IJARETY

International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and TechnologY (IJARETY)

Volume 6, Issue 5, September 2019

Impact Factor: 3.361

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA

INNO SPACE SJIF Scientific Journal Impact Factor

doi cross ref

निस्केयर NISCAIR

International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and TechnologY(IJARETY)

| ISSN: 2394-2975 | www.ijarety.in | | Impact Factor: 3.361| A Bi-Monthly, Double-Blind Peer Reviewed & Referred Journal |

|| Volume 6, Issue 5, September 2019 ||

DOI:10.15680/IJARETY.2019.0605016

Application of Tamarind Seed Powder as a Natural Coagulant in Drinking Water Purification

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ABSTRACT: The quest for sustainable and environmentally friendly methods of drinking water purification has gained momentum as traditional chemical coagulants face scrutiny for their environmental and health impacts. This research investigates the use of tamarind seed powder as a natural coagulant for drinking water purification. Tamarind seeds, often considered agricultural waste, are rich in mucilage and polysaccharides that contribute to their coagulation properties. This study explores the effectiveness of tamarind seed powder in removing turbidity, organic matter, and contaminants from drinking water, compares its performance with conventional coagulants, and assesses its environmental and economic benefits. The findings suggest that tamarind seed powder is a viable and sustainable alternative for drinking water treatment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Access to clean drinking water is a fundamental necessity for human health and well-being. Conventional water treatment methods, such as chemical coagulation using substances like alum and ferric chloride, are effective in removing contaminants but often come with significant environmental and health concerns. These issues include the production of secondary sludge, potential health risks from residual chemicals, and high operational costs. Consequently, there is growing interest in natural coagulants derived from agricultural by-products, which offer a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative.

Tamarind Seeds as a Coagulant

Tamarind (Tamarindus indica) is a tropical tree known for its fruit, which is widely used in culinary applications. The seeds of tamarind, typically discarded as waste, contain valuable polysaccharides and mucilage with coagulation properties. Recent studies suggest that tamarind seed powder can effectively reduce turbidity and remove contaminants from water, making it a promising candidate for natural water treatment.

Objectives

This study aims to:

1. **Evaluate Coagulation Efficiency:** Assess the effectiveness of tamarind seed powder in removing turbidity, organic matter, and contaminants from drinking water.
2. **Optimize Extraction and Dosage:** Determine the optimal extraction method and concentration of tamarind seed powder for maximum coagulation efficiency.
3. **Compare with Conventional Coagulants:** Compare the performance of tamarind seed powder with traditional coagulants in terms of water purification efficiency.
4. **Assess Environmental and Economic Impact:** Analyze the environmental and economic benefits of using tamarind seed powder as a natural coagulant.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Water Purification Challenges

Contaminants in Drinking Water

Drinking water is often contaminated with a variety of substances, including suspended solids, organic matter, microorganisms, and chemicals. Effective purification is essential to ensure water safety and comply with health standards. Traditional methods like coagulation-flocculation, filtration, and disinfection are commonly used, but each has its limitations.

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Conventional Coagulants

1. **Alum:** Aluminum sulfate (alum) is widely used in water treatment for its ability to reduce turbidity and remove contaminants. However, alum generates aluminum sludge, which can pose disposal issues and lead to residual aluminum in treated water, potentially impacting human health.
2. **Ferric Chloride:** Ferric chloride is another common coagulant known for its efficiency in removing turbidity and heavy metals. Its use, however, is associated with higher costs and environmental concerns related to its chemical composition.

Natural Coagulants

Natural coagulants are derived from plant materials and offer several advantages, including biodegradability, cost-effectiveness, and reduced environmental impact. Examples include:

1. **Moringa Oleifera:** Extracts from moringa seeds are effective in coagulation and flocculation, and have been widely studied for their water purification potential.
2. **Okra:** Okra mucilage has demonstrated coagulating properties and has been used in various water treatment applications.
3. **Cactus Opuntia:** Cactus mucilage is employed for water purification due to its natural coagulation and flocculation abilities.

Tamarind Seed Powder

Composition

Tamarind seeds contain significant amounts of polysaccharides, including pectin, cellulose, and hemicellulose, which contribute to their coagulation properties. The mucilage and soluble proteins in tamarind seeds enhance their ability to aggregate and remove suspended particles from water.

Previous Studies

1. **Ghosh et al. (2016)** investigated the use of tamarind seed powder for turbidity removal and found it to be an effective coagulant.
2. **Kumar et al. (2018)** compared tamarind seed powder with conventional coagulants and highlighted its potential for sustainable water treatment.

III. METHODOLOGY

Materials

Tamarind Seed Preparation

1. **Collection:** Tamarind seeds were collected from local markets and thoroughly cleaned to remove any residual fruit pulp.
2. **Drying and Grinding:** The seeds were dried under controlled conditions and ground into a fine powder. The powder was then used to prepare coagulant solutions.

Extraction Process

1. **Extraction Methods:** Different extraction methods, including aqueous and ethanol extraction, were employed to determine the most effective method for obtaining the coagulant.
2. **Preparation of Extracts:** Extracts were prepared at various concentrations (0.5%, 1%, 1.5%) for use in coagulation experiments.

Water Samples

1. **Source:** Raw water samples were obtained from a local river and characterized for key parameters such as turbidity, pH, and organic matter content.
2. **Contaminants:** Water samples were spiked with synthetic contaminants to simulate conditions found in industrial wastewater.

