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Study of Advanced Techniques for Inquisition, Segregation and Removal of Microplastics from Water Streams: Current Insights and Future Directions

Yogita Babar[1] ; Ankita Kamane[2] ; Sonali Suryawanshi[3*]
[1,3]Analytical Chemistry Laboratory, School of Chemical Sciences, Sanjay Ghodawat University, Kolhapur-416118, Maharashtra (India).
[2]Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil College of Engineering, Satara-415001, Maharashtra, (India).

Abstract:- The present research covers different analytical methods utilized for the diagnosis and characterization of microplastics (MPs) in water and wastewater, such as particle size distribution analysis, and focuses on the sources and forms of MPs in receiving environments.

First, we look at the most recent collection techniques, which include a variety of spectroscopic, chromatographic, and microscopic approaches used to identify and measure microplastics in water samples. We then investigate separation techniques designed to separate microplastics from diverse environmental matrices. This involves applying existing methods of separation based on density, such as centrifugation, flotation, and sedimentation, as well as more recent ones, like the use of microfluidic devices and materials for selective adsorption. Lastly, we look into removal methods aimed to reduce the buildup of microplastics in aquatic environments. These include enzymatic breakdown, coagulation/flocculation, and filtering, among other physical, chemical, and biological techniques.

***Keywords*:-** *Microplastics Removal, Plastic Particles, Freshwater Ecosystem, Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), Activated Sludge.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Microplastics (MPs), defined as plastic particles ranging from 1 mm to 5mm in size, are now ubiquitously present in aquatic and terrestrial environments A realistic assessment of the ill effects of the MPs must commence with a representative, large scale analysis of their abundance, size distribution and chemical composition.[1]

Around sixty percent of marine waste has been made up of plastics, whereas nearly ninety percent is made up of floating waste. It is estimated that an annual flow of plastics from rivers to the sea is of 1.15 to 2.41 million tonnes. Plastic travels through the atmosphere, the lithosphere (terrestrial systems), and the hydrosphere (aquatic systems) as part of the biogeochemical cycle. A significant number of microplastics (MPs) that cycle through these systems have been detected. Plastic particles having size less than 5 mm are commonly known as MPs. Owing to their diminutive size, they may travel through various habitats. MPs have been found in a variety of settings.[2] In order to better understand the effects of microplastic contamination in freshwater ecosystems, a study of the literature on the causes, dissemination, and impact of microplastics as well as recent developments in the study and policies, has been conducted. Synthetic fabrics, industrial components, improperly disposed plastic waste, and personal care items are the principal sources of microplastic in freshwater environments. [3]

In the environment, macroscopic plastic materials typic ally decompose into smaller fragments, also referred to as m icroplastics, via a mix of physical and chemical breakdown mechanisms.These include mechanical breakdown, hydrolyt ic breakdown, oxidation as well and photodegradation. Together, these processes are called decay, and they can vary greatly based on the kind and shape of the polymer.[4]

Additional laboratory research has demonstrated that aquatic organisms can consume microplastics, this may negatively impact their physiology, biochemistry, metabolism, and levels of individual cells and molecules. The secret to removing microplastics from biological matrices is to efficiently break down organic materials without interfering with the microplastics' qualitative and quantitative characterization.[5] In 2015, it was predicted that there were 60–99 million tonnes of mismanaged plastic trash worldwide. As human activity increases, it is anticipated that this amount will rise. Microplastics can enter the aquatic ecosystem via being disposed of directly into waterways, by sewage and sullage, or by industrial wastes. Rivers and oceans are the main locations where microplastics are deposited because rainfall runoff has the ability to carry microplastics from the land into waterways.[6]

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This paper outlines the most recent developments in various technologies for the removal of MPs in order to properly understand their advantages and disadvantages and to plan forward for future innovations in the sector. In order to sum up, this review summarizes what is known currently and points out important areas for future research in the area of complex techniques for finding, organizing, and reducing microplastics from water streams. The presence of micro plastic of aquatic environments has become a major environmental problem which negatively impacts human health as well as ecological integrity. As a result, quite a bit of study has gone into creating advanced techniques for locating, classifying, and eliminating microplastics from waterways.

