Isolation and characterisation of bacteria isolate from gin trash and its use in cotton wax degradation

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ABSTRACT

Bio scouring of cotton, which is an eco-friendly alternative to the expensive and polluting conventional caustic scouring, has not been successfully adopted mainly due to its inability to remove substrate wax. However, with surfactants, substrate’s absorbency can be boosted during the enzymatic scouring. An investigation of possibility of integrating cotton wax degrading bacteria with pectinase at mutually favorable temperature, pH and time during bio scouring was hence undertaken. Hydrocarbon degrading bacteria were isolated from cotton gin trash collected from Kibos and Kitui ginneries in Kenya, characterized and tested for the cotton fibre wax removal. The isolates were successfully pre inducted on paraffin wax then used to treat cotton fibres at 45°C and pH 8 for one hour. Wax removal efficiency was assessed by the percentage weight loss of the fibres after soxhlet solvent extraction. An average cotton fibre wax degradation of 0.765% out of 1.2% present in the fibres was recorded. This amount was comparable to that removed by caustic and pectinase with surfactants pre-scours. The isolates would hence enhance wax removal during pectinase bio scouring of cotton. © 2015 Trade Science Inc. - INDIA

KEYWORDS
Gin trash;
Bacteria isolates;
Characterization;
Isolates scour;
Bio scouring

INTRODUCTION

Enzymatic scouring has been evaluated as an alternative to the expensive, environmentally unfriendly and fibre damaging conventional caustic scouring. Use of enzymes during scouring allows the development of environmentally friendly technologies in fibre processing and strategies to improve final product quality. Various enzymes have been proposed by various researchers to provide effective scouring responses. As reported by Etters et al.1, Emre and Merih2, Qiang et al.3, Vigneswaranet al.4 and Vigneswaranet al.5 alkaline pectinase enzymes have been found to be the most effective and suitable for cotton bio scouring even in the presence of chelating agents. The mechanism of pectinase scouring reportedly assumes degradation and elimination of pectins and makes the loosened waxes more easily accessible with the help of a mechanical agita-
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tion. Pectinase, however, is not generally active at temperatures over 60°C. These properties limits its application to bio-scouring of textiles, since the textiles must be pre-boiled to attenuate the waxy cuticle overlaying the pectin layer. According to Li and Hardin, the cotton fabrics bio-scoured with pectinase show improved softness and wet-ability but much less wax is removed as compared to the conventional alkaline scouring. Added surfactants have a big influence on removing non cellulosic impurities. The cuticle of the cotton fibre which is cross linked to the primary cell wall by esterified pectic substances hinders pectinase action on the back bone. Cutin forms three dimensional network structures in which other amorphous waxy materials are embedded. Pre-rinsing in hot water (≥90°C) with a surfactant or extraction with boiled n-hexane helps to reduce wax impurities and, subsequently results in better destabilization of the primary cell wall, as reported by Qiang et al., Agrawal et al., and Kiromojsov. However such a high temperature treatment on the other hand would compromise the desirable low temperature treatments associated by enzyme scouring hence increase on the process costs.

The Alternative possibility of integrating wax degrading bacterial isolates with the pectinase scouring bath conditions was therefore evaluated by this research, to alleviate the high process costs and reduce environmental pollution. This was studied by culturing and isolating wax degrading bacterial isolates from sampled cotton gin trashes. Bacillus, a Gram-positive, rod-shaped, non-pathogenic and endospore-forming aerobic bacterium found in soil and rotting plant material has been reported to have hydrocarbons emulsification capacity. Such emulsifiers produced by a variety of microorganisms such as yeast, bacteria and filamentous fungi are referred to as bio surfactants. According to ZoBell hydrocarbons degrading bacteria exists in cotton gin trash, and the bacteria may last even for three years even if the gin trash has been in dry storage for over three years. These bacteria could have come from cotton field soil and feed on the cottonseed protein, along with the many carbohydrates present in the cotton gin trash plant debris. According to Leuschner, Endospores of bacillii represent a metabolically inactive survival form. They are characterized by high resistance against heat, dryness, irradiation and other unfavorable environmental conditions. The success of the endospore for the survival of the species depends on an effective mechanism to resuscitate and enter the vegetative cell cycle to multiply. Therefore long dumped cotton gin trash can be used for culturing wax degrading bacteria, hence the essence of this study to investigate the feasibility of the bacteria in cotton wax removal.

