

**SOFT SOIL REINFORCED WITH GRANULAR PILE-MAT  
SYSTEM: ANALYSIS AND MODEL TESTS**

*By*

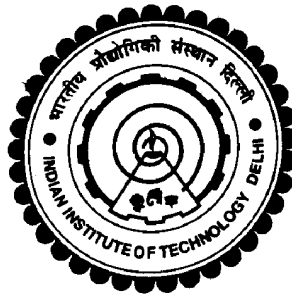
**Y. RAMANA REDDY**

**Submitted**

*In fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**to the**



**DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL ENGINEERING  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI  
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INDIA  
OCTOBER 2009**

**To  
My Parents**

## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**SOFT SOIL REINFORCED WITH GRANULAR PILE-MAT SYSTEM: ANALYSIS AND MODEL TESTS**” being submitted by **Mr. Y. Ramana Reddy** to the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi** is record of bonafide research work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. The thesis work, in my opinion, has reached the standard, fulfilling the requirements for **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** degree. The research report and results presented in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

**Dr. J. T. Shahu**  
Associate Professor

**Department of Civil Engineering  
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi  
New Delhi – 110 016  
INDIA**

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## ABSTRACT

Granular piles are one of the most commonly used ground improvement techniques worldwide. Granular piles, especially those constructed by vibration techniques, are now seen as environmentally and economically acceptable ground improvement method. Granular piles increase the bearing capacity of the soft ground and reduce total and differential settlements of the superstructures constructed on the soft soils.

The critical consideration for a single pile or a small group of granular piles is usually the immediate bearing capacity under a rapidly applied load.

On the other hand, it is usually the long-term drained settlement of large pile groups that is important. The group effect in pile groups of limited size, though increases the bearing capacity by transferring the applied stresses to deeper depths, gives rise to high concentration of stresses by allowing less spreading of the applied stresses in the surrounding soil. This results into a high long-term drained settlement in large pile groups.

Presently available methods for calculating long term settlement may be classified as either (i) simple, approximate methods which make simplifying assumptions or (ii) sophisticated methods based on finite element theory. All of these methods, however, are based on unit cell concept which assumes an infinitely wide loaded area reinforced with granular piles of a constant diameter and spacing. For stone column groups less than about 20 to 40 columns, the methods based on unit cell idealization are known to be overly conservative. Unlike in the case of the unit cell, the stress applied to a granular pile group of limited size spreads out laterally with depth into the surrounding cohesive soil. This spreading of stress leads to considerably smaller settlement in case of granular pile groups of limited size as compared to that of the unit cell. This settlement reduction is sometimes empirically considered by

using yielding boundaries of the unit cell in a two-dimensional finite element analysis. Moreover, these methods are applicable only for fully penetrating granular piles and not for floating piles.

In this thesis, non-dimensional charts are developed for computation of the long term, drained settlement of granular pile group-mat-soft soil foundation based on laboratory model tests and numerical analyses.

The laboratory tests are conducted on adequately instrumented small scale physical models of the granular pile group foundation. Fully drained, long term, load controlled tests are performed on the model foundation placed in slurry deposited samples. Effect of various group foundation parameters, such as the diameter, length, spacing and density of granular piles; soil physical state, etc. is evaluated.

The numerical analyses consist of three-dimensional, elasto-plastic, finite element analyses of the model and the prototype foundation system. The soft soil behavior is represented by the modified Cam-clay model while the granular pile and mat are represented by the Mohr-Coulomb model. The constitutive parameters are evaluated by triaxial tests on representative samples. The predicted results by numerical analyses are calibrated against the laboratory model test results. A detailed parametric study of the prototype group foundation is then carried out using the finite element analyses to evaluate the relative importance of various foundation parameters on the group response and develop design charts.

The three-dimensional finite element analysis was successful in predicting the model test results. However, the magnitude of induced stresses and settlement in the model tests should not be compared with the prototype group foundation owing to low initial geostatic stresses and consequently, low Young's modulus of granular material in the model.