II. SOURCES OF MICROPLASTICS

In contrast to marine systems, the amount of micropollutants is restricted, but this has recently raised serious concerns.MP found in freshwater is more important to the buildup of contaminants because of its proximity to sources and accessibility to additional pollutants. As a result, species found in freshwater ecosystems may be exposed to higher levels of pollutants, especially when they are close to industrial and populated regions, where the concentrations of microplastics and hydrophobic poisons in the water may be higher.[7]

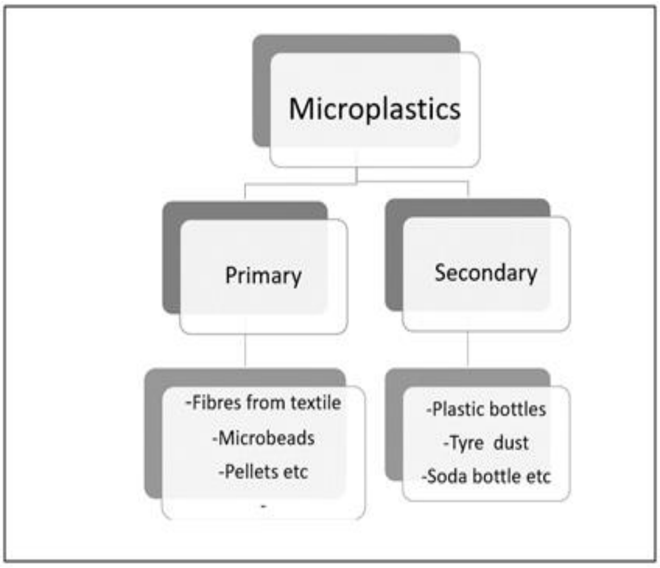

Fig 1 Types of Microplastics

MPs are primarily released into freshwater through wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) runoff. Even though it's estimated that a typical wastewater treatment plant removes MPs at a rate of between 73 and 79 percent. The primary contributors of microplastic pollution (MP) consist of automobile tires, markings on roads, the oceans coatings, artificial fabrics, personal care products, pellets of plastic, and city dirt. These materials penetrate the environment primarily through domestic wastewater, waste water treatment plants, or atmospheric things; more specifically, precipitation disperses road wear particles (TRWP) and tires. Micro-waste that is produced as a byproduct of the biological, physical, and chemical processes of decomposition that break down bigger plastic debris is known as secondary MP. These processes include the degradation of plastic can occur due to various factors such as photodegradation which is caused due to UV-B radiation), mechanical decomposition caused by wave action and sand friction, thermooxidative deterioration or cellular oxidation erosion, and biodegradation by microorganisms that can break down the hydrocarbons in plastic.[8]

During production, transportation, and product usage, environment may get contaminated with primary microplastics (MPs). Primary MPs belong to those that have been produced industrially for various purposes, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, abrasives, industrial and technical applications, and vectors. The fragmentation of big polymers caused by a variety of environmental factors, including exposure to UV light, weather, wind, severe temperature. A primary factor contributing to the contamination of water with microplastics is the release of wastewater containing microplastics. Pollution of the environment can result from plastic particles found in detergent, facial cleanser, and other goods. Testing on a number of commercially available personal care products has shown that the source of secondary MPs is plastic beads with a diameter of less than 0.5 mm.[10]

Several surface waters have been shown to contain mic roplastic.Microplastics can be found in freshwater environ ments in quantities ranging from several million to millions of tons on average.Wastewater containing microplastics find s its way into the surface water environment through dischar ges.Another way to be exposed to microplastics is by drinki ng bottled water.

Microplastics in bottled water have been examined by Mason et al. (2018).

III. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

- *Inquisition/Identification of Microplastics*

It has been claimed that microplastics can be clear, white, or blue, among a variety of colors.

[11] A microscope or the naked eye might be used to choose and categorize MPs as well as observe the visual inspection approach, comprising direct visual examination, observations made with optical and electronic microscopes to determine the color and size of the tested objects. Thermal analysis is a great analytical technique for identifying the constituents of MPs because it utilizes the unique pyrolysis spectra of polymers to assess the relationship between the temperature of MPs and their physical characteristics at particular temperatures, the MP detection procedure using differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). By applying differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), a thermos analytical technique, MPs can be measured. In industrial polymer manufacture and processing, it is a standard method for quality testing. Extensive information on MP in diverse settings and a range

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of estimations on MP have been offered by MP research.[12]

Extensive data on MP in diverse situations have been made available by MP research, and Various estimates have been produced about the contribution of various MP sources. Unique method for MP volumetric sensing in various situations. By mixing three waterbased dyes, the method is based on the Nile Red staining of MPs however eliminates the chance of outside organic molecules interfering, such as lignin, chitin, and cellulose components. Multiple microplastics could be investigated simultaneously because no spectroscopic subsampling was done because of the line-scan equipment's fast analysis.[12] Biological samples are usually pretreated using the digestion process. Samples are typically prepared by reducing substrate interference in environmental samples by acid, alkaline, or enzyme digestion. Studies that used a 35% H_2O_2 solution for continuous sample digestion found that the majority of the bioorganic components were broken down, which is encouraging for more investigation and analysis.[13] The full concentration of microplastic particles per millilitre of treated or untreated source water, which could be a sign of exposure to toxins that are maintained on microplastics at potentially hazardous concentrations if consumed is indicated by a novel concept known as the threshold microplastics concentration (TMC). Because lower TMCs suggest that exposure to contaminants at levels connected to health impacts could occur from fewer microplastic particles, they are indicative of a higher potential for harm.[14] Apart from the aquatic environment, another important sink for MP contamination and accumulation is the soil ecosystem. Plant disturbance can occur when MP modifies the properties of the soil, making it less conducive to plant growth. Inflammatory lesions, oxidative stress, particle toxicity, and the immune system's incapacity to eliminate synthetic polymers can all result from MP exposure, which can lead to chronic inflammation and neoplasia. [15]

