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**MATHEMATICAL MODELLING OF THE DYNAMICS  
OF GRANULAR MATERIALS IN A  
ROTATING CYLINDER**

Thesis submitted to  
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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**  
in  
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by  
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under the supervision of  
**Dr. S. SAVITHRI**



**REGIONAL RESEARCH LABORATORY (CSIR)**  
**Thiruvananthapuram**  
**November 2003**

## Declaration

I, Hema V., do hereby declare that the matter embodied in this thesis entitled “**Mathematical Modelling of the Dynamics of Granular Materials in a Rotating Cylinder**” is the result of the investigations carried out by me in the Computational Modelling and Simulation Unit of the Regional Research Laboratory (CSIR), Thiruvananthapuram, under the guidance of **Dr. S. Savithri**, and that the same has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree.

In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgement has been made wherever the work described is based on the findings of other investigators.



**Hema V.**



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#### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work outlined the thesis entitled "**Mathematical Modelling of the Dynamics of Granular Materials in a Rotating Cylinder**" is an authentic record of the research work carried out by **V. Hema** under my supervision in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of the **Cochin University of Science and Technology** and further that no part thereof has been submitted elsewhere for any other degree.

Dr. S. Savithri

(Supervisor)

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## Abstract

A fundamental understanding of mixing and blending of granular materials in horizontal rotating cylinders will be beneficial to a wide range of industries: pharmaceuticals, metallurgy, ceramics, composites, polymers, food processing and agriculture. Yet, in relation to its industrial prevalence, the understanding of granular mixing lags considerably when compared to that of liquid mixing.

Granular bed motion in the transverse cross section of a horizontal rotating cylinder is fundamental in determining advective heat transfer as well as axial flow of the bed material; but to date studies have been mainly empirical aimed at determining the macroscopic bed motion but devoid of detailed information of granular bed dynamics at a microscopic level.

The current study is therefore aimed at the development of a theoretical simulation tool based on Discrete Element Method (DEM) to interpret granular dynamics of solid bed in the cross section of the horizontal rotating cylinder at the microscopic level and subsequently apply this model to establish the transition behaviour, mixing and segregation.

The simulation of the granular motion developed in this work is based on solving Newton's equation of motion for each particle in the granular bed subjected to the collisional forces, external forces and boundary forces. At every instant of time, the forces are tracked and the positions, velocities and accelerations of each particle is

The software code for this simulation is written in VISUAL FORTRAN 90. After checking the validity of the code with special tests, it is used to investigate the transition behaviour of granular solids motion in the cross section of a rotating cylinder for various rotational speeds and fill fraction.

This work is hence directed towards a theoretical investigation based on Discrete Element Method (DEM) of the motion of granular solids in the radial direction of the horizontal cylinder to elucidate the relationship between the operating parameters of the rotating cylinder geometry and physical properties of the granular solid.

The operating parameters of the rotating cylinder include the various rotational velocities of the cylinder and volumetric fill. The physical properties of the granular solids include particle sizes, densities, stiffness coefficients, and coefficient of friction. Further the work highlights the fundamental basis for the important phenomena of the system namely; (i) the different modes of solids motion observed in a transverse cross-section of the rotating cylinder for various rotational speeds, (ii) the radial mixing of the granular solid in terms of active layer depth (iii) rate coefficient of mixing as well as the transition behaviour in terms of the bed turnover time and rotational speed and (iv) the segregation mechanisms resulting from differences in the size and density of particles.

The transition behaviour involving its six different modes of motion of the granular solid bed is quantified in terms of Froude number and the results obtained are validated with experimental and theoretical results reported in the literature. The transition from slumping to rolling mode is quantified using the bed turnover time and a linear relationship is established between the bed turn over time and the inverse of the rotational speed of the cylinder as predicted by Davidson *et al.*[2000]. The effect of the rotational speed, fill fraction and coefficient of friction on the dynamic angle of repose are presented and discussed. The variation of active layer depth with respect to fill fraction and rotational speed have been investigated. The results obtained through

simulation are compared with the experimental results reported by Van Puyvelde *et. al.* [2000] and Ding *et al.* [2002].

