

**STUDIES ON β -LACTAMASE FROM *BACILLUS TROPICUS*
EMB20 FOR ALLEVIATION OF ANTIBIOTIC POLLUTION
AND ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE**

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by

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Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

to the



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

NEW DELHI-110016

APRIL -2025

Dedicated to my family

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Studies On β -Lactamase from *Bacillus tropicus* EMB20 For alleviation of Antibiotic Pollution and Antimicrobial Resistance**” being submitted by **Ms. HUMA FATIMA** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. Ms. Huma Fatima has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the thesis submission, which, to my knowledge, has reached the requisite standard. The results contained in this dissertation have not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



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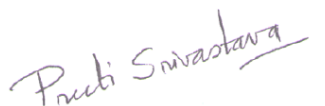
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Huma Fatima

Abstract

Antibiotics are extensively utilized across various domains including medicine, agriculture, aquaculture, and animal husbandry. In recent years, there has been a significant global increase in both prescribed and unprescribed antibiotic usage. However, due to the poor absorption of antibiotics in living organisms, substantial quantities of antibiotics and their metabolites end up in wastewater. Moreover, wastewater originating from healthcare and pharmaceutical industries further adds antibiotic load to the environment through their effluents. The presence of antibiotics in aquatic environments has a notable impact on both human and aquatic organisms, even at nano or microgram concentrations. The situation is exacerbated by the transfer of antibiotic-resistant genes (ARGs), leading to the emergence of multiple drug-resistant (MDR) bacteria. The escalating issue of antibiotic pollution has raised serious concerns regarding its remediation in recent years. The escalating threat of antibiotic pollution and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) necessitates innovative and sustainable remediation strategies. Based on the above background the present thesis investigates the potential of β -lactamase from *Bacillus tropicus* EMB20 in mitigating antibiotic contamination and vis-à-vis AMR.

B. tropicus EMB20 genome spans approximately 5.8 megabases (Mb) and contains 5,593 coding DNA sequences (CDSs). The CDSs encode a variety of proteins that contribute to the bacterium's metabolic capabilities and adaptability to different environments. One of the notable features of *B. tropicus* EMB20 is its ability to produce β -lactamase, an enzyme that confers resistance to β -lactam antibiotics. β -lactamase catalyzes the hydrolysis of the β -lactam ring, a core structural component of β -lactam antibiotics, rendering them ineffective. This enzymatic activity is important because it helps the bacterium survive in environments contaminated with β -lactam antibiotics and also has potential applications for the

bioremediation of antibiotics. The degradation of β -lactam antibiotics by *B. tropicus* EMB20 thus highlights its potential role in mitigating antibiotic pollution.

Building on this foundation, the study explores the application of β -lactamase from *Bacillus tropicus* EMB20 for *in-vitro* remediation of β -lactam antibiotics. The enzyme efficiently hydrolysed high concentrations of ampicillin, amoxicillin, and meropenem, demonstrating its capability to degrade different classes of β -lactam antibiotics, including carbapenems. The hydrolysed products were analyzed and found to be non-toxic, ensuring that the breakdown of these antibiotics does not produce harmful by-products.

To enhance the practical applicability of β -lactamase, the enzyme was immobilized onto magnetic nanoparticles (Fe_3O_4). This immobilization not only stabilized the enzyme but also facilitated its easy separation and reuse. The enzyme nanoconjugate demonstrated high removal efficiency for various antibiotics, including the simultaneous removal of multiple antibiotics from real aquaculture wastewater. Remarkably, the immobilized enzyme retained significant activity over multiple cycles of use, underscoring its practical viability for treatment processes. However, the enzyme immobilized onto magnetic nanoparticles was not suitable for scale-up due to the very small size of the nanoparticles and poor packing properties. Therefore, for further advancing the remediation techniques, a sustainable method was developed by entrapping β -lactamase within agarose discs. The enzyme entrapped in agarose efficiently hydrolyzed doripenem and other β -lactam antibiotics in both batch and continuous treatments. In a practical application, the fixed-bed column bioreactor setup, using these agarose discs, successfully treated synthetic hospital wastewater. This demonstrated the potential for large-scale applications, offering a feasible method for treating wastewater streams from healthcare facilities, which are significant sources of antibiotic contamination.

Complementing these practical approaches, the metallo- β -lactamase gene from *B. tropicus* EMB20 was cloned and expressed in *Escherichia coli* BL21(DE3) at various temperatures, resulting in the formation of inclusion bodies. These aggregates were solubilized and purified, then evaluated for their biological activity and structural characteristics. The recombinant enzyme displayed an enhanced activity over the native enzyme. Notably, β -lactamase activity within the inclusion bodies indicated proper protein folding. Lower expression temperatures correlated with reduced amyloid content and enhanced biological activity. The purified β -lactamase inclusion bodies effectively removed β -lactam antibiotics in vitro, highlighting their potential for environmental remediation.

