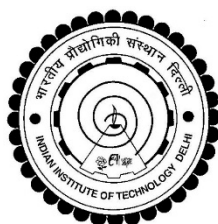


IMPROVED BIODESULFURIZATION OF PERSISTENT ORGANOSULFUR COMPOUNDS

POOJA SINGH



DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMICAL ENGINEERING AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

SEPTEMBER 2015

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by

POOJA SINGH

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMICAL ENGINEERING AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

Submitted

in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

to the



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

NEW DELHI-110016

SEPTEMBER 2015

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Improved biodesulfurization of persistent organosulfur compounds**” being submitted by **Ms. Pooja Singh** to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for the award of Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a record bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance in conformity with the rules and regulations of Indian Institute of Technology Delhi.

The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Successful completion of my thesis is the result of years of dedicated hard work. I was accompanied and supported by many people and it's time to express my gratitude towards them. I would like to acknowledge the following individuals who encouraged, inspired, helped, supported, and assisted, me to pursuit the degree.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and sense of respect to my advisor Dr. Preeti Srivastava for her excellent guidance and suggestions in my day to day work. Her kind and much needed effort provided me an opportunity to enhance my knowledge throughout the study. She has been a tremendous mentor for me. I would like to thank her for encouraging me all the way in my research. Her advice on research work has been priceless. Besides this she is also a kind hearted and caring person.

I avail this opportunity to express my thank to my committee members, Prof. Saroj Mishra, Dr. Biswajeet Kundu, and Dr. Shilpi Sharma, who gave their time to evaluate my research work and provided me with their brilliant comments and suggestions to improve my work.

I would also like to thank to the Head of Department and other faculty members of the department for their kind support.

I would like to acknowledge and convey my sincere thanks to Dr. M. P. Singh and Dr. Manoj Uperati (IOCL Faridabad) for their valuable suggestions and also for providing oil samples in the initial phase of the study.

I would also like to thanks Mr. Mukesh Anand, Mr. Rajiv Dahiya, Mr. S. P. Rana, Mr. Sumit and Neera Maam for all their support and help.

Special thanks to Neelam Maam, Sitaramji and other office staff members of DBEB for all the kind help.

I would like to thank Ajay Sir (AIRF, JNU), for helping me to carryout GC-MS analysis.

Thanks to my senior Mr. Javed Equbal, for his support and help in the initial days in RNAI lab.

I would also like to thank my friends Aakriti, Shikha, Shilpi, Shivani, Neha, Arpita, Anamika, Shraddha, Tenzin, Swati, Surabhi, Ritesh, Sunil kumar and khushboo for their undemanding help and support. I would also like to record my thanks to my hostel roommates, Snehil and Sonia for the care and supports.

I would like to express my thanks to Anees for his time to time advice related to research work and valuable assistance throughout the study. Special thanks to the juniors Faraz, Akhil, Tafazzul, Meet, Sahil, Jyoti, Kriti, Sandesh, Ramesh, Anurag and Ankur for all the help support and making the lab environment friendly which makes the work easy.

I would also like to pay thanks to my juniors Aayushi, Divya, Sagar, Sabita, Gaurav, Tanaya, Aashima and Gunjan for their great help and support in experiments and writing. They always incited me to strive towards my goal during the tough phase of the study.

Special thanks to Mr. Avneesh, for maintaining the lab clean and organized.

Precious thanks to all those whose names are missing but they are not forgotten

Finally I would like to extend my heartiest thanks to Rudra for his continuous motivation during the tough times in the final phase of the research programme.

I am thankful to my sister Priya and brother Abhishek beyond words for being there for me in all the ups and downs I went through all my life.

Although it's not possible to thank my parents in few lines, for all of the sacrifices that they have made for me. Your prayers for me was what sustained me thus far

At last I am thankful to almighty for always being on my side and bestowing me with blessings that have helped me through good and bad times. Without their grace the thesis would not have been materialized.

