Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Research (JIMR)
E-ISSN:1936-6264| Impact Factor: 8.886| UGC CARE II
Vol. 18 Issue 05, May- 2023
Available online at: https://livejimrjournal.in/
(An open access scholarly, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, monthly, and fully refereed journal.)

WASTE TO ENERGY CONVERSION

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ABSTRACT

Three modern worldwide issues include plastic waste, air pollution, and climate change. Greenhouse gases trap radiation from heat, air pollutants damage the lungs, and plastic debris taints the food web in the oceans. Burning fossil fuels releases emissions that are responsible for two thirds of global warming and air pollution. Plastics require thousands of years to decompose, toxins settle in months, and green gases take centuries. The areas of the world most impacted by climate change are also the most polluted. Most places impacted by climate change see an increase in air pollution, which exacerbates the greenhouse effect. The main goal of this review is to identify and analyse toxicological issues pertaining to the main air pollutants released throughout the Waste to Energy conversion process. The type of garbage that is solid and emission requirements differ from nation to state, which has an immediate influence on air quality regulations and the actions needed to minimise such emissions. The proportion of wet trash in India is far larger than that of dry solid waste, which makes WtE plants far less feasible both technically and economically. Improper waste segregation lowers the thermal efficiency of solid waste greatly, which is bad for both the production of power and pollution. The paper goes into great length on these solid waste management-related issues.

Keywords: Waste to Energy, Air pollution control, Health hazards, Environmental impact assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The current way of life has altered from the past due to a notable rise in the amount of industries, a rapid rate of economic growth, and also a major growth in the number of people residing in metropolitan areas, which has finally led to the production of enormous amounts of waste. The environment is now more polluted than before, endangering public health due to the rise in trash production. The traditional methods of disposing of waste used in India include mass burning and careless dumping, which have very negative effects on the environment and human health. However, the nation has acknowledged the regrettable outcomes and detrimental repercussions of such practices and has stepped up to support economical and environmentally appropriate alternatives for the disposal of waste. Despite rising oil and other fossil fuel prices and the depletion of fossil fuels, there remains an ever-growing energy demand. The need for energy, and specifically the production of electricity, has led to the establishment of fossil fuel-based power plants that release copious amounts of greenhouse gases and carbon emissions into the atmosphere, causing climate change and global warming. The Indian government, like that of many developing countries, is attempting to lessen these unfavourable effects of global warming: developing measures that will support India's production of renewable energy. The nation has access to a variety of renewable energy sources, including wind, sun, biomass, small hydro, and biogas. When disposed of safely, industrial, municipal, and urban trash may also be useful sources of energy.

Numerous obstacles have impeded the WTE sector's expansion, and the best practices for everything from trash procurement to removal are not being subsequently. Furthermore, political, economic, and technological challenges can be included in the list of the main challenges. The use of contemporary waste treatment technologies, including WTE solutions, is beset by a number of difficulties, including insufficient funding, the absence of consistent national policy and law, and incomplete data collection and evaluation. Planning the deployment of these technologies in the future may benefit from analysis and debate of these limits, particularly in light of India's emerging power sector. Supporting communities in Indian cities to manage waste properly can have a number of benefits. WTE and appropriate waste management can generate clean, healthy energy while enhancing the environment and everyone's quality of life. WTE can help many people in every community find work, which will lower the unemployment rates. Decreased landfills can

improve air quality, reduce odours, and free up valuable land. The overall waste reduction ranges from approximately 60% to 90%, contingent upon the type of trash and the technology employed for handling and processing. The amount of land required for waste disposal will be less with WTE.

India can prevent the failures if it focuses on logistical and economic planning. Additionally, the nation ought to focus on fortifying the policy framework that could. Alternatively, the procedure may be opposed by investors, industry players, and people. We have made recommendations using the research findings to direct future policies and establish WTE as a competitive alternative for garbage disposal and the generation of energy in India.

1. WASTE GENERATION IN INDIA

Waste-to-energy conversion is not a novel concept, yet it is a sustainable energy source that needs careful consideration. To create energy from solid waste, a variety of energy conversion systems are accessible in the literature. Despite various approaches, choosing an appropriate strategy for the conversion of energy is a difficult undertaking that is dependent on the waste's many biophysical features, the amount of waste as a raw material, and the type of energy that is sought. Of these, thermal technologies can provide heat and electricity, while biogas can be produced through a biochemical process called anaerobic digestion. Biogas can then be utilised as a fuel for transportation or to produce heat and power. Although waste-to-energy conversion has been the subject of much research both domestically and internationally, this section provides a succinct overview of the efforts that have been made on its commercialization.