Finally, the study addressed the broader issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) by exploring the development of meropenem-based nanoflowers (mNFs). These nanoflowers were synthesized by co-precipitating meropenem with metal ions, forming nanoflower structure with high surface area. The mNFs demonstrated significant antibacterial and anti-biofilm activities against *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* PA01, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*. The effective inhibition of biofilm formation and reduced bacterial viability, by mNFs, offers a promising therapeutic solution for biofilm-associated infections, which are notoriously difficult to treat and are often resistant to conventional antibiotics. This innovative approach provides a new avenue for combating AMR.

The present thesis collectively emphasizes the diverse applications of β -lactamase enzyme from *B. tropicus* EMB20 in addressing antibiotic pollution and AMR. Overall, the work paves the way for new bioremediation strategies and therapeutic interventions, showcasing the potential for these approaches to make a significant impact on public health and environmental sustainability.

सार

एंटीबायोटिक्स का उपयोग चिकित्सा, कृषि, जलीय कृषि और पशुपालन सहित विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में बड़े पैमाने पर किया जाता है। हाल के वर्षों में, उल्लेखित और गैर उल्लेखित दोनों तरह के एंटीबायोटिक के उपयोग में वैश्विक स्तर पर अत्यधिक वृद्धि हुई है। हालांकि, जीवों में एंटीबायोटिक के खराब अवशोषण के कारण, एंटीबायोटिक और उनके मेटाबोलाइट्स की पर्याप्त मात्रा अपशिष्ट जल में चली जाती है। इसके अलावा, स्वास्थ्य सेवा और दवा उद्योगों से निकलने वाला अपशिष्ट जल अपने अपशिष्टों के माध्यम से पर्यावरण में एंटीबायोटिक का प्रदूषण और बढ़ाता है। जलीय वातावरण में एंटीबायोटिक की मौजूदगी का मानव और जलीय जीवों दोनों पर अत्यधिक प्रभाव पड़ता है, यहां तक कि नैनो या माइक्रोग्राम स्तर तक सांद्रता पर भी। एंटीबायोटिक-प्रतिरोधी जीन के हस्तांतरण से स्थिति और खराब हो जाती है, जिससे कई दवा-प्रतिरोधी (एमडीआर) बैक्टीरिया उभर आते हैं। एंटीबायोटिक प्रदूषण के बढ़ते मुद्दे ने हाल के वर्षों में इनके उपचार के बारे में गंभीर चिंताएँ पैदा की हैं। एंटीबायोटिक प्रदूषण और रोगाणुरोधी प्रतिरोध (एएमआर) के बढ़ते खतरे के कारण अभिनव और टिकाऊ उपचार रणनीतियों की आवश्यकता है। उपरोक्त पृष्ठभूमि के आधार पर प्रस्तुत शोध प्रबंध न केवल एंटीबायोटिक संदूषण को कम करने बल्कि एएमआर के संबंध में बैसिलस ट्रोपिकस ईएमबी20 से प्राप्त β -लैक्टामेज की क्षमता की भी जांच करता है। बी. ट्रोपिकस ईएमबी20 जीनोम लगभग 5.8 मेगाबेस (एमबी) में फैला है और इसमें 5,593 कोडिंग डीएनए अनुक्रम (सीडीएस) हैं। सीडीएस विभिन्न प्रकार के प्रोटीन को एनकोड करते हैं जो जीवाणु की चयापचय क्षमताओं और विभिन्न वातावरणों के अनुकूल होने में योगदान करते हैं। बी. ट्रोपिकस ईएमबी20 की उल्लेखनीय विशेषताओं में से एक इसकी β -लैक्टामेज उत्पन्न करने की क्षमता है, जो एक ऐसा एंजाइम है जो β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के लिए प्रतिरोध क्षमता प्रदान करता है। β -लैक्टामेज β -लैक्टम रिंग के हाइड्रोलिसिस को उत्प्रेरित करता है, यह एंजाइमेटिक गतिविधि महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि यह जीवाणु को β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं से दूषित वातावरण में जीवित रहने में मदद करती है और एंटीबायोटिक