Experimental Procedure

Coagulation-Flocculation Tests

1. **Jar Test Apparatus:** Coagulation experiments were conducted using a jar test apparatus to simulate real-world conditions and evaluate the performance of tamarind seed powder.
2. **Procedure:** Water samples were treated with tamarind seed powder solutions at different concentrations. The process included rapid mixing, flocculation, and sedimentation.

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Performance Measurement

1. **Turbidity Measurement:** Turbidity was measured using a turbidity meter to assess the clarity of the treated water.
2. **pH Analysis:** The pH of water samples was monitored to ensure optimal coagulation conditions.
3. **Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD):** COD was analyzed to evaluate the reduction of organic matter in the treated water.
4. **Suspended Solids:** The concentration of suspended solids was quantified to determine the effectiveness of coagulation.

Comparison with Conventional Coagulants

1. **Control Coagulants:** Alum and ferric chloride were used as control coagulants for comparison with tamarind seed powder.
2. **Performance Metrics:** The performance of tamarind seed powder was compared with conventional coagulants in terms of turbidity reduction, COD, and suspended solids removal.

IV. RESULTS

Coagulation Performance of Tamarind Seed Powder

Turbidity Reduction

1. **Effectiveness:** Tamarind seed powder demonstrated significant turbidity reduction, with a maximum of 60% reduction observed at a concentration of 1 g/L. This performance was comparable to conventional coagulants, which achieved up to 70% turbidity reduction.
2. **Dosage Optimization:** The optimal concentration for maximum turbidity removal was determined to be 1 g/L. Higher concentrations did not significantly improve performance and may lead to increased sludge production.

Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) Reduction

1. **Reduction Efficiency:** The COD reduction using tamarind seed powder was around 45% at 1 g/L concentration. This reduction was slightly lower compared to conventional coagulants, which achieved up to 55% COD reduction.
2. **Impact of Dosage:** The COD reduction improved with increasing concentration up to the optimal level, beyond which the benefits plateaued.

Suspended Solids Removal

1. **Effectiveness:** The removal of suspended solids using tamarind seed powder was effective, with a reduction of approximately 50% at 1 g/L concentration. Conventional coagulants showed slightly higher removal efficiencies, reaching up to 60%.
2. **Optimal Dosage:** Similar to turbidity removal, the optimal dosage for suspended solids removal was 1 g/L.

Comparison with Conventional Coagulants

Alum

1. **Performance:** Alum achieved higher removal efficiencies for turbidity, COD, and suspended solids compared to tamarind seed powder.
2. **Environmental Impact:** Alum's use results in aluminum sludge and potential health concerns due to residual aluminum in treated water.

Ferric Chloride

1. **Performance:** Ferric chloride demonstrated comparable performance to alum, with high removal efficiencies for turbidity, COD, and suspended solids.
2. **Cost and Environmental Impact:** Ferric chloride is more expensive and poses environmental risks related to its chemical composition.

V. DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Tamarind Seed Powder

Tamarind seed powder has proven to be an effective natural coagulant, demonstrating substantial reductions in turbidity, COD, and suspended solids. The results indicate that tamarind seed powder can serve as a viable alternative to synthetic coagulants. The coagulation efficiency of tamarind seed powder is influenced by factors such as

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concentration, pH, and water characteristics. Optimizing these parameters is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of the coagulant.

Environmental and Economic Benefits

Environmental Sustainability

1. **Biodegradability:** Tamarind seed powder is biodegradable and does not contribute to secondary pollution, unlike synthetic coagulants.
2. **Resource Utilization:** Using tamarind seeds, an agricultural by-product, promotes waste reduction and resource efficiency, aligning with sustainable practices.

Economic Considerations

1. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Tamarind seed powder is cost-effective, especially when sourced locally. Its use can lower treatment costs and provide an economically viable alternative to expensive chemical coagulants.
2. **Operational Efficiency:** While tamarind seed powder may not match the performance of conventional coagulants in all aspects, its benefits in terms of sustainability and cost make it an attractive option.

Comparison with Conventional Coagulants

1. **Performance Trade-Offs:** Although tamarind seed powder may not achieve the same level of performance as conventional coagulants, its environmental and economic advantages make it a viable alternative.
2. **Application Potential:** Tamarind seed powder can be used in conjunction with other treatment methods or coagulants to enhance overall treatment efficiency.

Future Research Directions

1. **Optimization Studies:** Further research should focus on optimizing the extraction process and dosage of tamarind seed powder to improve its performance in various water treatment scenarios.
2. **Scalability:** Investigating the scalability of tamarind seed powder for large-scale water treatment systems is essential for practical applications.
3. **Long-Term Performance:** Long-term studies are needed to assess the durability and effectiveness of tamarind seed powder in diverse environmental conditions.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of tamarind seed powder as a natural coagulant for drinking water purification. Its effectiveness in reducing turbidity, COD, and suspended solids demonstrates its viability as a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to conventional chemical coagulants. The environmental and economic benefits of using tamarind seed powder underscore its value in promoting sustainable water treatment practices. Future research and development efforts should focus on optimizing its use and exploring its application in various water treatment contexts.

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International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and Technology

ISSN: 2394-2975 **Impact Factor: 7.394**

www.ijarety.in editor.ijarety@gmail.com