

Chapter 4

Conclusions and future scope

4. Conclusions and Future Scope

The conclusions of the entire thesis work along with some suggested scopes for future studies have been presented here.

4.1 Conclusions

Fluoride removal from groundwater and industrial wastewater using limestone has been investigated by many researchers. Though limestone can precipitate and adsorb fluoride up to some extent, it requires a long treatment time due to the slow dissolution of limestone in water which gives a poor fluoride removal capacity of limestone²⁴⁶. Fluoride removal efficiency of limestone can be enhanced by adding acid or by passing CO₂ through limestone column during the treatment process^{246, 247}. In the present work, the author has chosen PA in the limestone treatment process in order to increase the fluoride removal capacity of the limestone. The study has been carried out in five stages, *viz.*, fluoride removal by limestone powder in presence of PA, hydrothermal modification of limestone powder in presence of PA and fluoride removal by the modified materials, fluoride removal by PA-crushed limestone treatment (PACLT) in continuous-flow mode, a laboratory-scale pilot test of fluoride removal by PACLT in plug-flow mode and a field trial of fluoride removal by PACLT in plug-flow mode at fluoride affected villages. The main findings of the work described in the thesis are mentioned below.

4.1.1 Fluoride removal by limestone powder in presence of PA

- Addition of PA to fluoride containing water increases the fluoride removal by limestone powder. About 92% of fluoride can be removed from initial 5 mg/L [F⁻] in presence of 0.10 M initial [PA].
- The fluoride removal increases with increase in contact time and reaches equilibrium at 3 h.
- The final pH of water by this method is found to be within the range of 6.00-6.50. The added PA is neutralized due to reaction with limestone powder.
- The kinetics of fluoride adsorption follows pseudo-second order kinetics. The kinetics of the fluoride removal by the present method fits to various models in

the order: pseudo second-order > pseudo first-order > Elovich > intra-particle diffusion.

- The fluoride removal in the present method conforms to sorption of fluoride by the adsorbent. The sorption fits to various adsorption isotherms in the order: Temkin > Freundlich > D-R > Langmuir.
- It has been suggested that the fluoride sorption occurs on HAP formed due to the reaction between PA and limestone powder.
- The best fit with the Temkin model indicates that sorption of fluoride takes place through ion-exchange between OH^- of HAP and F^- ions.
- The adsorption of fluoride on limestone powder in presence of PA takes place through physisorption as indicated by better fitting of the Freundlich model than the Langmuir model.
- The maximum monolayer adsorption capacity of limestone has been found as 4.38 mg F^-/g which is higher than the reported value for limestone alone¹⁰⁷.
- The fluoride removal by limestone powder in presence of PA is a spontaneous, endothermic and irreversible process.

4.1.2 Fluoride removal by hydrothermally modified limestone powder using PA

- HAP is formed in the hydrothermal modification of limestone powder in presence of PA. Maximum fluoride removal has been obtained by using the modified limestone modified using 0.90M PA, M9. About 93% fluoride removal from 150 mL of 10 mg/L fluoride containing water has been achieved with 0.5 g the modified material M9.
- The adsorption of fluoride on modified limestone follows the pseudo-second order kinetics.
- The various isotherm models for fluoride adsorption on modified limestone powder reveals that fluoride adsorption takes place through exchange of OH^- ions of HAP by F^- . The adsorption of fluoride in the process is physisorption.
- The maximum fluoride adsorption capacity of M9 sample, calculated from Langmuir isotherm model has been found as 6.45 mg/g.
- The fluoride loaded-adsorbent can be regenerated by alkali treatment.

- The present fluoride adsorption process is spontaneous, endothermic and irreversible.

4.1.3 Fluoride removal by phosphoric acid-crushed limestone treatment in continuous-flow mode

- The phosphoric acid-crushed limestone treatment (PACLT) in continuous-flow mode can remove fluoride from initial 5-10 mg/L $[F^-]$ to 0.1-1.5 mg/L in presence of 0.01, 0.03 and 0.05 M $[PA]_0$ at the flow rate of 100 mL/h.
- Fluoride removal has been found to increase with increase in $[PA]_0$.
- The breakthrough occurs sooner on increasing the flow rate from 100 mL/h to 300 mL/h.
- The pH of the effluent water has been found to be in the range of 6.5-5.2.
- The effect of co-existing ions has little effect on fluoride removal by this method.
- Both precipitation of calcium fluoride and sorption of fluoride on HAP, produced in situ in the process, contribute to the fluoride removal. However, the saturation index of fluorite suggests that the sorption is the dominant mechanism.
- The relevant water quality parameters of effluent water remain within the WHO guideline values/acceptable range.
- Treatment of the exhausted limestone by NaOH shows about 73% regeneration of activity.
- The actual fluoride removal capacity of limestone has been estimated as 3.84 mg/g.
- The recurring cost of the present method has been estimated as INR 0.03 (US\$ 0.00041) per litre of treated water.