Materials and Methods

Bacteria cultures, isolation and characterization

Cotton gin trash was collected from two different ginneries. The trash samples were macerated and about 10 g put into a beaker containing 200 mls of water. The beakers were then covered and incubated at 30°C for 24 hrs to allow for microbial growth. Bacteria cultures were then grown using pour plate dilution technique as described by Ian and Charles. Each of the original samples was diluted five times to dilute the microbial population so as to obtain separate colonies when plating. Small volumes (about 0.1 to 1 mls) of the diluted samples were mixed with about 15 mls liquid nutrient agar (45°C) in sterile culture dishes which were then incubated at 37°C for 24 hrs.

The different colonies obtained were then isolated by the streak and spread methods. In the streak methods, small amount of colour and morphologically distinct colony was picked by the tip of an inoculation loop and streaked across the surface of the agar medium. For the spread plate method on the other hand, a small amount of distinct colony was picked, suspended in distilled water and then mixed with about 15 mls of sterile nutrient agar (45°C). All the streaked and spread plates were then incubated at 37°C for 24 hrs to allow for isolates growth. The two isolation techniques gave three pure isolates.

The pure isolates obtained were then subjected to simple and gram staining for respective morphological identification and differentiation. Crystal violet was used for the simple staining.

Gram staining is essential for differentiating bacteria isolates in two broad groups; Gram-negative and Gram-positive. Gram-positive bacteria retain the primary dye giving a purple to blue-black appearance. Gram-negative bacteria take-up the colour of the
counter stain (i.e red or pale red colour). Thus, gram-
positive bacteria stain violet, and gram-negative bacte-
ria stain pink. Crystal violet, Gram’s iodine, 95% alco-
hol and safranin stains were used.

**Preliminary hydrocarbon activity induction of the isolates**

Each of the three isolates was tested for hydrocar-
bon activity by streaking on 10mls pre melted and so-
lidified paraffin wax in sterile petri dishes. The petri
dishes were then incubated at 37°C, 45°C and 50°C
for 24 hours to test for optimal temperature for the bac-
teria growth.

**Preliminary caustic and pectinase scouring**

Five samples of cotton fibres collected at the card-
ing stage in a spinning factory were first treated with n-
hexane (30 min, 75°C), as a control for the evaluation
of wax removal efficiency by the caustic and pectinase
procedures. The solvent extracts all the wax contained
in the fibre[14]. The fibres were also scoured using dif-
ferently constituted baths; Caustic (0.25M, LR 20:1, 1
hr, 10 cotton fibre samples) and commercial Pectinase(A.
Niger) (4g/l, LR 50:1, pH8, 1hr, 10 cotton fibre
samples). Both procedures were done with and without
1% non-ionic surfactant (Sodium Lauryl sulphate).
Each of the scoured samples was then extracted using
trichloroethylene by a soxhlet apparatus as specified in
ASTM D2257-04 at the rate of six extractions per hour
for a total duration of 2 hours. The weight difference
between the scoured and the solvent extracted fibres
gave each of the procedure’s wax removal efficacy.
The weight loss calculation after each scour procedure was
done by the following equation:

\[
Y = \frac{W_f - [(W_p - W_s/W_p)] \times 100}{W_f} \tag{1}
\]

Where Y is the wax removed (%), \(W_f\) is the total wax
content in the cotton fibres, \(W_p\) and \(W_s\) are the wax
contents (%) in specified scour procedure and solvent
extracted fibres respectively.

