



# The Master Builder: Insecurity And Fall Of Ibsen's Tragic Hero

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Success with itself brings a lot of insecurities. This research paper is all about an insecure person i.e. the protagonist of one of Henrik Ibsen's plays *The Master Builder*, who is at the top of his professional career and in spite of having all the glory and fame he is facing issues related to insecurities from young talents on account of maintaining his top position in his field. The paper will cover the details about how a person himself creates his path of downfall and failure by attracting and entertaining unnecessary troubles in his life. Descriptive and qualitative method along with online research method has been used for the research work on the basis of which the paper will also discuss about how a normal and healthy man can reach the limit of madness due to his insecurities and can destroy everything he has achieved and not even think about his loved ones especially family members before doing that.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Builder, Fall, Young Talent

## Introduction:

To achieve what one wants in life is like a dream come true for everyone in this world. It takes so much effort and hard work along with luck and fortune; but not every person who achieves what he wants, has the ability to accept it as cycle of coming and passing it on to other when time comes. It is really difficult for any human being to maintain humanity after getting success and fame in life especially when they have got it through their art. The success starts getting into their head and makes them feel like it's only them to whom the world belongs to and revolves around, everything is about them and their work, that they are irreplaceable and no one in the world can change their time, but they forget that time itself changes everything, as and when required. When a person stays on top for a long time he is somewhere aware that the time to come down is nearer and this feeling turns into their insecurity because he doesn't want to fall or come down from the top position. This insecurity increases with time and turns in to kind of madness which leads the person to no where but selfishness and inhumanity. The same thing happens with Halvard Solness in Ibsen's *The Master Builder*.

*The Master Builder* is among Henrik Ibsen's twelve important and among his career's final stage plays. Published in 1892, *The Master Builder* is story of a top and glorified Master Builder Solness. He has such a strong position in society that he can make things happen the way he wishes to, but while making his such position in professional and social life he forgets to concentrate on his personal life and there comes a phase in his life where he is not able to share his feelings with anyone. The problem arises when Solness realises that now younger generation is ready to enter the field and he may lose his top position. His insecurity increases day by day and he tries to keep younger talents engaged by providing them employment under himself or by some other unkind way to secure his position of top architect. Ragnar is a young man who is working as draughtsman for Solness, also, he is son of Knut Brovik, former architect who once had appointed Solness under him but Solness started cheating him smartly and now Brovik with his son Ragnar and his niece Kaia (also Ragnar's fiancé) is working under Solness.

Ragnar is very talented man which increases the insecurity of Solness, to overcome which Solness always criticizes Ragnar's work and drawings to break his confidence on himself and Ragnar's image in his father's vision. One day a strange girl named Hilda Wangle visit him and convinces him that they have met ten years ago and Solness had promised her a kingdom with high towers in it. Initially Solness doesn't believe her but

soon he gets convinced with all her story because his insecurities have increased so much that he himself doubts his own memory. The control of Hilda is so strong on Solness's mind that he jumps a high tower on Hilda's instructions and with that fall he ends his life.

### Discussion:

Solness started his career from a scratch, he is not having any professional qualification of architect but he has worked as builder in past, he used to build tower of churches along with some small projects. He with his wife Aline lived in a house which belonged to his wife Aline. It was a small house which burnt in a fire accident, in which his wife was injured and due to her high fever, their twin son died. Though this accident took his sons but Solness consider it as door of fortune for himself as his professional status changed after it, he received so many works of building homes which brought him all the glory of the world and tremendous success in his career, because of which he is considered as the best architect. But as time passed he started getting insecure of new talents and one or the other way buried their bright future to maintain his top position. Likewise, he tries to ruin Ragnar's career with his criticism and by denying him to work as an individual architect; he refuses Brovik too to give Ragnar the work which Solness himself was not accepting and after knowing that the client liked Ragnar's work more than Solness's work, the fear of Solness increased even more.

BROVIK: They came to call upon you--and at the same time to ask whether you would mind retiring---

SOLNESS: [Angrily.] Retire? I?

BROVIK: In case you thought that Ragnar's drawings---

SOLNESS: I! Retire in favour of your son!

BROVIK: Retire from the agreement, they meant.

SOLNESS: Oh, it comes to the same thing. [Laughs angrily.] So that is it, is it? Halvard Solness is to see about retiring now! To make room for younger men! For the very youngest, perhaps! He must make room! Room! Room!

