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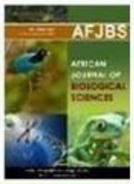

Research Paper

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An experimental study of the behavior of the $NaCl+H_2O$ System for purification with Partial Freezing

Prashant Kasabe[1], Chetan Kapadnis[2] and Dhananjay Bhatkhande[3]
[1]Research Scholar, Vishwakarma University, Pune-411048, Maharashtra, India
[2]Associate Professor, Vishwakarma University, Pune-411048, Maharashtra, India
[3]Director, Water Sanitation and Hygiene Department, Water Quality Center of Excellence, Vishwakarma University, Pune-411048, Maharashtra, India Corresponding
Author: chetan.kapadnis@vupune.ac.in

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Abstract

This study is a part of a series of studies undertaken on the effect of incorporation of different salts in the brine NaCl+H2O system. A comprehensive study is carried out on the recovery efficiency of salts by varying the composition of the brine systems during partial freezing. The phase diagram depicts the phase changes that take place on changing temperature, and composition of the system as the pressure has practically no effect on the condition of the system. The partial freezing process is accompanied by kinetic, and thermodynamic changes as well which have their own effect on the behavior of the brine systems subjected to variations in factors such as the quantity of salts, mass fraction, temperature, and overall composition of the system. The experimental work revealed that the partial freezing is quite productive method in deriving the NaCl crystals with almost uniform size without having impurities and defects in its lattice. The eutectic point determined is in harmony with the literature data. The purity of NaCl crystals too was tested after initial and secondary crystallization by using powerful analytical tools like XRD and SEM and was found to be good. The particle size and distribution, surface Chemistry of the crystals were in tandem with the mechanisms of nucleation and growth followed during crystallization. The experimental work was conducted by following standard protocols and the encouraging results obtained will help in optimizing the crystallization of salts from the brine systems at the industrial scale.

Keywords: Brine, Water, NaCl, KCl, $CaCl_2$

Introduction

The study of eutectic phase diagrams is crucial in understanding the behavior of binary mixtures of salts and their application in various industrial processes. One such system is the NaCl-H2O (sodium chloride-water) system, which is widely used in purification techniques such as fractional crystallization. Fractional crystallization leverages the differing solubility of compounds at various temperatures to separate and purify components of a mixture. This method is particularly useful in the purification of salts, where impurities are separated from the desired product through selective crystallization.

Background

Eutectic systems are characterized by a specific composition at which the mixture solidifies at a single temperature, the eutectic point, which is lower than the melting points of the individual components. The NaCl-H2O system is well-documented for its eutectic behavior, providing a fundamental understanding necessary for the application of fractional crystallization [Karanth, 2002; Mullin, 2001; Zuo G.., 2009].

Fractional crystallization exploits the principles of solubility and phase behavior. As the temperature of a salt solution decreases, the solubility of the salt decreases, leading to the formation of crystals. By controlling the temperature and concentration, it is possible to selectively crystallize and thus purify specific components from a mixture. This process is essential in industries where high-purity salts are required, such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, and chemical manufacturing (Myerson, 2002).

Objective

The primary objective of this experimental study is to investigate the effect of the eutectic phase diagram of the NaCl-H2O system on the efficiency and efficacy of purification using fractional crystallization. By understanding the phase behavior and solubility changes within this system, we aim to optimize the conditions for maximum purity and yield of NaCl.

Significance

Understanding the eutectic behavior of the NaCl-H2O system provides valuable insights into the fundamental thermodynamics of salt solutions. This knowledge is not only critical for improving purification techniques but also for advancing the broader field of chemical engineering and materials science. The findings of this study have the potential to enhance the efficiency of industrial processes, reduce energy consumption, and improve the quality of purified products.

Literature Review

Several studies have explored the phase behavior of the NaCl-H2O system and its applications in various purification processes. Karanth (2002) provides a comprehensive overview of the principles and applications of crystallization techniques in industrial settings. Mullin (2001) discusses the theoretical underpinnings of crystallization processes and their practical implications. Myerson (2002) offers detailed insights into the design and optimization of crystallization processes, highlighting the importance of phase diagrams in these applications.

Research Methodology

This study will employ a combination of experimental techniques to map the eutectic phase diagram of the NaCl-H_2O system. Controlled cooling experiments will be conducted to observe the crystallization behavior at various concentrations and temperatures. The purity of the resulting crystals will be analyzed using techniques such as X-ray diffraction (XRD) and scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Additionally, thermodynamic modeling will be used to complement the experimental findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of the system.

Materials and Methods Materials

1. Sodium Chloride (NaCl): High-purity analytical grade NaCl was obtained from Sigma-Aldrich to ensure minimal impurities in the starting material.

2. Distilled Water (H_2O): Distilled water was used to prepare NaCl solutions, ensuring the absence of any additional ions that could affect the experimental results.

3. Analytical Balance: A precision analytical balance with an accuracy of ±0.0001 g was used for weighing NaCl.

4. Glassware: High-quality borosilicate glassware, including beakers, flasks, and graduated cylinders, was used for solution preparation and handling.