Pooja Singh

ABSTRACT

Fossil fuels are the major source of energy on earth. Sulfur emission due to combustion of these fossil fuels is a global problem. These emissions cause various environmental and health hazards. Reduction in sulfur emissions is highly desirable and many countries have, therefore, established stringent sulfur emission standards. Conventionally sulfur is removed from petroleum fractions by hydrodesulfurization (HDS) which is capable of removing most of the inorganic as well as some organic sulfur compounds. Some organosulfur compounds such as dibenzothiophene, benzothiophenes and their derivatives, however, are not removed completely by this process. For their removal, a modified HDS method, referred as deep HDS, is needed, which requires a higher temperature i.e. 400-450 °C and presence of some specialized catalysts. Due to this the process becomes more expensive. While dibenzothiophenes and benzothiophenes are removed by this process, their alkylated derivatives such as 4,6- dimethyl dibenzothiophene, 4- methyl dibenzothiophene etc. are not removed, they are termed as persistent/ recalcitrant organosulfur compounds. For removal of such type of compounds biodesulfurization is an attractive alternative. Biodesulfurization, where in microorganisms are used to break the target compounds to release sulfur from petroleum fractions, offers the advantage of removing the sulfur selectively without affecting the calorific value of fuel. It is energy efficient, and is therefore environmentally and economically favorable. In the past several bacterial strains have been isolated that have the capability to remove sulfur from such persistent organosulfur compounds. The bacteria isolated so far have limited substrate range, low activity and less solvent tolerance. For commercialization, the desired rate of biodesulfurization should be 3 mM/gDCW/h. whereas the maximum rate achieved till date is 320 μ M/gDCW/h. A bacterial strain *Gordonia* sp. IITR100 was isolated in our lab from petroleum contaminated soil by enrichment culture using 4,6-dimethyl dibenzothiophene as the sulfur source. The biodesulfurization genes were also

identified. The present work involves a) determination of the efficacy of the strain towards biodesulfurization of persistent organosulfurs such as Benzonaphthothiophene and 4,6 dimethyl dibenzothiophene, b) elucidation of the biodesulfurization pathway of benzonaphthothiophene c) development of molecular tools for gene expression in *Gordonia* and d) construction of a recombinant *Gordonia* with improved biodesulfurization activity.

The bacterium was found to desulfurize benzonaphthothiophene and 4,6 dimethyl dibenzothiophene efficiently. A novel method was developed for elucidation of the biodesulfurization pathway of benzonaphthothiophene. The set of constructed plasmids can be used for the determination of biodesulfurization pathway of any organosulfur compound.

For constructing a recombinant strain, an improved protocol for electroporation in *Gordonia* was developed. A new promoter was isolated from *Gordonia* and characterized in detail. To the best of our knowledge this is the first report on the detailed characterization of a stationary phase promoter from *Gordonia*.

An expression vector was constructed using the isolated promoter. Expression of biodesulfurization genes was achieved. A recombinant *Gordonia* strain was constructed which had many useful features. The constructed recombinant strain has high potential for applications in biodesulfurization of diesel and crude oil.

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ABBREVIATIONS

2-HBP	2-Hydroxybiphenyl
2-HBPS	2(2'-hydroxybiphenyl)-benzene sulfinate
2-MBP	2 Methoxy biphenyl
3MDBT	3-Methyl dibenzothiophene
Amp	Ampicillin
ATCC	American Type Culture Collection
BDS	Biodesulfurisation
BLAST	Basic local alignment search tool
BNT	Benzenaphthothiophene
BSM	Basal salt media
Cm	Chloramphenicol
CSPD	3-(4-methoxy Spiro(1,2-dioxetane-3,2'-(5'-chloro)tricyclo(3.3.1.1(3,7))decan)-4-yl) phenyl phosphate
DBT	Dibenzothiophene
DBTS	Dibenzothiophene sulfone
DIG	Dioxigenin
DMDBT	4,6Dimethyldibenzothiophene
dNTP	Deoxy ribose nucleotide triphosphate
DszA	DBTS-monoxygenase
DszB	2'-Hydroxybiphenyl-2-sulfinate desulfinate
DszC	DBT- monoxygenase
DszD	Flavin-reductase
EDTA	Ethylene diamine tetra acetic acid
Fig.	Figure
GC-MS	Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectroscopy
Gibbs Reagent	4,6dichloroquinone 4chlorimide
HCl	Hydrochloric acid
HDS	Hydrodesulfurisation
HPLC	High Pressure Liquid Chromatography

INH	Iso nicotinic acid hydrazide
IPTG	Isopropyl β -D thio galactopyranoside
Kan	Kanamycin
LB	Luria Broth
MCC	Microbial culture collection
MTCC	Microbial type culture collection
ODS	Oxidative desulfurization
ONPG	O-nitrophenyl β -D galactopyranoside
PASHs	Poly aromatic sulphur hetro cycles
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
RACE	Rapid amplification of c-DNA ends
RNase	Ribonuclease
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulphate
Tet	Tetracycline
TLC	Thin Layer Chromatography
Tris	Tris (hydroxymethyl) amino methane
UV	Ultra violet
X-gal	5-Bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl- β -D-galactopyranoside