The theoretical model has been further extended, to study the mixing and segregation in the transverse direction for different particle sizes and their size ratios. The effect of fill fraction and rotational speed on the transverse mixing behaviour is presented in the form of a mixing index and mixing kinetics curve. The segregation pattern obtained by the simulation of the granular solid bed with respect to the rotational speed of the cylinder is presented both in graphical and numerical forms. The segregation behaviour of the granular solid bed with respect to particle size, density and volume fraction of particle size has been investigated. Several important macro parameters characterising segregation such as mixing index, percolation index and segregation index have been derived from the simulation tool based on first principles developed in this work.



# CONTENTS

<b>List of figures</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Granular materials: A fascinating field	1
1.2 Why study granular materials?	3
1.3 Granular mixing and segregation	4
1.4 Need for the present study	7
1.5 Layout of the thesis	9
<b>2 A literature review on the transport phenomena ...</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Dynamics of granular motion in rotating cylinders	13
2.3 Granular bed motion along the cylinder axis	14
2.4 Granular bed motion in the transverse plane	17
2.4.1 Slipping mode	18
2.4.2 Slumping mode	18
2.4.3 Rolling mode	18
2.4.4 Cascading mode	20
2.4.5 Cataracting mode	20
2.4.6 Centrifuging mode	20
2.5 Earlier studies on bed behaviour	21
2.6 Particle mixing and segregation in transverse plane	23
2.7 Modelling the flow of granular materials	30
2.7.1 Macroscopic modelling or continuum theory	30
2.7.2 Microscopic modelling or discrete element modelling	33

2.8	Experimental work	37
2.8.1	Positron Emission Topography	37
2.8.2	Positron Emission Particle Tracking	38
2.8.3	Magnetic Resonance Imaging	38
2.8.4	Gamma Ray Tomography	39
2.9	Conclusion	39
<b>3</b>	<b>Theoretical model: discrete element method</b>	<b>41</b>
3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Equations of particle motion	43
3.2.1	Translational motion	43
3.2.2	Rotational motion	45
3.3	Boundary conditions	47
3.4	Particle shape	48
3.5	General scheme for the contact geometry	49
3.6	Inter particle contact forces	52
3.7	Time integration	59
3.7.1	Gear's Predictor-Corrector algorithm	60
3.8	Collision detection	64
3.9	Input parameters	65
3.10	Implementation of the code	66
3.11	Special validation tests	71
3.11.1	Effect of normal elastic force in the vertical direction	71
3.11.2	Effect of normal elastic force in the horizontal direction	73
3.11.3	Effect of normal damping force	74
3.12	Conclusion	75
<b>4</b>	<b>Dynamics of granular solids motion in the transverse plane ...</b>	<b>77</b>
4.1	Introduction	77
4.2	Simulation of a packed bed of granular solids ...	79
4.3	Simulation of granular solids in the transverse plane ...	83

4.3.1	Dynamic angle of repose	83
4.3.2	Velocity profiles	84
4.3.3	Surface velocity of the granular bed	85
4.3.4	Active layer depth	86
4.3.5	Evaluation of kinetic energy of the system ...	87
4.4	Simulation of the various modes of the granular solid bed	87
4.4.1	Slipping mode	89
4.4.2	Slumping mode	91
4.4.3	Rolling mode	97
4.4.4	Cascading	100
4.4.5	Cataracting mode	104
4.4.6	Centrifuging	106
4.5	Results and discussion	117
4.5.1	Characterization of the transition behaviour	117
4.5.2	Characterization of active layer	122
4.5.3	Dynamic angle of repose	126
4.5.4	Surface velocity during granular motion	127
4.6	Conclusion	130
<b>5</b>	<b>Mixing and segregation behaviour of granular materials...</b>	<b>132</b>
5.1	Introduction	132
5.2	Mixing curve, Segregation Index and Percolation Index	136
5.2.1	Mixing curve	136
5.2.2	Segregation Index	138
5.2.3	Percolation Index	140
5.3	Mixing behaviour using DEMCYL	140
5.4	Segregation behaviour using DEMCYL	147
5.4.1	Effect of particle size ratio	147
5.4.2	Effect of rotational speed	149
5.4.3	Effect of volume concentration	156