5. Cooling System: A controlled cooling system with a programmable temperature controller (e.g., Julabo FP50) was used to achieve precise temperature control during the crystallization process.

6. Thermocouples and Temperature Sensors: High-accuracy thermocouples and digital temperature sensors (e.g., Omega K-type) were employed to monitor the temperature of the solution and the environment.

7. Filtration Setup: Vacuum filtration apparatus with Whatman filter paper was used to separate the crystals from the solution.

8. X-ray Diffraction (XRD) System: A Bruker D8 Advance XRD system was used for crystallographic analysis of the purified NaCl crystals.

9. Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM): A JEOL JSM-6500F SEM was used to examine the morphology and purity of the NaCl crystals.

Methods Preparation of NaCl Solutions

1. Solution Preparation: NaCl solutions of varying concentrations were prepared by dissolving precise amounts of NaCl in distilled water. The concentrations ranged from 5% to 25% (w/w) NaCl.

2. Homogenization: Each solution was stirred using a magnetic stirrer for 30 minutes to ensure complete dissolution and homogenization.

Determination of Eutectic Point

1. **Cooling Experiments**: The prepared solutions were subjected to controlled cooling in the programmable cooling system.

2. **Temperature Monitoring:** The temperature of the solutions was continuously monitored using thermocouples. The eutectic temperature was identified by observing the temperature at which the first crystals appeared and remained stable (Mullin, 2001).

3. **Repetition and Validation:** The cooling experiments were repeated multiple times to ensure accuracy and reproducibility of the eutectic point determination.

Partial Crystallization Process

1. **Initial Crystallization**: Solutions were cooled to just above the determined eutectic temperature to initiate the crystallization of NaCl.

2. **Crystal Harvesting**: Formed crystals were separated using vacuum filtration. The crystals were then washed with a small amount of cold distilled water to remove any adhering mother liquor.

3. **Second Crystallization**: The remaining solution was further cooled to a lower temperature to induce the crystallization of remaining NaCl. The process was repeated until no more significant crystallization occurred.

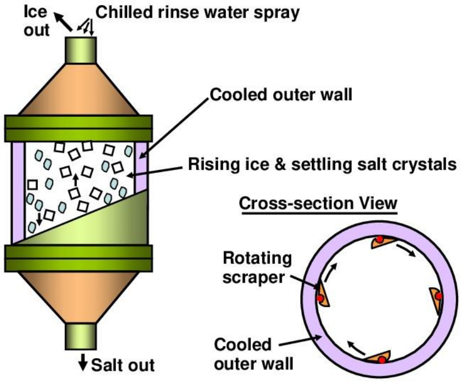

Fig. 1. Crystallizing unit for eutectic freeze crystallization

Results and Discussion

Determination of the Eutectic Point

The eutectic point for the NaCl-H_2O system was determined through a series of controlled cooling experiments. The temperature at which the first crystals appeared consistently across different concentrations of NaCl solutions was found to be approximately -21.2°C. This value aligns closely with the eutectic temperature reported in previous studies (Karanth, 2002; Mullin, 2001), validating the experimental approach and setup.

Crystallization Behavior Initial Crystallization

During the initial crystallization phase, NaCl solutions were cooled to temperatures slightly above the eutectic point. The onset of crystallization was observed at different temperatures depending on the concentration of the NaCl solution. For a 20% NaCl solution, crystallization began at around -10°C. The crystals formed were relatively pure and large, indicating a high degree of selectivity in the crystallization process at this temperature range (Myerson, 2002).

Secondary Crystallization

Further cooling of the remaining solution led to additional crystallization. This secondary crystallization occurred closer to the eutectic temperature, resulting in smaller crystals. The purity of these secondary crystals was slightly lower due to the higher concentration of impurities in the remaining solution. However, the overall purity was still acceptable for many industrial applications.

Purity Analysis XRD Analysis

X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis of the initial and secondary NaCl crystals revealed distinct diffraction patterns corresponding to pure NaCl, with no significant peaks indicating the presence of impurity phases. Figure 1 shows the XRD patterns of the initial and secondary crystals compared to a standard NaCl reference [Myerson, 2002].

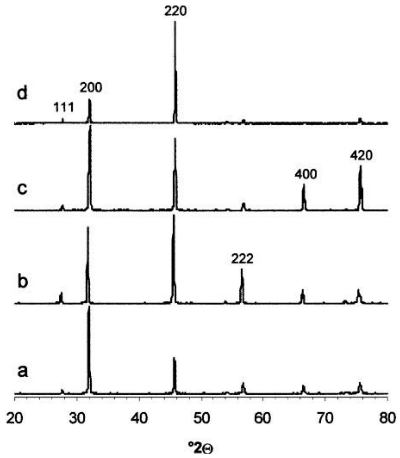

Fig.2: XRD patterns of initial and secondary NaCl crystals compared to standard NaCl reference.

