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Hydrogen Production: A Review

Yashawant Patil*, Prajakta Shete, Jayant Pawar and Girish Pathade

**Krishna Institute of Allied Sciences, Krishna Vishwa Vidhyapeeth (Deemed to be University)
Karad 415 539, M.S., India**

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ABSTRACT

Hydrogen, with its high energy content and zero emissions, has emerged as a promising alternative to traditional fossil fuels for various applications, including transportation, power generation, and industrial processes. This article provides an overview of hydrogen production methods, highlighting their advantages, limitations, and current developments. The main focus is on the most common methods of hydrogen production, including steam methane reforming, electrolysis, and biomass gasification. Additionally, alternative and emerging technologies, such as photoelectrochemical and biological processes, are discussed. This abstract provides a brief overview of hydrogen production methods and their significance in the transition towards a sustainable energy future. Hydrogen, has gained considerable attention as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels. This article aims to summarize the various methods of hydrogen production, including steam methane reforming, electrolysis, biomass gasification, and emerging technologies such as photo electrochemical and biological processes.

Key words: *Hydrogen, CO₂, Fermentation, Coal, Gasoline, Methanol, Natural gas.*

Introduction

The article also highlights the global hydrogen market, government initiatives, and the role of hydrogen in achieving sustainable energy goals. Potential applications of hydrogen in transportation, industrial processes, and energy storage are explored, emphasizing its potential to decarbonize these sectors.

In summary, this overview article provides a concise understanding of hydrogen production, its environmental implications, and its potential as a clean energy carrier. It aims to inform readers about the current state of hydrogen production technologies, the challenges they pose, and the opportunities they present in driving the transition to a sustainable energy future, (Amin, 2022).

Biohydrogen is valuable gas; it is used as a source of feedstock for industries. Hydrogen is known as a clean energy source that demand on hydrogen pro-

duction has been increased in recent years. The steam reforming of hydrocarbon, electrolysis of water, and thermal processes are well known methods of hydrogen production, but these methods are not sustainable for environment because it requires fossil fuel based as high energy source. Hence, the biohydrogen production has been advantageous over chemical methods. In fact the area of existing scientific field dealing with the conversion of low cost of organic waste to valuable fuels (Ahmed, 2021), source of clean energy that called hydrogen.

Methods of hydrogen Production

Hydrogen is an important energy source in hydrogen production, and has always been the subject of vigorous and intensive research and development, the production of hydrogen energy in the world is increasing at a rate of 8-10% per year, for many years hydrogen has been used to produce ammonia

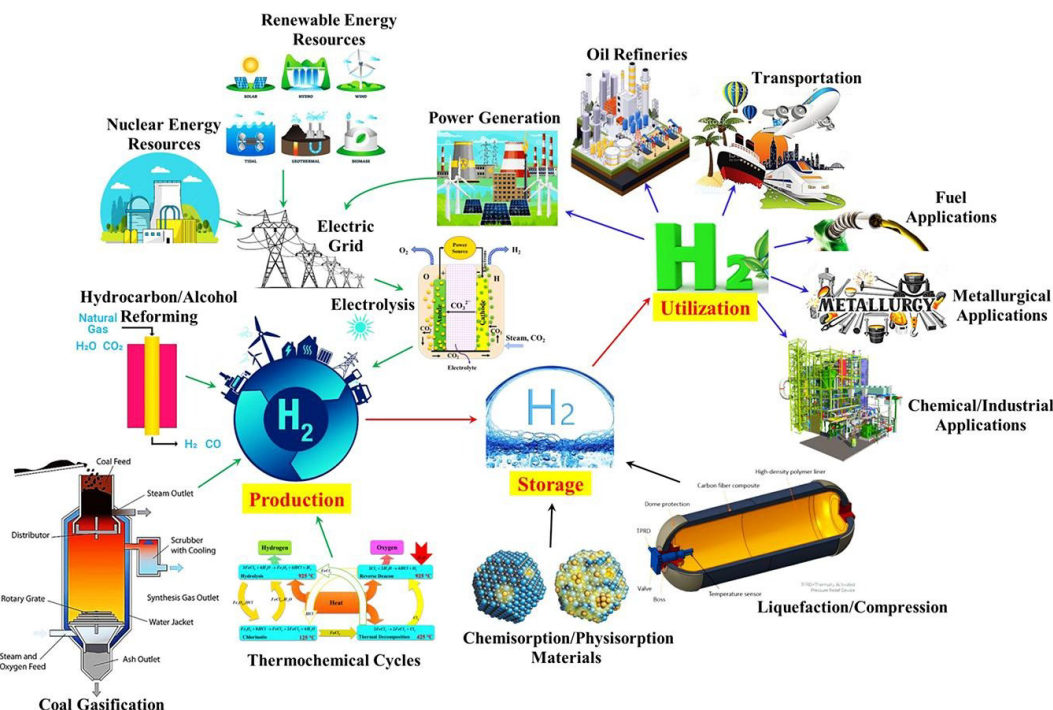


Plate 1. Hydrogen utilization (Dusseault, 2022).

