it does not occur to him despite his neurotic guilt which is condemned by psychologists such as Freud, Jung and Erich Fromm.

The vision that emerges in the respect of the search for freedom is the basic question, ‘How can one have freedom for one self while denying the same to the others?’ One can not be free by shutting all doors and windows through which warmth, joy, liveliness and creativity of life enters one’s life. Primary bonds are very important for realisation of true freedom because it is through
such bonds, one can grow and enjoy in a natural manner the fruition of one's innate potential. Instinct for self-preservation, self-glorification, self-advancement and even self-deification is innate to man but this instinct has to be satisfied in the larger, social, moral and even spiritual realms. Since Master Builder has become a Moloch himself, it is but natural for him to become blind to the basic human urges and cries which are indicative of human freedom. In his attempts to become free, therefore, he becomes enslaved to the new enemies of freedom. He lacks a positive and productive orientation of life and therefore he falls into pieces in his capacity not as Master Builder but as 'Master Destroyer'. Freedom can be realized not by severing relations with others but by uniting with others. Such is the new dimension which Ibsen has added in his search for freedom.

The purport of *The Master Builder* is basically simple for life-dynamics. The moral underscored in the play is that one has every right to self-affirmation, self-assertion and self-enlargement, for that is the push of life-urge. That is what Bergson, the great French philosopher, calls Elan Vital. But in one's pursuit of advancement, one should respect the relationship between right means and right ends. Secondly one should not enslave others, who be tied to one in family, profession or otherwise. One is not in the business of swallowing the space for others. Thirdly, in no circumstances, should one open oneself to the occult because the latter entices as it did Lady Mecbeth, Mecbeth and Dr. Faustus and kills one's self ultimately but in the process one has carried lots of people to perdition through no fault of their own.

In a word, power and freedom do not go together unless power is made to subserve higher ideals of truth and justice, unless power is made to subserve the evolutionary spiral of the world from the lower levels into the higher ends of finer and productive consciousness. On all these three counts, the Master Builder stands indicted irrespective of the spell he may cast on the ordinary mortals who are invariably impressed with the titanic more than the
divine. What is required in terms of freedom is enhancement, accentuation and amplification of human potentials through relatedness, rootedness, Wordworthian primal sympathy, creativity and productivity which fructifies in the lives of others and nourishes, to adopt a phrase from T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets*, the 'life of significant soil'. 
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p.539.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


20 Ibid., p. 89.

21 Ibid., p. 117.


23 Erich Fromm, To Have Or To Be, p. 88.


28 Ibid., p. 31.

29 Ibid., p. 33.

30 Erich Fromm, The Fear of Freedom, p. 158.


33 F.L. Lucas, p.255.


36 Ibid., p.16.

37 Desmond Mac Carthy, p. XIV.


41 Ibid., p.630.

42 Errol Durbach, pp.128-129.


44 The New Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. X throws light on the concept of Valhalla. In Norse mythology, it is the hall of slain warriors who live there blissfully under the leadership of the god Odin. Valhalla is depicted as a splendid palace roofed with shields, where the warriors feast on the flesh of a boar slaughtered daily and made whole again each evening. They drink liquor that flows from udders of a goat and their sport is to fight one another everyday. Thus, they will live until Ragnarok (Doomsday), when they will march out the 640 doors of the palace to fight at the side of Odin against the giants. When heroes fall in battle, it is said that Odin needs them to strengthen his forces for a Ragnarok. It is also very interesting that Ibsen has named Master Builder’s young student as Ragnar because it is from him that Master Builder dreads the most. In Norse mythology Ragnarok refers to the doom of the gods.
According to a prophecy, the end of the world would follow a severe ice age in which human civilization will be destroyed. After the fierce battle between the forces of evil and chaos, a new golden age would appear ruled by survivors of gods.