4.1.4. Fluoride removal by phosphoric acid-crushed limestone treatment: A laboratory pilot test

- The present PACLT in laboratory-scale pilot experiment of the PACLT in plug-flow mode of influent fluoride-containing water pre-mixed with PA efficiently removes fluoride from water. Fluoride can be removed from an initial concentration of 10 mg/L to about 0.01-0.10 mg/L in a residence time of 3 h with 0.01 M $[PA]_0$.

- The exhausted limestone regenerated by simply scrubbing and rinsing with water and by $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and NaOH treatment shows about 50% regeneration of activity towards fluoride removal.
- The results of the analysis of the relevant water quality parameters of the treated water shows that treated water is safe for drinking.
- The presence of competing ions, viz., NO_3^- , Cl^- , Br^- and SO_4^{2-} ions has little effect in the present method.
- The present method is efficient, safe and has an advantage as it does not involve any sophisticated or energy-intensive technology.

4.1.5. Field study of fluoride removal by phosphoric acid-crushed limestone treatment: *Fluoride Nilogon*

- The field trial has shown the PACLT in plug-flow mode (*Fluoride Nilogon*) to be an excellent and consistent fluoride removal technique at domestic and small community level.
- The method removes fluoride from initial 2.8-20 mg/L to 0.5-0.8 mg/L with a dose of just 0.68 mM PA. The removal is almost independent of initial fluoride concentration.
- In this method, the precipitation rapidly brings down the fluoride concentration from any high level up to at least 20 mg/L to a moderate level of 1-2 mg/L controlled by solubility product, thereafter sorption removes the rest fluoride to finally give the desired 0.5-0.8 mg/L in the effluent water.
- The relevant water quality parameters after treatment remain within the WHO guideline values for drinking water. The pH of the treated water also remains within the range of 7.4-7.8 which is in the middle of the acceptable range for drinking water, i.e., 6.5-8.5.
- The pre-assessment with the replica test gave 83 L of treated fluoride-free water per kg of crushed limestone but the field small community unit has been giving more treated water than that. The regenerated limestone shows almost 45% and 57% activity using simple scrubbing-rinsing and lime solution treatment, respectively, as found from the replica test. There is no need for frequent replacement or replenishment of limestone in the units.

- The actual fluoride removal capacity of limestone in the PACLT in plug-flow mode has been found to be 1.20 mg/g from the pre-assessment experiment with the replica unit. The recurring cost of the PACLT method including the costs of limestone and PA has been estimated to be INR 0.016 (US\$ 0.00023) per liter of water.
- The acceptance of the method by the rural users and the ability of the rural people to use the method shows its simplicity of the method which can be operated without electricity.
- The field trial has clearly proven the PACLT in plug-flow mode method as an efficient, low-cost, safe, environment-friendly and user-friendly method suitable for rural applications in fluoride affected areas.

4.2 Future scope

After carrying out the work described in this thesis, some more related interesting things as mentioned below appear which need to be addressed.

- The pH of keeps changing during fluoride removal in the reactor in PACLT due to the continuously changing concentration of PA. Study of the detailed mechanism of fluoride removal as a function of time and pH will be interesting considering the excellent fluoride removal by the method.
- The author has noticed variations in fluoride removal performance in PACLT of limestone collected from different sources. A detail study of performance of limestone of different sources with respect to their exact composition and physical properties will be useful.
- Field trial of the PACLT in plug-flow mode for large community piped drinking water schemes and developing automated device for domestic use of the PACLT in plug-flow mode will be interesting.
- Excess fluoride in agricultural water is known affect crops. A field trial of the PACLT in plug-flow mode for agricultural use in large scale may be carried out.
- The PACLT in continuous-flow mode has also been found to have potential for application. Further application oriented works on the PACLT in continuous-flow mode may be worthwhile.

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