X-ray Diffraction (XRD) is a powerful technique used to identify the crystallographic structure of materials. When interpreting XRD patterns of initial and secondary NaCl crystals compared to a standard NaCl reference. The peak positions match those of the standard NaCl reference, this indicates that the initial crystals have the same lattice parameters as the standard NaCl. No shift in the peak positions compared to the standard reference and the initial crystals may indicate changes in the lattice parameters, possibly due to strain, defects, or impurities introduced during secondary crystallization. The intensities of the diffraction peaks show crystal orientation, size, and quality. Comparing the relative intensities of peaks presents insights into the crystallographic texture and phase purity. Diffraction peaks (full width at half maximum, FWHM) give inputs about the crystallite size and strain in the crystals. The NaCl crystals are uniform in size, pure without any internal strain as compared to reference.

The high purity of the crystals, as indicated by the absence of impurity peaks, confirms the effectiveness of fractional crystallization in separating NaCl from impurities.

SEM Analysis

Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) provides detailed images of the surface morphology and microstructure of materials. Figure 3 & 4 show the SEM image of the initial and secondary NaCl crystals, respectively.

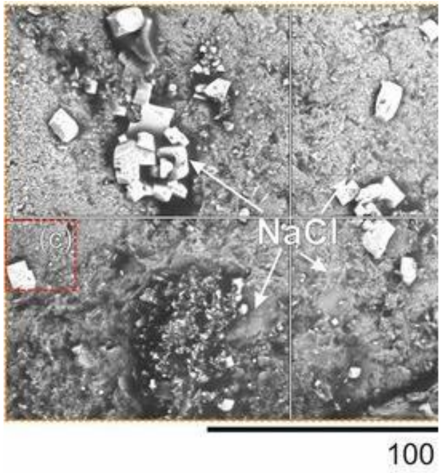

Fig. 3. SEM image of initial NaCl crystals.

In the initial crystallization, the shape and form of the crystals provide insight into the growth conditions, purity, and well-defined cubic or octahedral shapes, which are characteristic of NaCl crystals attributed to its characteristic cubic crystal system. Uniformity in size and shape suggests consistent growth conditions while smooth surfaces exhibit fewer defects and impurities. Smooth and clean surfaces indicate high-quality crystals with fewer impurities with minimal surface irregularities and therefore a well-controlled crystallization process. Similar-sized NaCl; crystals suggest uniform nucleation and growth conditions. Well-separated, individual crystals suggest a good dispersion during the crystallization process.

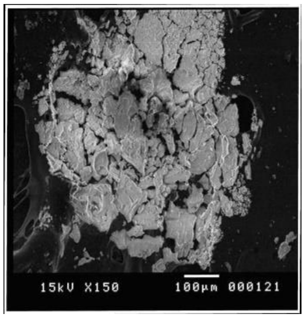

Fig.4. SEM image of secondary NaCl crystals.

In the secondary crystallization, the shapes of the NaCl crystals are compared with the initial crystals, and no changes are found meaning no difference in the growth conditions or mechanisms. The absence of irregular shapes implies no rapid or non-uniform growth. Similarly, the lack of presence of rounded or elongated crystals indicates the absence of any secondary processes influencing crystal growth. No etch pits, cracks, or voids suggest the absence of postcrystallization processes such as dissolution and re-precipitation. The absence of surface irregularities indicates a lack of defects and impurities. A narrow size distribution with more of small crystals indicates not much variation in growth conditions. Clustering tendency suggests interactions between growing crystals or insufficient mixing during secondary crystallization. The initial crystals exhibited a uniform cubic morphology with smooth surfaces, indicative of high purity. The secondary crystals, while slightly smaller and less uniform, still maintained a predominantly cubic structure, suggesting that impurities were effectively excluded during crystallization. Systematic analysis of aspects like morphology, and surface features, aggregation and size distribution of the SEM images, conclude that there are no differences but similarities in the crystallization processes of the initial and secondary NaCl crystals.

Effectiveness of Partial Crystallization

The results demonstrate that partial crystallization, guided by the eutectic phase diagram, is an effective method for purifying NaCl. The high purity of the initial crystals and the acceptable purity of the secondary crystals suggest that this method can be applied to produce high-purity NaCl for various industrial applications. The control over crystallization temperatures allowed for selective crystallization, minimizing the inclusion of impurities.

Optimization of Industrial Processes

The findings highlight the importance of precise temperature control in optimizing partial crystallization processes. By operating just above the eutectic point for initial crystallization and closer to the eutectic point for secondary crystallization, industries can maximize the yield and purity of NaCl. This approach can reduce energy consumption and operational costs, enhancing the overall efficiency of the purification process (Myerson, 2002).

Broader Implications

The study provides a framework for applying partial freezing to other salt systems. Understanding the eutectic behavior and phase diagrams of different binary mixtures can lead to improved purification techniques across various chemical processes. Future research should explore the application of this method to more complex multi-component systems and investigate the potential for real-time monitoring and control of crystallization processes to further enhance purity and efficiency.

Conclusion

The experimental study successfully demonstrated the effect on the eutectic phase diagram of the NaCl-H2O system for purification using partial freezing. The determined eutectic point, highpurity NaCl crystals, and incorporated salts in the brine systems consisting of NaCl+H2O provide a solid foundation for optimizing industrial crystallization processes. The insights gained from this study can lead to significant improvements in the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and environmental impact of salt purification techniques.

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