**Isolates and isolates/pectinase cotton wax removal**

Five tests for each of the three isolates were con-
ducted on the isolates fibres scour procedure. About 2
mls of Tris-HCL Buffer, pH 8 put into each of the fif-
teen test tubes and a flame sterilized wire loop was used
to pick each of the isolate and introduce them into the
test tubes. Fibre samples weighing 1.00±0.01 g were
prepared and each put into each test tube’s contents
and incubated at 45°C for one hour. The contents were
then subjected to boiling to deactivate the enzyme and
the isolates. The Percent wax removed was calculated
using the following formula as adapted from Vigneswaran
et al.[14]:

\[
Y = 1.2 - \frac{[W_f - W_s]}{W_f} \times 100 \tag{2}
\]

Where Y is the wax removed (%), \(W_f\), and \(W_s\) are the
content of swaxes (%) in the isolates scoured fibres
and solvent-extracted fibres respectively. Average wax
removed from each isolate was obtained from which
the overall average was calculated. The same proce-
dure of isolate scour was then repeated but with addi-
tion of about 2mls of 4g/l of pectinase at LR 50:1.

**Investigation for enzyme presence**

The isolates bacterial cells rupturing tests were con-
ducted to determine if the bacteria contained an en-
zyme that might have had the activity on the wax. Each
pure isolate was Sub-divided into 10 eppendorf tubes,
labeled and put into a centrifuge. The bacterial cells/iso-
lates were then pelleted by centrifuging at 6000 rpm
for 5 minutes, supernatants aspirated and the pellets
frozen at -30°C for 30 minutes. Five test tubes of pel-
lets of the bacterial cells from each isolate were then
re-suspended in 0.75 mls of lysis buffer, and then incu-
bated at 30°C for 15 minutes. The other five pellets from
each pure culture were re-suspended with nutrient
agar as controls. All the tubes were then vortexed
for 1 minute until the cell suspension was homogeneous.
The pellet tubes were then centrifuged at 12,000 rpm
for 20 minutes at 4°C, supernatants from the lysis buffer-
suspended tubes collected to new tubes and pellets re-
suspended in 0.75 mls of lysis buffer as described in[15].
Each of the supernatants, nutrient agar and lysis buffer
suspended pellets, were then used to test for their ac-
tivity on wax, by streaking the contents onto solidified
pre-melted wax in petri dishes which were then incu-
bated at 37°C for 24 hours to allow for growth.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Bacteria cultures, isolation and characterization**

Each of the two gin trash samples that were cul-
tured through the plate dilution technique gave a com-
position three distinct colonies: Large serrated yellow
colonies, small round white colonies and oval shaped transparent bluish greenish colonies. The distinctive colonies which were then isolated through the spread and streak plate methods gave three pure isolates. The different isolates obtained are as shown in the photo illustrations in Figure 1 A, B and C and Figure 2 A and B.

Simple staining of all the isolates revealed purple stained rod shapes indicating that the bacteria were bacilli. The observation under the microscope also showed chained rods occurrence for all the isolates meaning that the bacteria were streptobacilli in nature. Under the Gram staining test, all the isolates stained purple, the primary colour used, indicating that the bacteria isolates were Gram-positive. Respective illustrations are as shown in Figure 3 A-C.

**Preliminary hydrocarbon activity induction of the isolates**

The three pure isolates from the two sample gin trashes streaked on the wax and incubated at 37°C gave a thick bacterial growth along the streak lines. The plates incubated at 45°C gave a relatively thick growth along the streak lines while the plates incubated at 50°C gave the least growth along the streak lines, meaning the isolates survival at that temperature was declining as respectively illustrated in Figure 4 A, B and C.

**Preliminary caustic and pectinase scouring**

The n-hexane solvent extraction at 75°C for 30 min on the five fibre samples gave an average 1.2% fibre wax content. The caustic with surfactant scour that was conducted on 10 cotton fibre samples at 0.25M NaOH, 1% Sodium Lauryl sulphate surfactant, LR 20:1 for 1 hour gave 7.2% weight loss (general impurities contained in the fibres). This amount (7.2%) was found to be comparable with that reported by Bahrum[16]; 6.87-7.27% and Tzanko et al.[17]; 6.3%. It is on this basis that the effectiveness of each of the scouring procedures in wax removal was evaluated.