दवाओं के बायोरेमेडिएशन के लिए भी इसके संभावित अनुप्रयोग हैं। इस प्रकार बी. ट्रोपिकस EMB20 द्वारा β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं का विघटन एंटीबायोटिक प्रदूषण को कम करने में इसकी संभावित भूमिका को उजागर करता है। इस आधार पर, अध्ययन β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के इन-विट्रो उपचार के लिए बैसिलस ट्रोपिकस EMB20 से β -लैक्टामेज के अनुप्रयोग की खोज करता है। एंजाइम ने एम्पीसिलीन, एमोक्सिसिलिन और मेरोपेनम की उच्च सांद्रता को कुशलतापूर्वक हाइड्रोलाइज किया, जिससे कार्बापेनम सहित β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के विभिन्न वर्गों को विघटित करने की इसकी क्षमता का प्रदर्शन हुआ। हाइड्रोलाइज्ड उत्पादों का विश्लेषण किया गया और पाया गया कि वे गैर विषैले हैं, जिससे यह सुनिश्चित होता है कि इन एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के टूटने से हानिकारक उप-उत्पाद उत्पन्न नहीं होते हैं। β -लैक्टामेज की व्यावहारिक प्रयोज्यता को बढ़ाने के लिए, एंजाइम को चुंबकीय नैनोकणों (Fe_3O_4) पर स्थिर किया गया था। इस स्थिरीकरण ने न केवल एंजाइम को स्थिर किया, बल्कि इसके आसान पृथक्करण और उसके पुनः उपयोग को भी सुगम बनाया। एंजाइम नैनोकंकजुगेट ने विभिन्न एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के लिए उच्च निष्कासन दक्षता का प्रदर्शन किया, जिसमें वास्तविक जलीय कृषि अपशिष्ट जल से कई एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं को एक साथ हटाना शामिल है। उल्लेखनीय रूप से, स्थिर एंजाइम ने उपयोग के कई चक्रों में महत्वपूर्ण गतिविधि बनाए रखी, जो उपचार प्रक्रियाओं के लिए इसकी व्यावहारिक व्यवहार्यता को रेखांकित करता है। हालाँकि, चुंबकीय नैनोकणों पर स्थिर किया गया एंजाइम नैनोकणों के बहुत छोटे आकार और खराब पैकिंग गुणों के कारण स्केल-अप के लिए उपयुक्त नहीं था। इसलिए, उपचार तकनीकों को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए, एगरोज़ डिस्क के भीतर β -लैक्टामेज़ को फंसाकर एक स्थायी विधि विकसित की गई। एगरोज़ में फंसा एंजाइम बैच और निरंतर उपचार दोनों में डोरिपेनम और अन्य β -लैक्टम एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं को कुशलतापूर्वक हाइड्रोलाइज़ करता है। एक व्यावहारिक अनुप्रयोग में, इन एगरोज़ डिस्क का उपयोग करके फिक्स्ड-बेड कॉलम बायोरिएक्टर सेटअप ने सिंथेटिक अस्पताल अपशिष्ट जल का सफलतापूर्वक उपचार किया। इसने बड़े पैमाने पर अनुप्रयोगों क्षमता को प्रदर्शित किया, जो स्वास्थ्य देखभाल सुविधाओं से अपशिष्ट जल धाराओं के उपचार के लिए एक सरल

व्यावहारिक विधि प्रदान करता है, जो एंटीबायोटिक संदूषण के महत्वपूर्ण स्रोत हैं। इन व्यावहारिक दृष्टिकोणों को पूरक करते हुए, बी। ट्रोपिकस ईएमबी 20 से मेटालो- β -लैक्टामेज जीन को क्लोन किया गया और विभिन्न तापमानों पर एस्चेरिचिया कोली बीएल 21 (डीई 3) में व्यक्त किया गया, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप समावेशन निकायों का निर्माण हुआ। इन समुच्चयों को घुलनशील और शुद्ध किया गया, फिर उनकी जैविक गतिविधि और संरचनात्मक विशेषताओं के लिए मूल्यांकन किया गया। पुनः संयोजक एंजाइम ने मूल एंजाइम की तुलना में एक बढ़ी हुई गतिविधि प्रदर्शित की। विशेष रूप से, समावेशन निकायों के भीतर β -लैक्टामेज गतिविधि ने उचित प्रोटीन तह का संकेत दिया। कम अभिव्यक्ति तापमान कम एमिलॉयड सामग्री और बढ़ी हुई जैविक गतिविधि के साथ सहसंबंधित है।

अंत में, अध्ययन ने मेरोपेनम-आधारित नैनोफ्लॉवर (mNFs) के विकास की खोज करके रोगाणुरोधी प्रतिरोध (AMR) के व्यापक मुद्दे को संबोधित किया। इन नैनोफ्लॉवर को मेरोपेनम को धातु आयनों के साथ सह-अवक्षेपित करके संश्लेषित किया गया था, जिससे उच्च सतह क्षेत्र के साथ नैनोफ्लॉवर संरचना का निर्माण हुआ। mNFs ने स्पूडोमोनस एरुगिनोसा PA01, क्लेबसिएला न्यूमोनिया और स्टैफिलोकोकस ऑरियस के खिलाफ महत्वपूर्ण जीवाणुरोधी और एंटी-बायोफिल्म गतिविधियों का प्रदर्शन किया। बायोफिल्म निर्माण का प्रभावी अवरोध और बैक्टीरिया की संख्या में कमी, mNFs द्वारा बायोफिल्म से जुड़े संक्रमणों के लिए एक आशाजनक चिकित्सीय समाधान प्रदान करता है, जिसका इलाज करना बेहद मुश्किल है और जो अक्सर पारंपरिक एंटीबायोटिक दवाओं के लिए प्रतिरोधी होते हैं। यह अभिनव दृष्टिकोण AMR का मुकाबला करने के लिए एक नया रास्ता प्रदान करता है।

वर्तमान थीसिस सामूहिक रूप से एंटीबायोटिक प्रदूषण और AMR को संबोधित करने में B. ट्रोपिकस EMB20 से β -लैक्टामेज एंजाइम के विविध अनुप्रयोगों पर जोर देती है। कुल मिलाकर, यह शोध कार्य नई जैव-उपचार रणनीतियों और उपचारात्मक हस्तक्षेपों का मार्ग प्रशस्त करता है, तथा इन तरीकों से

सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य और पर्यावरणीय स्थिरता पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ने की संभावना को भी प्रदर्शित करता है।

TABLE OF CONTENT

Certificate		i
Acknowledgement		ii
Abstract		vi
Table of content		xiii
List of Figures		xxi
List of Tables		xxviii
List of Abbreviations		xxx

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1-45
------------------	---------------------	-------------

1.1	Rationale of the work	1
1.2	Objectives	6
1.3	Scope of the thesis	7
1.4	Review of literature	11
1.4.1	Antibiotics: Classes and mode of action	15
1.4.2	Sources of antibiotics in the environment	17
1.4.3	Detection of antibiotics	19
1.4.4	Impacts of antibiotics on environment	22
1.4.5	Bioremediation of antibiotics	26
1.4.6	Microbial remediation of antibiotics	29
1.4.7	Enzymatic removal of antibiotics	33
1.4.7.1	Peroxidase	36
1.4.7.2	Laccases	37
1.4.7.3	β -lactamases	38
1.4.7.4	Immobilized enzyme	40
1.4.8	Nano-biocatalyst for antibiotic remediation	42

CHAPTER 2A	GENOME SEQUENCE OF	46-63
	<i>BACILLUS TROPICUS</i> EMB20	
	FOR β-LACTAMASE GENES	

2A.1	Introduction	46
-------------	---------------------	-----------

2A.2	Materials and methods	48-50
2A.2.1	Genomic DNA Isolation	48
2A.2.2	Genomic sequencing	48
2A.2.3	Comparison of the genome sequence of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20 and other <i>Bacillus</i> species	49
2A.2.4	Annotation of the sequenced genome	49
2A.2.5	Comparison of the GC content of the genome and β -lactamase genes	49
2A.2.6	Antibiotic susceptibility test	50
2A.3	Results and Discussion	50-61
2A.3.1	Genome sequencing	50
2A.3.2	Comparison of the genome sequence of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20 and other <i>Bacillus</i> sp.	52
2A.3.3	Genome annotation	54
2A.3.4	t-test	59
2A.3.5	Antibiotic susceptibility test	60
2A.4	Conclusions	61
CHAPTER 2B	UTILIZATION OF EMB20 β-LACTAMASE FOR REMEDIATION OF β-LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS	63-79
2B.1	Introduction	63
2B.2	Materials and methods	64-70
2B.2.1	Media and Chemicals	64
2B.2.2	Seed culture preparation and β -lactamase production	65
2B.2.3	β -lactamase assay	65
2B.2.4	<i>In-vitro</i> Amp removal using β -lactamase containing cell-free supernatant (CFS)	66
2B.2.5	Effects of varying Amp concentrations and initial pH on Amp removal	66

2B.2.6	High resolution-mass spectrometry (HR-MS) analysis of Amp hydrolysis products	66
2B.2.7	Antimicrobial activity and toxicity assay of Amp hydrolysis products	67
2B.2.8	Microbial MTT (3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)- 2,5-diphenyl tetrazolium bromide) assay	67
2B.2.9	Removal of various β -lactam antibiotics singly and in mixed forms	68
2B.2.10	Quantification of antibiotics	68
2B.2.11	Statistical analysis	69
2B.3	Results and discussion	70-78
2B.3.1	<i>In-vitro</i> removal of Amp	70
2B.3.2	Identification of Amp hydrolyzed products	71
2B.3.3	Antibiotic activity and toxicity assessment of hydrolysed products	74
2B.3.4	Removal of other β -lactam antibiotics	75
2B.3.5	Removal of β -lactam antibiotics mixture	76
2B.4	Conclusion	78

CHAPTER 3	IMMOBILIZATION OF EMB20 β- LACTAMASE ON MAGNETIC NANOPARTICLES FOR EFFICIENT REMEDIATION OF β- LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS	80-108
------------------	--	---------------

3.1	Introduction	80
3.2	Material and Methods	82-88
3.2.1	Media and chemicals	82
3.2.2	β -lactamase production	82
3.2.3	Functionalization and immobilization of β - lactamase on Fe ₃ O ₄ magnetic nanoparticles	83

3.2.4	Characterization of enzyme immobilized MNPs	84
3.2.5	<i>In-vitro</i> remediation of Mer using lactamase immobilized MNPs	84
3.2.5.1	Effect of pH and reusability studies	85
3.2.6	Identification of Mer hydrolyzed product and its toxicity assessment	85
3.2.7	Toxicity studies	85
3.2.7.1	Growth studies	86
3.2.7.2	Microbial MTT assay	86
3.2.7.3	Confocal microscopy	86
3.2.8	Remediation of β -lactam antibiotics mixture	87
3.2.9	Application of immobilized enzyme in Mer removal from aquaculture wastewater	87
3.2.9.1	Characterization of wastewater	87
3.2.9.2	Remediation of Mer	87
3.2.10	Quantification of antibiotics	88
3.2.11	Statistical analysis	88
3.3	Results and Discussion	88-105
3.3.1	Immobilization of β -lactamase on MNPs	88
3.3.2	Characterization of the enzyme immobilized MNPs	89
3.3.3	<i>In-vitro</i> remediation of Mer using lactamase-immobilized MNPs	93
3.3.3.1	Effect of pH	95
3.3.3.2	Reusability	96
3.3.4	Identification of Mer intermediate metabolites	97
3.3.4.1	Toxicity of meropenem hydrolyzed products	99
3.3.5	Remediation of β -lactam antibiotics mixture	102