	iv
5.4.4 Effect of particle density	159
5.5 Conclusion	161
<b>6 Conclusion</b>	<b>162</b>
6.1 Conclusions	162
6.2 Future scope	165
<b>Nomenclature</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>List of publications</b>	<b>185</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Schematic view of granular bed motion in a rotating cylinder.....	13
2.2	Schematic view of the different modes of solids motion .....	17
2.3	Rolling bed motion :top plane –active (shear)layer: Bottom plane-plug flow(non-shearing region).....	19
2.4	Comparison of granular flow behavior with other type flows.....	31
3.1	Elastic contact of two particles as overlap.....	42
3.2	Contact between two particles $i$ and $j$ .....	49
3.3	Schematic representation of contact forces.....	54
3.4	Flowchart showing the initial distribution of solid particles as a packed bed.....	69
3.5	Flowchart showing the calculation of particle positions at time $t + \Delta t$ ....	70
3.6	$y$ -position Vs time.....	72
3.7	Normal elastic force Vs time .....	73
3.8	$x$ -position Vs Time.....	74
3.9	$y$ -position Vs time.....	75
4.1	Co-ordinate system chosen for simulation.....	79
4.2	Initial Distribution of the particles.....	80
4.3	(a)Initial Packed bed.....	81
	(b)Total Kinetic energy with respect to time.....	82

4.4	Dynamic Angle of Repose.....	84
4.5	A typical vector plot.....	85
4.6	Discretisation of the cross section into segments.....	86
4.7	Six different modes of motion obtained through DEM simulation.....	88
4.8	(a) Granular bed in Slipping mode .....	89
	(b) The velocity profile in slipping mode.....	90
	(c) Dynamic angle of repose of the granular solid bed at 4 rpm.....	90
	(d) Kinetic energy of the granular solid bed at 4 rpm.....	91
...	...	...
4.9	Cycle Slumping or avalanching	
	(a)Initial stage of a slump at an angle $\theta_S$ .....	92
	(b)Final stage of a slump at an angle $\theta_d$ .....	92
	(c)Initial stage of the next slump at an angle at $\theta_S$ .....	92
	(d)The granular solid bed profile at the beginning of avalanching in the Slumping mode.....	92
4.10	a) Vector plot of the granular solid bed during solid body rotation in in Slumping mode.....	93
	(b) Vector plot of the granular solid bed at the beginning of the avalanching in Slumping mode.....	94
	(c) Trajectory of a single particle in slumping mode.....	95
	(d) Kinetic energy distribution during slumping mode.....	95
	(e) Dynamic angle of repose with respect to time during slumping mode.....	96
4.11	(a) Velocity profile of the rolling bed.....	97
	(b) Granular solid bed during rolling mode.....	98
	(c) Kinetic energy distribution.....	99
	(d) Dynamic angle of repose with respect to time.....	99
	(e) Trajectory of a single particle in rolling mode.....	100
4.12	(a) Granular Solid bed during cascading mode.....	101
	(b)Trajectory of a single particle in cascading mode.....	101
	(c)Velocity profile of the cascading mode.....	102
	(d)Kinetic energy distribution .....	103
	(e)Dynamic angle of repose with respect to time.....	103