- *Separation Techniques*

Microplastics must be segregated and retrieved from the digested solution after the biological samples are treated with digestion if they cannot be directly extracted using a visual method. Chemical digestion is a widely used technique for removing microplastics from biological samples. It primarily consists of acid, alkali, oxidation, and enzyme treatments.[5]

Screening, skimming, which and sedimentation are a few examples of physical separation techniques applied to primary wastewater treatment. These techniques make it practical to filter big pollutants quickly and affordably. The parameters of the wastewater and the type of treatment technique used determine whether or not MP can be removed.[5]

When treating water, efficient polymer chemical degradation could mineralize MP and prevent any waste from moving to a new solid phase. Biologically resistant pollutants can be effectively eliminated by advanced oxidation processes, which produce highly reactive, non-selective radicals. Antibiotics, personal care items, and trace organic pollutants are examples of new organic pollutants that can be effectively removed by AOPs. With an average of 19% from the treatment systems evaluated, biofiltration of wastewater was found to be a more successful biological secondary stage for MP removal than activated sludge.[9]

Over 90% of PE microplastics could be removed from water using electrocoagulation, which has been shown to be an efficient method of removing microplastics. When the pH was 7.5, the maximum removal efficiency of 9 9.24% was noted.[16]

A possible method for polymerizing plastic polymers is plastic degradation by microbes, which takes several steps.

By means of two sequential processes, bacteria are able to biodegrade MPs in a fairly efficient manner.

Biodegradation occurs when bacteria cause changes to the polymers' physical structure, resulting in their conversion into monomers. Generally speaking, enzymes are used to degrade MP.[15]In an effort to facilitate filtration and increase the effectiveness of recovering microplastics from the sample matrix researchers are now focusing on how organic molecules decompose. Researchers employed a range of methods for more complex environmental materials, such as digestion followed by density separation. Researchers employed a range of methods for more complex environmental materials, such as digestion accompanied by the separation of density.[17]

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- *Removal of Microplastics from Water Streams*

Recent research on the treatment of MPs using several AOPs, including UV photolysis, UV/H_2O_2, ozone, UV/catalysts, heat/persulfate, heat/peroxymonosulfate, and plasma, was summarized in this study. Results of MPs' physical and chemical alterations as well as the effectiveness of AOPs' elimination of MPs are specifically outlined.[18] Since main MPs are typically shaped like microbeads and secondary MPs are more likely to be textile fibers or other debris, it has also been proposed that the nature of the MPs plays a key impact in the removal efficiency. main MPs are therefore thought to be removed more successfully than secondary MPs. Another unconventional method of MPs separation that makes use of electromagnetic characteristics is electrostatic separation, which involves sorting particles based on mass using a charged beam with low energy. This is an example of how water carrying MPs travels through various electrostatic fields and is drawn to various containers based on surface properties. It has been demonstrated that electrostatic separation technology is applicable for not only separating MPs in various matrices (such as solid or liquid), but also for separating MPs according to type, which is crucial for particle degradation.[19]

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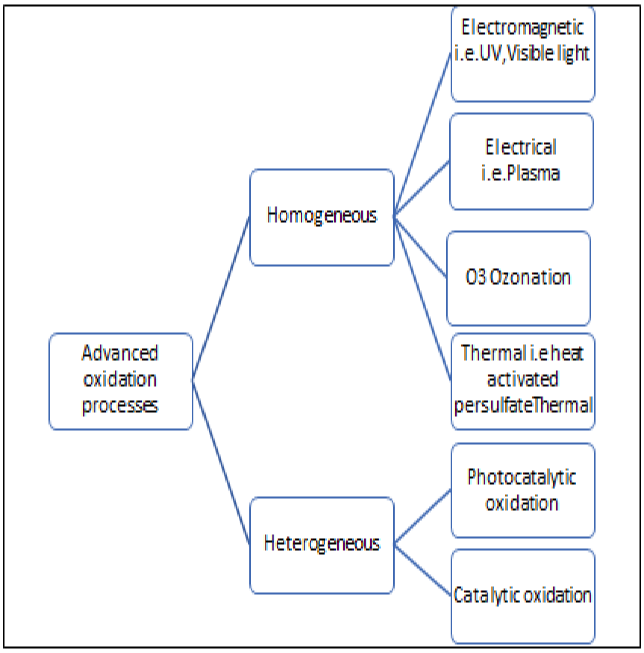