3.3.6	Application of immobilized β -lactamase in the removal of antibiotics from aquaculture wastewater (AQW)	104
3.3.6.1	Remediation of Mer and antibiotic mixture from aquaculture wastewater	105
3.3.7	Conclusion	106
CHAPTER 4	USE OF AGAROSE ENTRAPPED β-LACTAMASE FOR BIOREMEDIATION OF β-LACTAM ANTIBIOTICS IN A FIXED BED COLUMN BIOREACTOR	109-135
4.1	Introduction	109
4.2	Materials and methods	111
4.2.1	Media and chemicals	111
4.2.2	Microorganism and β -lactamase production	111
4.2.3	Immobilization of β -lactamase on agarose gel matrix	112
4.2.4	Scanning electron microscopy	113
4.2.5	Removal of doripenem in batch mode	113
4.2.5.1	Effect of pH	113
4.2.5.2	Toxicity studies	113
4.2.5.3	Reusability studies	114
4.2.6	β -lactam antibiotics mixture removal under batch mode	114
4.2.7	Removal in fixed-bed column bioreactor (FBCR)	115
4.2.7.1	Reusability of the Fixed-bed column Bioreactor	116
4.2.8	Analytical techniques	116
4.2.8.1	β -Lactamase assay	116

4.2.8.2	Quantification of antibiotics	116
4.2.9	Statistical analysis	117
4.3	Results and discussion	117-135
4.3.1	Effect of agarose concentration on enzyme immobilization	117
4.3.2	Morphological analysis of discs	119
4.3.3	Removal of doripenem	120
4.3.3.1	Effect of pH	122
4.3.3.2	Reusability studies	123
4.3.3.3	Toxicity of doripenem hydrolysed products	124
4.3.4	Removal of β -lactam antibiotics mixture in batch mode	125
4.3.5	Fixed-bed column Bioreactor (FBCR) performance	129
4.3.5.1	Effect of flow rate on FBCR	129
4.3.5.2	Reusability of FBCR for removal of antibiotics in continuous mode	131
4.3.6	Removal kinetics of antibiotics	133
4.3.7	Conclusions	136

CHAPTER 5	CLONING AND EXPRESSION OF β-LACTAMASE GENE FROM <i>B. TROPICUS</i> EMB20 WITH ACTIVE INCLUSION BODIES	138- 164
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5.1	Introduction	138
5.2	Materials and methods	140
5.2.1	Chemicals	140
5.2.2	Bacterial strains and plasmid	140
5.2.3	Primer designing and PCR	140
5.2.4	Cloning of metallo- β -lactamase from <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20 in pET22b (+)	141

5.2.5	Expression, isolation and purification of lactamase Inclusion Bodies	144
5.2.6	β -lactamase activity of LIB's obtained at varying temperature	145
5.2.7	Characterization of lactamase Inclusion Bodies	145
5.2.8	Application in remediation of antibiotic	146
5.2.9	Statistical analysis	146
5.3	Results and discussion	147 -163
5.3.1	Cloning of metallo- β -lactamase from <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20	147
5.3.2	Expression and purification of the cloned metallo- β -lactamase from <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20	151
5.3.3	Microscopic images of Inclusion Bodies	154
5.3.4	β -lactamase Activity of the lactamase Inclusion Bodies	156
5.3.5	Thioflavin Binding assay	158
5.3.6	Enzymatic hydrolysis of antibiotic mixture using lactamase Inclusion Bodies	160
5.4	Conclusions	163

CHAPTER 6	SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF MEROPENEM INCORPORATED NANOFLOWERS AS NANO-ANTIBIOTICS FOR ANTIBACTERIAL AND ANTIBIOFILM APPLICATIONS	165-192
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6.1	Introduction	165
6.2	Materials and Methods	168
6.2.1	Media and chemicals	168
6.2.2	Synthesis of mNFs	168
6.2.3	Structural and Functional Characterization of mNFs	169
6.2.4	Antibacterial Experiments	170
6.2.5	Confocal microscopy	171
6.2.6	Membrane disruption of <i>P. aeruginosa</i> PAO1 after treatment with mNFs	171
6.2.7	Antibiofilm Experiments	172
6.2.8	Morphological characterisation of treated biofilm	172
6.2.9	Pyocyanin assay	172
6.3	Results and Discussion	173-190
6.3.1	Characterization of mNFs	173
6.3.2	Antibacterial activity of meropenem	178
6.3.3	Membrane disruption of <i>P. aeruginosa</i> PAO1 after treatment with mNFs	182
6.3.4	Confocal Microscopy	184
6.3.5	Antibiofilm activity of mNFs	186
6.3.6	Morphological characterization of biofilm	188
6.3.7	Estimation of virulence factor	189
6.4	Conclusions	191
SUMMARY		193
Future Prospectives		196
References		199
Appendix		253
List of Publications		255
Conferences		257
Bio-Data		258