4.13	(a) Granular solid bed during cataracting mode.....	104
	(b) Velocity profile of the cataracting mode.....	105
	(c) Trajectory of a single particle in cataracting mode.....	105
	(d) Kinetic energy distribution.....	106
4.14	(a) Granular solid bed during centrifuging mode.....	107
	(b) Velocity profile of the centrifuging mode.....	107
	(c) Trajectory of a single particle in centrifuging mode.....	108
	(c) Kinetic energy distribution.....	108
4.15	(a) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 1 rotation.....	109
	(b) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 2 rotation.....	109
	(c) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 3 rotation.....	110
	(d) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 5 rotation.....	110
	(e) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 7 rotation.....	111
	(f) Vector plot of the centrifuging motion after 9 rotation.....	111
4.16	(a) After 2 rotations with different rotational speed.....	112
	(b) After 4 rotations with different rotational speed.....	113
	(c) After 6 rotations with different rotational speed.....	114
	(d) After 8 rotations with different rotational speed.....	115
	(e) After 10 rotations with different rotational speed.....	116
4.17	Horizontal and vertical position of the particle with respect to time using DEM Simulation.....	119
4.18	Bed turn over time using DEM simulation.....	120
4.19	Active layer depth Vs Rotational speed.....	124
4.20	Active layer depth Vs Fill Fraction.....	125
4.21	Dynamic Angle of repose Vs Rotational Speed.....	126
4.22	Dynamic angle of repose Vs Coefficient of friction.....	127
4.23	Normalized Surface Velocity Along the chord length.....	128
4.24	Maximum Surface Velocities Vs Rotational Speed.....	129

5.1	Initial Particle Distribution.....	136
5.2	The Cross Section Of the Cylinder Divided into Different Segments.....	137
5.3	Mixing Pattern After 15 rotations in Rolling mode At rotational speed (a)20 rpm (b)25 rpm (c)30 rpm.....	141
5.4	Trajectory of a single Particle After 15 rotations in Rolling mode At rotational speed (a)20 rpm (b)25 rpm (c) 30rpm.....	142
5.5	Mixing Curve for fill fraction 30%.....	143
5.6	Degree of mixing on Natural log scale VsTime(fill fraction 30%).....	144
5.7	Rate of coefficient of mixing Vs Rotational Speed .....	145
5.8	Mixing index Vs Fill fraction.....	146
5.9(a)	Granular Solid bed with 20% of 6mm and 80% of 8mm Particles.....	148
(b)	Granular Solid bed with 20% of 6mm and 80% of 10mm Particles...	149
5.10(a-h)	Segregation Pattern formation for the first 9 rotations in the rolling mode.....	151
5.11(a-h)	Segregation Pattern formation for the first 9 rotations in the cascading mode.....	152
5.12(a-h)	Segregation Pattern formation for the first 9 rotations in the cataracting mode.....	154
5.13(a-h)	Segregation Pattern formation for the first 9 rotations in the centrifuging mode.....	155
5.14	Segregated Solid bed of 10% small particles and 90% Larger Particles...	156
5.15	Segregated Solid bed of 20% small particles and 80% Larger Particles...	157
5.16	Segregated Solid bed of 30% small particles and 70% Larger Particles..	157
5.17	Segregated Solid bed of 40% small particles and 60% Larger Particles..	158
5.18	Percolation Index Vs Volume fraction of Smaller Particles.....	159
5.19	Segregation of Denser Particles.....	160



## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Different modes of solids motion in terms of Froude Number	23
3.1	Values of the Parameter $\alpha_i$ .....	63
4.1	Process Parameters.....	83
4.2	Froude Numbers as predicted by Simulation.....	118
4.3	Process Parameters.....	121
4.4	Bed turnover Time as predicted by equation (4.9) And by DEM Simulation.....	122
4.5	Percentage of Active layer both Simulation and Equation 4.10.....	123
5.1	Mixing Parameters at 30% fill fraction.....	146
5.2	Mixing Parameters for different fill fraction.....	147

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Granular materials: A fascinating field

Granular materials are large conglomerations of discrete microscopic particles of varying size, shape and material properties, which displace from one another and interact only at the contact points. Granular materials are ubiquitous; a few examples include food products such as rice, corn and breakfast cereal flakes, building materials (sand, gravel and soil) and chemicals (coal, plastics and pharmaceuticals). They play an important role in several of our industries such as mining, agriculture, civil engineering and pharmaceutical engineering. They are also important in geological processes where landslides and erosion occur on a larger scale.