The subsequent solvent extraction of the caustic with
surfactant scoured fibres gave percentage average values wax removed of 0.72%. Caustic without a surfactant scour on the contrary gave respectively low values of 2.65% and 0.3% of general and wax impurities removed. The low values be explained by the ability of the hot caustic soda solution with the aid of the surfactant to remove more impurities by breaking, releasing and emulsifying them effectively as argued by Tzanko et al.[17]. Pectinase with surfactant procedure gave a percentage average general impurities removal value of 4.14% and a wax removal value of 0.844% while Pectinase without a surfactant on the other hand, gave respective percentage average impurities and wax removal values of 2.4% and 0.267%. These results can be explained by the substrate specific nature of the enzyme in impurities removal and hence the inability of the enzyme to destabilize the cuticle layer containing the wax. Comparatively, under pectinase cotton scour process conditions of 45°C, reaction time of 60 minutes and a pH of 8.5, Vigneswaran et al.[18] obtained the best opted test results of overall impurity removal efficiency of 4.80% which can be related to the 4.14% obtained.

**Isolates and isolates/pectinase cotton wax removal**

All the fifteen tests of the isolates scour gave an average of 0.765% wax removed which is comparable to that degraded by the caustic and pectinase in the presence of a surfactant; 0.72% and 0.844%. This

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Total fibre impurities Removal (%)</th>
<th>Total fibre wax Removal (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n-Hexane</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caustic with surfactant</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caustic without surfactant</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectinase with surfactant</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectinase without surfactant</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolates</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolates and pectinase</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 5: Respective supernatant, Nutrient agar and Lysis buffer suspended pellets wax induction streak plates; (A) Supernatant wax activity induction streak growth; (B) Lysis buffer suspended bacteria pellet wax activity induction streak growth; (C) Nutrient Agar suspended bacteria pellet wax activity induction streak growth.

Investigation for enzyme presence

All the plates streaked with the supernatants from all the isolates did not show any growth along the streak lines. All the plates streaked with lysis buffer-suspended pellets from all the isolates gave comparatively distinctive growths along the streak lines. The plates streaked with nutrient-suspended pellets from all the pure cultures gave relatively thick and clear growths along the streak lines as shown in Figure 5 A-C. This indicates that there was no bacterial enzyme contained in the bacteria and it is the bacterial cells that had the activity on the wax.

The bacteria cells lysis tests showed that the nutrient agar suspended bacteria pellets control streaks, gave relatively thick lines of action on the paraffin wax indicating that it is the bacteria that acted on the wax as a supplement and not as a source of food for the bacteria. The lysis buffer suspended bacteria pellets however gave comparatively thin lines of action on the paraffin wax, meaning that the bacteria cells relied solely on the wax for their nutrients hence the slow rate of action. The supernatants from all the isolates did not exhibit any action on the wax, explaining the absence of any protein/enzyme in the bacteria isolates.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, three different bacteria isolates (white, yellow and bluish greenish) can be isolated from cotton gin trash. All the isolates have activity on paraffin wax and on the cotton fibre wax as sources of hydrocarbon. It was also demonstrated that the isolates can feasibly be integrated into the pectinase, which would enhance the enzyme’s capacity to destabilize the amount is also notably higher than that reported by Vigneswaran et al.\textsuperscript{[18]} of an average loss in wax content of 0.525% at 60\degree C, pH 8.5-9.0 and treatment time of 60 minutes using 6% pectinase enzyme concentration. Isolates and pectinase combination scour gave an average of 0.729% wax removed. This value is also comparable those recorded under the respective caustic and pectinase with surfactant procedures (0.72% and 0.844%). These results can therefore explain that the isolates played a similar role as the chemical surfactant as explained by Tzanko et al.\textsuperscript{[17]}. TABLE 1 gives the summary of all the scour procedures described above.
cuticle waxy layer from 0.267% (pectinase without surfactant scour) to 0.729% of the percentage average wax degraded (isolates/pectinase scour). It was also established that the bacterial isolates did not contain any enzyme, indicating that it was the bacteria that degraded the cotton fibre wax.

Environmental consciousness being one of the major concerns for the textile industry, there is increasing need of replacing the chemical processes with bio-preparation techniques. As it has been demonstrated, chemical surfactants, which have been found to be very important in the cotton fibre impurities/wax removal can potentially be replaced with hydrocarbon degrading bacteria isolates from cotton gin trashes.

Optimum temperature, pH and incubation time for the isolates cotton fibre wax removal should therefore be established.

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