List of Figures

Figure No.	Description	Page No.
Fig 1.1	Major subgroups of β -lactam antibiotics	3
Fig 1.2	Hydrolysis reaction of β -lactam ring by β -lactamase enzyme	4
Fig 1.3	Horizontal Gene Transfer of Antibiotic Resistance Genes and Emergence of Multidrug-Resistant Bacterial Strains	12
Fig 1.4	Different sources of antibiotic pollution in environment	18
Fig 1.5	Impact of antibiotic pollution on environment and human health	24
Fig 1.6	Different types of bioremediation techniques	28
Fig.2A. 1	Comparative genomic analysis of genome sequence of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20.	52
Fig. 2A.2	Average nucleotide identity phylogenetic tree	54
Fig. 2A.3	RAST subsystem statistics of <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20	55
Fig. 2A.4	Antibiotic susceptibility test using Octa disc Combi 67 having antibiotics Ampicillin (A), Ampicillin/sulbactam (As), Amoxicillin/clavulanic acid (Ac), Piperacillin/Tazobactam (Pt), Ticarcillin/ Clavulanic acid (Tc), Cefoperazone/Sulbactam (Cfs), Cefuroxime (Cu) and Cephalexime (Ce).	61
Fig. 2B.1	<i>In-vitro</i> ampicillin (Amp) removal using <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20 β -lactamase.	70
Fig. 2B.2	a) HR-MS spectra of ampicillin hydrolyzed products generated through <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20 culture extract containing β -lactamase	72

Fig. 2B.3	Proposed pathway of ampicillin hydrolysis. After enzymatic treatment, the sample was subjected to HRMS for identification of the intermediate products and tentative Amp hydrolysis pathway proposed.	73
Fig. 2B.4	Residual antibiotic activity and toxicity assessment of ampicillin transformed products. Growth of antibiotic sensitive <i>Escherichia coli</i> BL21DE3 in presence and absence of Amp transformed products. Inset: Cell viability (MTT assay) of <i>Escherichia coli</i> BL21DE3 grown in presence and absence of Amp transformed products.	74
Fig. 2B.5	Remediation of different β -lactam antibiotics using <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20 β -lactamase.	75
Fig. 2B.6	Remediation of antibiotics mixture using ampicillin (Amp) or meropenem (Mer)- induced β -lactamase	77
Fig. 2B.7	Plate assay showing antibiotic and non-antibiotic activity after enzymatic treatment. <i>E. coli</i> BL21DE3 plated on LB gar plate. (1): No lactamase treatment, (2): Ampicillin-induced lactamase, (3): Meropenem-induced lactamase.	78
Fig. 3.1	(a) Scanning electron micrographs of magnetic nanoparticles (b) β -lactamase immobilized magnetic nanoparticles	90
Fig 3.2	FT-IR spectra of unbound magnetic nanoparticles (blue) and β -lactamase immobilized magnetic nanoparticles (red)	91
Fig. 3.3	UV-Vis spectra of unbound magnetic nanoparticles (black) and immobilized magnetic nanoparticles (green)	92

Fig 3.4	X-ray diffractogram of unbound magnetic nanoparticles (blue) and β -lactamase immobilized magnetic nanoparticles (red)	93
Fig. 3.5	Time course removal of varying concentration of meropenem using β -lactamase immobilized magnetic nanoparticles	94
Fig. 3.6	Effect of pH on removal of meropenem lactamase immobilized MNPs	96
Fig. 3.7	Use of enzyme immobilized MNPs in repeated cycles	97
Fig. 3.8	ESI mass spectra of meropenem intermediate metabolite	98
Fig. 3.9	Proposed pathway of hydrolysis/transformation of meropenem by immobilized β -lactamase	99
Fig 3.10	(a) Toxicity assessment of meropenem hydrolysed products on antibiotic sensitive <i>E. coli</i> BL21(DE3) through growth pattern (b) MTT assay	100
Fig. 3.11	Toxicity assessment of meropenem hydrolyzed products on antibiotic sensitive <i>E. coli</i> BL21 (DE3) using confocal microscopy (a) cells grown in absence of Mer hydrolysed products (control); (b) cells grown in presence of Mer hydrolysed products	102
Fig. 3.12	<i>In-vitro</i> removal of antibiotic mixture by enzyme immobilized MNPs	103
Fig. 3.13	Removal of mixture of antibiotics from aquaculture wastewater	105
Fig. 4.1	a) SDS gel electrophoresis of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20 β -lactamase (lane 1-CFS containing β -lactamase; lane 2-marker) b) Zymography of β -lactamase using iodometric assay.	117