The behaviour of granular materials is determined by the material and geometric properties of the particles at the contact points. Depending on these conditions the granular materials exhibit properties reminiscent of the various states of matter; they may be deformed as solids, may have flowability similar to liquids or compressibility like that of gases. For example, a sand pile at rest with a slope lower than the angle of repose, behaves like a solid: the material remains at rest even though gravitational forces create macroscopic stresses on its surface. If the pile is tilted several degrees above the angle of repose, grains start to flow. However, this flow is clearly not that of an ordinary fluid because it only exists in a boundary layer at the pile's surface with no movement in the bulk.

A distinguishing feature of granular flows over other flows of solid-fluid mixtures is that in granular flows, the direct interaction of particles plays an important

role in the flow mechanics. The dynamics of granular materials are highly dissipative and a significant fraction of the energy dissipation and momentum transfer in granular flows occur when particles are in contact with each other or with a boundary. Unlike the flows of solid-liquid mixtures, the temperature has no effect on grain motion since external forces such as gravity dominate the behaviour. Further the frictional interactions between the individual grains are highly nonlinear and, for static friction, even discontinuous. Also the particle size in a granular system is comparable to the length scale of flow variation; for example, the patterns such as waves resulting from the flow of granular materials occur on scales only 10-100 times that of the individual grain. Due to these unique properties exhibited by granular systems they are usually considered as an additional state of matter in its own right.

The unusual and unique character exhibited by granular material systems have led to a resurgence of interest within several scientific and engineering disciplines ranging from physics, soil mechanics and chemical engineering (Jaeger and Nagel [1992]; Behringer [1993, 1995]; Bideau and Hansen [1993]; Jaeger *et al.* [1994, 1996a, 1996b]; Mehta [1994]; Hayakawa *et al.* [1995]).

The science of granular media has a long history. Much of the engineering literature has been devoted to understanding how to deal with these materials. Notable contributions in the literature include Coulomb [1773], who proposed the ideas of static friction; Faraday [1831], who discovered the convective instability in a vibrated container filled with powder, and Reynolds [1885], who introduced the notion of dilatancy, which implies that a compacted granular material must expand in order for it to undergo shear.

Finally, there is another vitally important reason for the recent activity in this field. As mentioned above, many of our industries rely on transporting and storing granular materials. These include the pharmaceutical industry which relies on the processing of powders and pills, agriculture and the food processing industry where

seeds, grains and foodstuffs are transported and manipulated, as well as all construction based industries. Similarly, manufacturing processes in the automotive industry rely on casting large metal parts in carefully packed beds of sand. Thus it is important to develop appropriate technology for handling and controlling granular materials effectively, and this still remains as an area not yet fully explored.

## 1.2 Why study granular materials?

A good understanding of the physics of granular materials is desirable in designing efficient processing and handling systems. The significance of this is apparent when one considers the following statistics:

- In chemical industry approximately one-half of the products and at least three-quarters of the raw materials are in granular form (Neddermann [1992]).
- Ennis *et al.* [1994] estimate that \$61 billion in the chemical industry is linked to particle technology.
- Approximately 1.3% of the U.S. electrical power production goes toward grinding particles or ores (Ennis *et al.* [1994]).
- Landslides cause a minimum of \$1.5 billion dollars of property damage and at least 25 fatalities in the United States annually.
- Each year over 1,000 silos, bins, and hoppers fail in North America (Knowlton *et al.* [1994]).
- In Mexico, 5 million tons of corn is handled each year, 30% of which is lost due to poor handling systems.

In the chemical industry alone, it is estimated that half the products and three-quarters of the raw materials are in the form of particulates (Neddermann [1992]) and also enormous costs are associated with handling these materials. For example, a



























































































































































































































































































































































































