Load settlement responses for some typical prototype granular pile group foundations are presented along with the corresponding responses for the unit cell and the single pile. Typical variations in the responses due to changes in various foundation parameters are also presented for all the three cases.

The major foundation parameters affecting the group response are area ratio, pile length, Young's modulus of pile, initial geostatic stresses and soft soil properties ( $\lambda$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $M$  and past maximum consolidation stress  $\sigma_{vm}$ ). The minor parameters are mat thickness, and angle of shearing resistance and dilatancy of the granular material.

As certain foundation parameters, namely, area ratio, pile modulus, pile length, initial geostatic stresses, past maximum consolidation stress and stress ratio  $M$  of soft soil increase, the stiffness of the granular pile-mat foundation increases. Consequently, at any given applied vertical load, the footing settlement decreases. On the other hand, as  $\lambda$  and  $\kappa$  decrease, the soil becomes stiffer and the settlement decreases.

In general, the settlement  $S_u$  of the unit cell is found to be higher than the single pile settlement  $S_1$  and the group foundation settlement  $S_g$ . As the applied load approaches the failure load, the single pile and the group settlement increase sharply and become higher than the settlement of the unit cell. The single pile settlement is found to be smaller than that of the group settlement.

In the granular pile group foundation of limited size, the spreading of stress occurs similar to that in a homogeneous soil. However, the granular piles attract relatively higher proportion of the applied stresses as compared to the surrounding soft soil. The bulging of one pile is resisted by the bulging of the neighboring piles and in the process, the applied stress is transferred to deeper depths. This mechanism known as the group effect gives rise to higher stress concentration in the soft soil below the

footing and consequently, higher settlement in the group foundation as compared to that in the single pile.

In the case of single pile, the absence of group effect leads to higher spreading of stress and consequently, lower settlement as compared to that in the group piles. The unrestrained bulging is also responsible for the lower settlement.

The unit cell represents the response when the group consists of infinite number of piles. The boundaries of the unit cell are rigid and unyielding giving rise to a complete stress transfer to deeper depths. There is no spreading of the stress and a minimal bulging of the pile. The higher stresses inside the unit cell lead to higher settlement as compared to the group piles.

The ratio of group settlement to single pile settlement  $S_g/S_1$  increases as the number of piles increases.  $S_g/S_1$  is expected to reach a constant value at large number of piles (approximately greater than 40). The data are compared with the range and average values recommended by FHWA (1983) on empirical basis. The average values in both cases compare well.

The ratio of unit cell settlement to group settlement  $S_u/S_g$  decreases as the number of piles increases.  $S_u/S_g$  is expected to reach the value of 1.0 at large number of piles (approximately = 70 to 80).

Charts are presented for the estimation of the long term drained settlement of granular pile group foundation. The estimation of the group settlement envisages first estimating the settlement of the corresponding unit cell or the single pile and then calculating the group settlement using  $S_g/S_1$  or  $S_u/S_g$  charts. For the foundation structures or material properties for which the responses are not available, suitable interpolation or extrapolation is recommended.

# CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>CERTIFICATE</b>	vii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	ix
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	xi
<b>CONTENTS</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xxi
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xxxix
<b>LIST OF NOTATIONS</b>	xxxiii
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 GENERAL	1
1.2 MECHANISM OF GROUND IMPROVEMENT	3
1.2.1 Fully Penetrating versus Floating Piles	4
1.2.2 Group Effect	5
1.2.3 Single versus Group Behavior	6
1.3 NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY	7
1.4 OBJECTIVES	11
1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THESIS	12
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 GENERAL	15
2.2 CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES	15
2.3 BASIC RELATIONSHIPS	19
2.4 ANALYTICAL FORMULATIONS	23

