

Boat building at Malpe in Udupi District of Karnataka - an alternate livelihood option

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Fishing is one of the major source of income for coastal dwellers. People of the coastal region depend on a wide spectrum of fishery related activities for alternate sources of livelihood. Boat-building is one such avocation, which can be traced back to very ancient times.

An attempt was made to survey the boat builders of Malpe Fisheries Harbour and to analyse how boat building forms an alternate source of income generation and livelihood. There are two boat building yards at Malpe, one near Malpe Fisheries Harbour and another at Angarkatte, 5 km from Malpe. The boat-building yard at Malpe is 35 years old and the technology of boat building is a traditional profession and is the monopoly of the Aachari community. The entire boat building activity is in the hands of the "Head Maestri" who has a supervisor and a group of labourers (up to 35 numbers) working under him. The different types of boats built here are, the single-day trawler (40-42 feet overall-length, OAL) of 63 HP, the multi-day trawler (52-60 feet OAL of 122 HP) and purse seiner (50-55 feet OAL of 122 HP). Once the Head Maestri receives the orders for a particular type of boat, he makes the sketch of the boat and necessary instructions are given to the



Fig. 1. A view of the boat building yard at Malpe

supervisors and group of labourers. The peak period of boat building is from August to May, when they are employed for 30 days in a month and the lean period of work is during June - July. During the lean period, they are engaged in other income generating activities such as painting and carpentry work in households.



Fig. 2. A multi-day deepsea trawler under construction at the boat building yard, Malpe

Usually a group headed by one maestri, one supervisor and ten labourers work for 10 h per day and build a single-day/multi-day trawler within a period of 2 months. The timings of work are from 0800 hrs to 1800 hrs. The wage per day for the maestri is ₹ 300 for the supervisor and for the labourer it is ₹ 250 each. The cost of wood, labour, provision for food and boat-building items such as fibre material, fans, copper nails, sawing machine and paints are borne by the boat owner. The cost of building one multi-day trawler inclusive of material cost and labour cost works out to ₹ 20 lakhs, that of single day trawler ₹ 8-10 lakhs and ₹ 18-20 lakhs for a purse seiner.

Annual earnings of a Maestri from boat building = ₹ 300 x 30days x10 months = ₹ 90,000/-

Annual earnings of a supervisor from boat building = ₹ 250 x 30days x 10months = ₹ 75,000/-

Annual earnings of a labourer from boat building = ₹ 250 x 30days x 10 months = ₹ 75,000/-

The boat builders (maestri, supervisors and labourers) avail medical insurance facilities since they encounter causalities of falling from heights in the

yard, injuries caused by handling heavy logs, sawing machines *etc.* The ground space for the boat-building yard at Malpe has been leased out by the harbour authorities to the maestris @ ₹ 2,500 /year. The architects of these boats, deserve a special place in the socio-economic arena of the coastal society in particular and the community in general.