BROVIK: Why, good heavens! there is surely room for more than one single man--

SOLNESS: Oh, there's not so very much room to spare either. But, be that as it may--I will never retire! I will never give way to anybody! Never of my own free will. Never in this world will I do that!

He is insecure of the young generation about which he tries to discuss with Dr. Herdal. He has a fear that one day young generation will knock at his door and will turn his luck. He is so scared that he doesn't even want to believe his own luck and talent on the basis of which he has come so far in life. He hardly discusses anything with anyone but confesses his terror in front of Dr. Herdal while discussing about Aline's behaviour and her treatment.

DR. HERDAL: Afraid? Because you have the luck on your side!

SOLNESS: It terrifies me--terrifies me every hour of the day. For sooner or later the luck must turn, you see.

DR. HERDAL: Oh nonsense! What should make the luck turn?

SOLNESS: [With firm assurance.] The younger generation!

Solness's insecurity makes him do what one should not. He traps Kaia with his fake love, emotions and promises. With his such plan of action he wants to have control on Ragnar. Solness thinks that by trapping Kaia he can make Ragnar stay with him and that way he can stop him by working individually as Solness's competitor. He becomes so indulged in the thought process of maintaining his top position that he forgets about his family life and personal space with his wife Aline. After Hilda's arrival in the house Solness feels something different, he starts sharing his thoughts with Hilda and the thoughts reflect the mental instability of Solness which has arisen due to his insecurities. His mental instability is visible by the episode where Solness starts believing all the stories of Hilda without any proof or something and even wants to join Hilda in her future plans of building castles in the air.

SOLNESS: Yes, no doubt they are stupid. But now tell me what it is--the loveliest thing in the world--that we two are to build together?

HILDA: [Is silent a little while, then says with an indefinable expression in her eyes.] Castles in the air.

SOLNESS: Castles in the air?

HILDA:

[Nods.] Castles in the air, yes! Do you know what sort of thing a castle in the air is?

SOLNESS: It is the loveliest thing in the world, you say.

HILDA: [Rises with vehemence, and makes a gesture of repulsion with her hand.] Yes, to be sure it is!

Castles in the air--they are so easy to build, too--[looks scornfully at him] --especially for the builders who have a--a dizzy conscience.

SOLNESS: [Rises.] After this day we two will build together, Hilda.

HILDA: [With a half-dubious smile.] A real castle in the air?

SOLNESS: Yes. One with a firm foundation under it.

By believing all these meaning less things he gets fascinated with Hilda and follows every instruction of her. Without even thinking about his wife Aline and his fear of heights, he on Hilda's provocation climbs his new house tower to hang the wreath in spite of knowing he gets dizzy in such a height. Hilda wanted him to be free

like her so called last memory of meeting Solness in Lyngstrand but as expected by his wife Aline, he falls from the tower and dies.

### Conclusion:

Being terrified is one thing but in that terror using someone inappropriately and playing with people's emotion is not sign of a good human being and such inhumanity leads to nowhere but sad end. This is what happened with Solness, the tragic hero of Ibsen in *The Master Builder*. His fall from the tower is punishment for all his wrong deeds. The way he tries to manipulate Kaia and uses Ragnar and Kaia's relation against Ragnar's career is a result of his insecurities. Solness is not doing injustice with Ragnar but also with his father Brovik. Though at last on Hilda's suggestion he writes recommendation in Ragnar's drawing but that is of no use for Brovik as he is already unconscious and waiting to take his last breath. Had Solness done this before on Brovik's request, it could have let Brovik die peacefully. But the insecurities of Solness is so high on him that he does not realize it.

While being with outsiders all the time Solness does not care about his wife Aline. He does not even know the exact reason of her wife's depression. In act three of the play Solness confesses to Hilda that he tries to avoid communicating with his wife, which seems to be a weird act especially when one's partner is not well. Solness's insecurities have taken him into the world where no one is important for him except his position and success. He has achieved so much and have reached so high that he is not able to see anyone's pain, dreams, emotions from his position and he wants to maintain himself at that position; but at the same time, he is aware that if he loses his position from this height he will not exist anywhere. In the climax, Hilda's provocation to climb the tower represents Solness's drive for achieving success, the height of the tower represents his professional position in his career, his dizziness represents the insecurities which have turned him away from humanity and his fall from the tower due to his dizziness represents end of his professional career due to his insecurities.

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