2.4.1	Load-Settlement Response	24
2.4.2	Ultimate Bearing Capacity	31
2.4.3	Time dependent behavior	36
2.5	NUMERICAL ANALYSIS	37
2.6	EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS	45
2.7	STRENGTHENING OF GRANULAR PILES	54
2.8	CONSTITUTIVE MODELS FOR MATERIALS	57
2.8.1	Considerations for Selecting a Constitutive Model	57
2.8.2	Elasto-Plastic Models	58
2.9	CONCLUSIONS	68
 <b>CHAPTER 3 MODEL TESTS AND RESULTS</b>		 73
3.1	GENERAL	73
3.2	MODEL TEST SET-UP, MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTATION	74
3.2.1	Model Test Set-Up	74
3.2.2	Materials	76
3.2.3	Instrumentation	78
3.3	TEST PROGRAMME	79
3.4	MODELING DETAILS	79
3.5	TEST PROCEDURE	84
3.5.1	Preparation of Soft Clay Bed	84
3.5.2	Installation of Granular Piles and Mat	86
3.5.3	Application of Footing Load and Measurements	89
3.6	MODEL TEST RESULTS	93
3.7	CONCLUSIONS	104

<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>MATERIAL TESTING AND EVALUATION OF CONSTITUENT PARAMETERS</b>	<b>107</b>
4.1	GENERAL	107
4.2	MATERIAL CHARACTERIZATION	108
4.2.1	Kaolinite Clay	109
4.2.2	Badarpur Sand	110
4.3	TEST DETAILS	110
4.3.1	Summary of Tests	111
4.3.2	Testing Apparatus	111
4.3.3	Sample Preparation	112
4.3.4	Test Procedure	115
4.4	EVALUATION OF CONSTITUTIVE PARAMETERS	117
4.4.1	Modified Cam-clay Model Parameters for Kaolinite Clay	117
4.4.2	Mohr-Coulomb Model Parameters for Badarpur Sand	122
4.5	NUMERICAL SIMULATION OF TRIAXIAL TESTS	128
4.6	CONCLUSIONS	132
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>FINITE ELEMENT ANALYSIS OF MODEL TESTS</b>	<b>135</b>
5.1	GENERAL	135
5.2	THE FINITE ELEMENT METHOD	137
5.3	ABAQUS SOFTWARE PACKAGE	137
5.4	FINITE ELEMENT ANALYSIS OF MODEL TESTS	138
5.4.1	Finite Element Simulation in ABAQUS	138
5.4.2	Mesh Sensitivity Analysis	142
5.4.3	Computations and Convergence Criteria	149
5.4.4	Effect of Material Parameters of Granular Mat	151

5.5	ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR MODEL TESTS	152
5.6	COMPARISON OF ANALYSIS RESULTS WITH MODEL TEST RESULTS	161
5.7	PARAMETRIC TRENDS	166
5.8	CONCLUSIONS	176
 <b>CHAPTER 6 ANALYSIS OF PROTOTYPE FOUNDATION AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY</b>		 179
6.1	GENERAL	179
	6.1.1 Mechanism of Settlement	179
	6.1.2 Available Methods	180
6.2	PARAMETRIC STUDY	181
	6.2.1 Finite Element Simulation	181
	6.2.2 Typical Response of a Prototype Group Foundation	182
	6.2.3 Range of Parameters	189
	6.2.4 Mesh Discretization and Computation Controls	192
	6.2.5 Results of Parametric Study	195
6.3	DESIGN CHARTS	207
	6.3.1 Analysis of Unit Cell	207
	6.3.2 Analysis of Single Pile	211
	6.3.3 Group Response vis-à-vis Unit Cell / Single Pile Response	214
	6.3.4 Comparison with Available Data	221
	6.3.5 $S_g/S_1$ and $S_u/S_g$ Charts	222
	6.3.6 Design Example	230
6.4	CONCLUSIONS	231

<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<b>BULGING, VERTICAL STRESS DISTRIBUTION AND STRESS CONCENTRATION RATIO</b>	235
7.1	GENERAL	235
7.2	MODELING DETAILS	236
7.3	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	238
	7.3.1 Prototype Foundations	238
	7.3.2 Model Foundation	245
7.4	CONCLUSIONS	256
<b>CHAPTER8</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	259
8.1	GENERAL	259
8.2	CONCLUSIONS	260
8.3	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	263
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	265