- Processes for thermochemical waste-to-energy

  By heating trash to high temperatures, thermochemical technologies are typically used to transform waste into heat, power, or other value-added products (VAP). One aspect of integrated waste disposal technology is thermal conversion. The three main thermochemical conversion processes are pyrolysis, gasification, and incineration. These techniques are all suggested and appropriate for waste with less than 20% moisture content. The oldest and most common method of turning waste into energy is incineration or direct

combustion, though there are other approaches as well. Every conversion technique recovers the chemistry value of waste material instead of its energy value by using alternative equipment designs, offering a diverse variety of products, and changing input parameters. Moreover, various by-products are produced from these processes, and these by-products can be further utilized as raw materials for the production of other various petrochemical products like olefin, carbon black, alcohol, etc. However, the major advantage of thermal processes lies in keeping most of the hazardous bacteria and pathogens sterile.

- Waste-to-energy biochemical processes

Enzymes from bacteria and other microorganisms are used in the biochemical process to break down biomass in order to convert waste into energy. One of the few techniques

that provides MSW with an environmentally friendly way to obtain energy and fuel is biochemical conversion. Numerous byproducts as well as renewable energy are produced by biochemical processes including anaerobic digestion and fermentation. Regarded as a dependable technology, this process treats organic waste that is moist. Digestable and biodegradable materials, such as marketplace veggie waste products, culinary waste products, papers, wood, etc., make up a sizable amount of the MSW in India. Biochemical procedures are better suited since they allow for segregation and need less initial outlay. The three types of advanced digester systems that are currently available are passive, low-rate, and high-rate systems. These systems are capable of producing methane with a purified methane content of above 95%.

2. WASTE TO ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES

The MSW can be processed using a variety of technologies that rely on thermal or biological conversion methods. Microorganisms are used in the biological transformation process to break down the waste's biodegradable components. Waste is converted via thermal conversion, which releases heat energy while converting it into gaseous, liquid, and solid products.

- **THERMAL PROCESSES**

  Waste is converted by thermal processes into gaseous, liquid, and solid conversion products, releasing heat energy in the process. Municipal solid waste needs to have a low moisture content, a high percentage of naturally occurring nonbiodegradable materials, and a reasonably high calorific value in order to be a feasible candidate for obtaining energy through thermal processing.

- **INCINERATION**: The process of incinerating MSW basically entails burning the garbage to reduce its volume and recover heat to create steam, which generates electricity. In essence, MSW is burned in a furnace to produce ash, gaseous and particle pollutants, and heat energy. The qualities of the waste, such as its water content and calorific values, are related to the technology's efficiency. It needs a temperature that is high—between 800 and 1000 o C—as well as enough air and gas stream mixing. 850o C is the lowest temperature at which carbonaceous wastes can be burned without producing smoke or furans or dioxin emissions.
- **PYROLYSIS**: Pyrolysis is the process of heat causing an irreparable chemical change in an oxygen-free environment. In contrast to burning, pyrolysis is an endothermic process in which the waste must be heated in order to evaporate volatile components. Pyrolysis is a process that can be used to turn plastic into fuels, but it hasn't been shown to be a profitable endeavour yet. Pyrolysis creates three component streams, which are produced at temperatures ranging from 500°C to 1000°.

  Gas: A blend of flammable gases, including carbon dioxide, methane, hydrogen, and certain hydrocarbons.

  Liquid: Contains pitch, tar, light oil, and organic compounds with low boiling points, such as acetone and acetic acid,methanol, among other things.

  Char: Composed of inert elements in waste product feed and elemental carbon.

  The high calorific value of the char, liquids, and gases makes them helpful. A portion of the heat produced by burning gas or char is frequently utilised as process heat in endothermic pyrolysis reactions. It has been noted that a certain quantity of extra heat

remains even after providing the heat required for pyrolysis remains that can be used for profit.

- **GASIFICATION**: The process of gasification involves partially burning carbonaceous materials, such as plastics, that are derived from organic or fossil sources to produce the gases hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and methane. This is accomplished with a regulated amount of air, oxygen, and/or steam at high temperatures (650°C and beyond). Most of the process is exothermic. However, some heat might be needed to start and maintain the gasification process. Syngas, which includes methane, hydrogen, and carbon monoxide, is the primary product. The actual calorific value of the gas produced during gasification is typically between 4 and 10 MJ/Nm3. An additional principal byproduct of gasification is ash, a solid remnant of non-combustible materials with a comparatively low carbon content.

3. BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Biological waste-to-energy conversion is a safer, more cost-effective, and environmentally friendly technology than earlier thermal methods. In this case, anaerobic digestion and composting are widely used in India.

- **COMPOSTING**: The composting process involves the controlled aerobic breakdown of organic MSW by microorganisms in the presence of air in an environment that is humid and warm. The two processes that make up this approach are anaerobic and aerobic composting. The final byproduct of composting, known as humus or compost, is highly nutrient-rich. This solid compost product is utilised as agricultural fertiliser, and biogas, a combustible gas made of the gases carbon dioxide and methane are used to generate electricity and/or heat.

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Table summarizing key numerical and written data related to Waste to Energy conversion for easy understanding

Aspect	Data / Description
Global Market Size	Valued at USD 34.50 billion in 2023; projected to reach USD 50.92 billion by 2032 with a CAGR of 4.5%
Waste Volume Reduction	WtE plants reduce 2,000 pounds of garbage to ash weighing 300-600 pounds; 87% volume reduction
Installed Capacity (India)	Total installed capacity of WtE plants in India is 168.64 MW
Global Waste Management	Approx. 171 million tons of municipal solid waste requires disposal or conversion annually
Energy Recovery Efficiency	Some WtE techniques recover up to 27.40% of energy from waste
Technology Types	Combustion, Gasification, Pyrolysis, Anaerobic Digestion; produce electricity, heat, syngas, biogas, fuels
Environmental Impact	WtE reduces greenhouse gases; plants equipped with advanced emission control to minimize air pollution
Waste Volume Reduction by WtE	Up to 90% depending on waste composition and technology used
Capacity Factor	Average capacity factor for WtE plants is ~77% (higher than conventional technologies at ~57%)
Cost of Implementation	Estimated US$244.81 billion (net first cost) from 2020 to 2050 globally for large scale WtE adoption
Global Energy Share	Combustible renewables and waste form part of total energy supply in countries (varies by region)
Typical Plant Capacity	One unit usually processes approx. 35 tonnes of waste per hour

- **ANAEROBIC DIGESTION**: Another name for this process is bio-methanation. The organic portion of the waste is separated and fed into a biogas digester, a closed container where it biodegrades under anaerobic conditions to produce sludge and biogas high in methane. After stabilisation, the anaerobic digestion sludge can be sold as manure or utilised as a soil conditioner, depending on its composition, which is mostly influenced by the makeup of the input waste.

4. AINDIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR WASTE TO ENERGY CONVERSION

Waste to energy has been acknowledged by the Indian government as a renewable technology, and it is encouraged by a number of grants and incentives. Every technical option available for generating electricity from industrial and urban trash is actively being promoted by the Department of Renewable and New Energy. By offering financial support for research and development initiatives on a cost-sharing basis in compliance with the MNRE R&D Policy, the organisation is also advancing the study of waste to energy. Furthermore, MNRE offers funding for studies on resource evaluation, technology advancement, and performance evaluation in addition to initiatives requiring applied R&D.

The WTE industry is supported by the government's Ministry of Renewable Energy, or MNRE, through a number of initiatives that emphasise the handling of waste and the advancement of RE generation. The Clean India Mission, also known as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, was introduced in 2014 and encourages WTE as part of waste management strategies. Programmes like the National Methane and Fertiliser Management Programme, which encourages the use of methane and organic manure generated from urbanised industrial, and agricultural waste, also support the application of WTE technologies in business and demonstration ventures. The programme creates jobs in waste management by improving sanitation, providing RE, and providing financial assistance for the establishment of biogas plants.

CONCLUSION

Municipal solid waste can be disposed of safely and environmentally friendly with the help of waste to energy technologies. It solves the solid waste management issue and produces heat and

energy.By the aforementioned research. It has been demonstrated that waste to energy techniques have been attempted and failed for a long time in India. It is caused by inadequate resource management, inadequate financial funding, insufficient logistical preparation, and incorrect technological attentiveness. Sustainable waste management solutions need changing how people view garbage and raising environmental consciousness. The Indian government and people are currently attempting to take a number of steps addressing the management of solid waste and the production of energy from garbage. India will continue to experience poor waste management and several health effects till these operations are completed.

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