Fig 2 Advanced Oxidation Processes

There are three fundamental stages of treatment for wastewater: primary, secondary, and tertiary stages. To remove the large floating particulates and grits, a preliminary step is frequently used as well; however, usually, this stage is considered to be a part of the main course of treatment. Primary treatment's overarching objective is to physically settle the insoluble solids from the wastewater stream by a number of methods, including as screening, sedimentation (with coagulation), grit and oil removal, and oil and grease removal using either the suspended growth system or the connected growth system, secondary (biological) treatment attempts to reduce the biological content of wastewater.

Reverse osmosis, ozonation, filtration (ultra, micro, an d nano), and other chemical disinfection techniques are used in the tertiary (advance) treatment stage, which is the last kind treatment.

In the filtration phase of wastewater treatment, micropl astics can also be eliminated (Michielssen et al., 2016). Three methods microfiltration (0.1–1 μm), ultrafiltration (2–100 μm), and nanofiltration (~2 nm) have been employed to remove microplastics.[20] Tanks for sedimentation, grit chambers, and coarse screens are common pre-treatment methods used before primary treatment to remove large particles including sand, aggregates, and wood. Secondary treatment, commonly known as the activated sludge process, consists of a membrane bioreactor (MBR) or an aeration tank, will be used to collect suspended organic debris that has escaped primary treatment. WWTPs utilize secondary treatment more frequently because of the higher content of organic compounds in wastewater. If a WWTP wants to remove more contaminants from its secondary effluent, it might add a tertiary treatment to improve the discharge quality. A disc filter, ozonation, UV radiation, fast sand filtering, granular activated carbon, and chlorination are some of the techniques used in tertiary treatment. [6] When wastewater treatment plant effluent or industrial discharge contaminate aquatic bodies, the majority of land-based microplastics are deposited there directly. On the beds of water bodies, larger and heavier debris (small particles that are having an average dimension of 3.6 millimetres) are deposited, whereas smaller and lighter debris is suspended on the surface. Sediments are used to store these deposited microplastics [21] Ultrafiltration and nanofiltration are two sophisticated membrane filtration processes that successfully remove microplastics. These membrane' distinct pore sizes allow them to selectively block microplastics while allowing water to pass through. Remove all microplastics from the water. Microplastic pollutants are broken down using a variety of biological techniques that include a wide range of species like fungi, bacteria, zooplankton, algae, and enzymes. The process of treating water containing microplastics using plasma entails a plasma discharge. Reactive species produced by the plasma have the ability to chemically break down the microplastic particles. In laboratory-scale studies, this method has demonstrated promise in the removal of microplastics.[22]

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Enzymes, microbes, and photocatalytic materials can all be employed to get rid of these undesirable polymeric byproducts, according to earlier research. Since MPs are broken down by a range of environmental microbes and enzymes, studies into MP degradability were first carried out utilizing biopolymers, bacteria, fungus, etc. Because of this, microbial biodegradation techniques are much less effective in biodegradation than enzyme biodegradation. These enzymes' efficiency in breaking down plastic is significantly reduced, and MP biodegradation technology is still in its early stages. To make significant amounts of MP wastes easier to break down in the environment, enzymatic mechanisms need to be enhanced. Only a small percentage of MP research examines pollution in the atmosphere and on land; most studies focus on water contamination. An immediate necessity at this time.[23]

Due to MPs' carbon base and ability to be utilized as a feedstock for the synthesis of other carbon-based materials with potential environmental applications, it is acknowledged that the alteration of MPs by thermal methods such as carbonization by hydrothermal means and pyrolysis has great promise.[8]

It is worth noting that there is variability in the sample collection, pretreatment, and detection procedures employed in the literature, and that using a single approach may result in false positives.

The amount of microplastics present in drinking water varies significantly.[15]

Comparing the data is challenging due to the various approaches used in the studies on microplastics. A practical application's obstacle is the absence of technology that can efficiently hold plastic waste at the wastewater treatment

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plant. High removal efficiencies were demonstrated by the WWTP technologies in the wastewater treatment plant in the preceding sections. Even so, these WWTPs emit tiny amounts of microplastics into the environment, which can build up and have detrimental effects on the ecosystem despite their high removal efficiency.[21] It is necessary to have precise and standardized procedures for sampling, measuring, and identifying MPs in various environmental compartments. Establishing suitable standardized models for sample collecting is necessary to do this. It is necessary to have precise and standardized procedures for sampling, measuring, and identifying MPs. This requires the development of standard models for sample collection, separation, and analysis that are appropriate for all types of MP, irrespective of their shape, composition, dimensions, or place of origin. [10]

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