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Bioleaching-Microbe Assisted Metal Recovery

Nida tabassum khan

Department of Biotechnology, Faculty of Life Sciences & Informatics, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, Takatu Campus, Airport Road, Quetta, Balochistan

ABSTRACT

Bioleaching otherwise called microbial bioleaching is characterized as the solubilization of metals from insoluble ore substrates either straight by the digestion of filtering organism or by implication by the results of their digestion. This process gives a method by which metals can be recuperated from mechanical wastes, second rate minerals, metal bearing minerals, soil polluted with metals, mine tailings and so on.

KEY WORDS: Hydrometallurgy; Mining; Uranium; Oxidation; Environmentally friendly; Heap bioleaching

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INTRODUCTION

The process of bioleaching is employed in mining and bio hydrometallurgy to extracts valuable metals such as copper, zinc, gold, silver, iron, nickel. cobalt etc from their ores with the help of microorganisms such as bacteria [1,2].Bioleaching process occurs at a very slow rate in nature and therefore not suitable for commercial extraction of metals [3]. Thus, at optimized temperature, oxygen content and in the presence of suitable microorganism this process can be accelerated [4].

The most common commercial processes of bioleaching are as follows:

- **Slope leaching:** The Fine mineral is kept into an enormous, incline moulded dump. During slant draining, a water arrangement is made into a section containing *thiobacillus* and is consistently splashed over the metal. After wards, the filter alcohol is assembled at the base and prepared for metal recuperation [5,6].
- **In-situ leaching:** This type of bioleaching process is also known as solution mining in which in-situ recovery of metals from their ores occurs by dissolution of solid-state mineral ore[7]. Water containing thiobacillus is pushed through the drilled passages within the ore. Then the leach fluid is stored until it is time for metal recovery [8].
- **Heap leaching:** The Heap bioleaching is a microbial innovation which catalyses the decay of the mineral without granulating it [9]. Under the oxidation activity of the $Fe^{3+,}$ important metals in sulfide go into the fluid stage as particles, which are then recuperated from the resulting system. The principal capacity of the microorganisms is the recovery of Fe^{3+}[10]. This process is cost effective, environment friendly and other straightforward prerequisites [11].In heap leaching, the ores are arranged in large heaps, over which an aqueous mixture of microorganisms is sprayed. The solution is then collected and processed to recover metals [12].
- **Pyrite leaching:** In this type of leaching process the first step is the oxidation of disulfide to thiosulfate by ferric ion which is reduced to give ferrous ion which is later oxidized by the bacteria to give ferric ion and thiosulphate is oxidized to give sulphur [13]

MECHANISMS OF BIOLEACHING

Bioleaching involves numerous iron and sulphur oxidizing bacteria such as Acidithiobacillus ferredoxins, Acidithiobacillus thiooxidans etc [14]. The function of microbe is oxidation of the ore, and the regeneration of the chemical oxidants in the end of the bioleaching process [15].

TYPES OF BIOLEACHING

Two types of bioleaching process are well known direct bioleaching and indirect bioleaching [16].

1. **Direct bioleaching:** In direct bioleaching a physical contact exist between the bacteria and mineral ores and the oxidation is assisted by microbial enzymes [17].

2. **Indirect bioleaching:** Indirect bioleaching the microbes are not in direct contact with the mineral ore but the leaching agents are produced [18].

ADVANTAGES OF BIOLEACHING

- It is a less difficult less expensive strategy and simple to keep up with [19].
- Bioleaching is harmless to the ecosystem interactions [20].
- It is utilized to remove metals from minerals which are poor for different innovations [21].

DISADVANTAGES OF BIOLEACHING

- Slow exothermic process that can kill the microbe [22].
- Toxic by-products are produced in the process [23].

CONCLUSION

Developments in bioleaching enable this technique to be utilized as an alternative process for extraction of metals

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