Fig.4.2	a) Effect of agarose concentration on immobilization efficiency	118
	b) Scanning electron micrographs of (i) agarose gel (ii) β -lactamase immobilized agarose gel.	119
Fig.4.3	Time course removal of doripenem by β -lactamase entrapped in agarose gel matrix	120
Fig. 4.4	HRMS spectrum of doripenem hydrolysed products	122
Fig.4.5	Reusability of lactamase entrapped in agarose discs	123
Fig. 4.6	Toxicity assessment of doripenem hydrolyzed products on antibiotic sensitive <i>E. coli</i> BL21 (DE3) using	124
	a) MTT assay; control- cells grown in absence of doripenem hydrolysed products; test- cells grown in presence of doripenem hydrolysed products (ns- non significant)	
	b) Confocal microscopy. <i>E. coli</i> BL21(DE3) cells grown in absence (i) presence of doripenem hydrolyzed products (ii) and presence of Doripenem.	
Fig. 4.7	Removal of Mixture of antibiotics	126
Fig. 4.8	Schematic diagram of Fixed column Bioreactor (FBCR)	130
Fig. 4.9	Effect of the flow rate for antibiotic removal by Fixed column Bioreactor (FBCR) in continuous mode	131
Fig.4.10	Reusability of FBCR for removal of antibiotics in continuous mode	132
Fig. 4.11	First order and second order linear regression model for degradation of antibiotics; (a and b) Doripenem, (c and d) meropenem, (e and f) amoxicillin, (g and h) mixture of Doripenem, Meropenem and Amoxicillin	135

Fig. 5.1	a) Colony PCR analysis of the transformants observed using 1 % agarose gel electrophoresis	147
	b) Plasmid PCR analysis of the products observed using 1 % agarose gel electrophoresis	
	c) Restriction release-for confirmation of cloned gene	
Fig. 5.2	a) Electropherogram of cloned plasmid sequencing	148
	b) Open reading frame using Expasy translate	149
	c) NCBI protein blast	149
Fig. 5.3	a) Expression profile of recombinant metallo β - lactamase; M- Marker, 1-crude protein induced at 1) 0.6 mM IPTG, 2) 0.4 mM 3) 0.2 mM IPTG and 4) Inclusion body fraction induced at 0.6mM IPTG	152
	b) Purification of the recombinant metallo- β -lactamase inclusion bodies using, 1) 10%, 2) 30 % sucrose density gradient	
Fig. 5.4	TEM images of recombinant metallo β - lactamase inclusion bodies formed inside the <i>E. coli</i> BL21 (DE3), LIB expressed at 1) 20 °C, 2) 30 °C and 3) 37 °C; a) image taken at 3kX, b) Image taken at 15kx	155
Fig. 5.5	β -lactamase activity in purified lactamase Inclusion Bodies expressed at different temperatures	157
Fig. 5.6	ThT binding assay	159
Fig. 5.7	Application of lactamase Inclusion Bodies in remediation of antibiotic mixture	161
Fig.6.1	Flow chart for the synthesis of meropenem incorporated nanoflowers	169
Fig. 6.2	(a) FE-SEM image of meropenem Nanoflowers	173
	(b) EDX Mapping	173

	(c) EDS map spectra	174
Fig. 6.3	(a) XRD spectra of meropenem nanoflowers	175
	(b) Dynamic Light Scattering of meropenem nanoflowers	175
	(c) Transmission electron microscope images of meropenem nanoflowers	176
Fig. 6.4	UV spectrometry of meropenem, copper sulphate and meropenem nanoflowers	177
Fig 6.5	HPLC graphs of a) initially added meropenem in the buffer (26 µg/ml); b) Supernatant obtained after synthesis of mNFs	178
Fig 6.6	Antibacterial activity of free meropenem and mNFs against <i>P. aeruginosa</i> PAO1	179
Fig 6.7	Antibacterial activity of free meropenem and mNFs against a) <i>S. aureus</i> , b) <i>K. pneumonia</i>	180
Fig 6.8	Antibacterial activity of mNFs (a) colony forming units (CFU)/ml. <i>P. aeruginosa</i> PAO1 bacterial growth significantly reduced for cells treated with mNFs and (b) images of petri plates used to calculate CFU/ml	181
Fig. 6.9	Visualizing morphological changes in cell membranes of <i>P. aeruginosa</i> using TEM. (a) without treatment and (b) Treated with 1.33 µg/ml free meropenem (c) Treated with 0.5 mg/ml mNFs (containing 1.33 µg/ml meropenem).	183
Fig. 6.10	Confocal microscopy images of <i>P. aeruginosa</i> a) control b) treated with free meropenem c) treated with mNFs (Syto9 (green)- live cells; Propidium iodide (red)-dead)	185

Fig. 6.11	Biofilm inhibition by mNFs	187
Fig. 6.12	FE-SEM images of biofilm i) without any treatment ii) treatment with 1.33 µg/ml free meropenem iii) treatment with 0.5 mg/ml mNFs	188
Fig. 6.13	Pyocyanin inhibition assay: the quantitative assessment of pyocyanin inhibition in <i>P. aeruginosa</i> PAO1 treated with free meropenem and mNFs	190
Fig. A1	Standard curve of Ampicillin for the estimation of residual ampicillin	253
Fig. A2	Standard curve of Meropenem for the estimation of residual meropenem	253
Fig. A3	Standard curve of Doripenem for the estimation of residual Doripenem	254
Fig. A4	Standard curve of Amoxicillin for the estimation of residual Amoxicillin	254

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Description	Page No.
Table 1.1	Concentration of β -lactam antibiotics detected in wastewater	4
Table 1.2	Recent studies on microbial bioremediation of antibiotics	30
Table 1.3	Removal of antibiotics using different enzymes	34
Table 2A.1	Genome features of <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20	50
Table 2A.2	Pairwise comparisons of <i>Bacillus tropicus</i> EMB20 versus type strain genomes	53
Table 2A.3	β -Lactamases found in the genome of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20	56
Table 2A.4	The GC content of 22 β -lactamases of <i>B. tropicus</i> EMB20	59
Table 3.1	Optimization of binding of β -lactamase on functionalized MNPs	89
Table 3.2	Statistical analysis of eEffect of pH on removal of Mer by lactamase immobilized MNPs	96
Table 3.3	Statistical analysis of removal of antibiotic mixture (2-way ANOVA)	104
Table 3.4	Characteristics of aquaculture wastewater	105
Table 3.5	Statistical analysis of removal of the mixture of antibiotics from aquaculture wastewater (2-way ANOVA)	106
Table 4.1	Composition of hospital wastewater	115
Table 4.2	Statistical analysis of time course removal of doripenem by β -lactamase entrapped in agarose gel matrix	121

Table 4.3	Statistical analysis of reusability of lactamase entrapped in agarose discs	124
Table 4.4	Statistical analysis of remediation of antibiotics mixture	126
Table 4.5	Removal of β -lactam antibiotics using β -lactamases or β -lactamase producing microbes	127
Table 4.6	Statistical analysis of reusability of FBCR for remediation of antibiotics in continuous mode	132
Table 4.7	Correlation coefficient (r^2 value), rate constant and half-life value of first and second order kinetics model for degradation of Doripenem, meropenem, amoxicillin, individually and their mixture.	133
Table 5.1	PCR reaction master Mix components	141
Table 5.2	Reaction mixture components for double digestion of the amplified gene and plasmid pET22b (+)	142
Table 5.3	Concentrations of the isolated double digested insert and plasmid pET22b (+)	143
Table 5.4	Reaction components of ligation reaction of the digested insert and plasmid	143
Table 5.5	β -lactamase activity in purified inclusion bodies	153

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

µg/L	micrograms per liter
µl	Microliter
µg	Microgram
ACN	Acetonitrile
Amox	Amoxicillin
Amp	Ampicillin
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
ANI	Average nucleotide identity
APTES	3-aminopropyltriethoxysilane
AQW	Aquaculture wastewater
ARGs	Antimicrobial resistance genes
CDSs	Coding DNA sequences
CFS	Cell-free supernatant
CFU	Colony Forming Units
CFX	Cefuroxime (CFX)
CGIA	Colloidal gold immunoassay
CLIA	Chemiluminescence immunoassay
CLSI	Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute
Conc.	Concentration
CPR	Cefpirome (CPR)
CTX	Cefotaxime (CTX)

CV	Crystal violet
dDDH	Digital DNA-DNA hybridization
DLS	Dynamic light scattering
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DTT	Dithiothreitol
ELISA	Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay
EPS	Extracellular polymeric substances
FBCR	Fixed-bed column bioreactor
FCC	Face centered cubic
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FE-SEM	Field emission scanning electron microscope
EDS	Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy
FIA	Fluorescence immunoassay
FT-IR	Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy
HGT	Horizontal gene transfer (HGT)
HPLC	High performance liquid chromatography
HR-MS	High-resolution mass spectrometry
HWW	Hospital wastewater
IMP	Imipenemase
IPTG	Isopropyl β -d-1-thiogalactopyranoside
isDDH	<i>in-silico</i> DNA-DNA hybridization
JCPDS	Joint Committee on Powder Diffraction Standards
KPC	<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i> carbapenemase

LB	Luria Bertani
LCMS	Liquid Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS),
LIBs	Lactamase Inclusion Bodies
LOD	Limit of detection
MBLs	Metallo- β -lactamases
MDR	Multidrug-resistant
Mer	Meropenem
mg	Milligram
MICs	Minimum inhibitory concentrations MICs
mm	Millimetre
mM	Milli molar
mNFs	Meropenem nanoflowers
MNPs	Magnetic nanoparticles
MTCC	Microbial type culture collection
MTT	3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyl tetrazolium bromide
MWCO	Molecular weight cut-off
NB	Nutrient Broth
NCBI	National Center for Biotechnology Information
NDM	New Delhi metallo- β -lactamase
ng/L	Nanograms per liter
nm	Nanometre
PAGE	Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis

PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PGAP	Prokaryotic Genomes Annotation Pipeline
PMSF	Phenylmethanesulfonyl fluoride
QS	Quorum sensing
RAST	Rapid Annotation using the Subsystem Technology
RIA	Radioimmunoassay
SBLs	Serine- β -lactamases
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDS	Sodium Dodecyl Sulphate
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
SHV	Sulf-hydryl variable active site
TDS	Total dissolved solids
TEM	Transmission electron microscope
ThT	Thioflavin T
TSB	Tryptic soya broth
TSS	Total suspended solids
TYGS	Type (Strain) Genome Server
UV	Ultraviolet
VIM	Verone integron-encoded metallo-beta-lactamase
WWTPs	Wastewater treatment plants
XRD	X-ray diffraction