and the remaining hydrogen is used for the production of hydrocracking and hydrodesulphurization of oil, and currently hydrogen is mainly produced for the production of methanol. Hydrogen is mainly produced using fossil fuels, water splitting and biomass, and these production methods can be classified as below (Kothari, 2004) as non-biological and biological:

A) Non biological methods

1. Hydrogen production using a source of fossil fuel
2. Water splitting
3. Utilization of solar energy

B) Biological methods

1. Fermentative hydrogen production from organic compounds
2. Solar-Driven Biological Processes
3. Hydrogen production from biomass

A) Non biological methods

1. Hydrogen production using a source of fossil fuels:

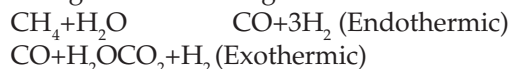
Presently hydrogen is used for the ammonia production and refinery products processing and 90% more hydrogen is produced from fossil fuel. The different types of fossil fuels using a source like coal,

gasoline, methanol, natural gas has been used.

Steam reforming of fossil fuels

Steam reforming of fossil fuel is a widely used in industrial processes for the production of hydrogen. This process involves the reaction between hydrocarbon fuels, typically natural gas or methane, and steam to produce hydrogen gas, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. The reaction is typically carried out in the presence of a catalyst, such as nickel or platinum, to enhance the reaction rate, (Efstathiou, 2013).

In the steam reforming reaction, the hydrocarbon fuel reacts with steam in the presence of the catalyst, resulting in the following reactions:



Thermal cracking is a highly energy-intensive process due to requirement of high temperatures. Therefore, it's often integrated with other processes, such as cogeneration or heat recovery systems, to maximize environmental impact.

Partial oxidation of hydrocarbons (naphtha)

The partial oxidation of heavier hydrocarbons, such as naphtha, is a chemical process used to convert these hydrocarbon molecules into valuable prod-

ucts. This process involves the controlled combustion of hydrocarbons in the presence of limited supply of oxygen or air.

The partial oxidation reaction typically results in the formation of a variety of products, depending on the specific conditions and composition of the feedstock. These products may include carbon monoxide, hydrogen gas, light hydrocarbons such as methane and ethylene, as well as various other byproducts (Darouich, 2005).

Coal gasification

Coal gasification is a process that converts coal into synthesis gas, also known as syngas. Syngas is a maximum of carbon monoxide, hydrogen and other gases that can be used as a fuel or gas as a feedstock for production of chemicals and other products, (Rauch, 2014).

Water splitting

Water splitting, also known as water electrolysis, is a process that involves breaking water molecules (H_2O) into hydrogen (H_2) and oxygen (O_2) gases. It is a key method for producing hydrogen, which is considered a clean and sustainable energy carrier. (Effah, 2015).

There are two primary methods of water splitting:

Electrolysis: Electrolysis involves the use of an electric current to drive the water splitting reaction. Water is typically electrolyzed using two electrodes—an anode and a cathode—immersed in an electrolyte solution. When an electric current is passed through the water, the anode undergoes oxidation (loses electrons), generating oxygen gas (O_2), while the cathode undergoes reduction (gains electrons), producing hydrogen gas (H_2), (Sen, 2022).

Photocatalysis: Photocatalytic water splitting utilizes a semiconductor material as a photocatalyst to absorb light energy and facilitate the water splitting reaction. When light is absorbed by the photocatalyst, it generates electron-hole pairs. The electrons reduce water molecules, forming hydrogen gas (H_2), while the holes oxidize water, producing oxygen gas (O_2). This process is typically enhanced by adding co-catalysts or co-absorbents to improve the efficiency of the reaction, (Joy, 2018).

Utilization of solar energy

Solar energy can be utilized for hydrogen production through various methods, enabling the genera-

tion of clean and renewable hydrogen gas. Here's some information on the utilization of solar energy for hydrogen production, (Orhan, 2016):

Photoelectrochemical (PEC) Water Splitting: Photoelectrochemical water splitting involves the use of specialized materials called photoelectrodes, which absorb sunlight and initiate the water splitting reaction. These photoelectrodes are typically semiconductors, such as titanium dioxide (TiO_2) or metal oxides. When illuminated by sunlight, the photoelectrodes generate an electric current that drives the water splitting process, producing hydrogen gas at the cathode and oxygen gas at the anode. PEC systems offer the advantage of directly converting solar energy into chemical energy (hydrogen), (Moakhar, 2021)

Photovoltaic-Electrolysis Systems: Photovoltaic-electrolysis systems combine solar photovoltaic (PV) technology with water electrolysis. Solar PV panels generate electricity from sunlight, which is then used to power an electrolyzer. The electrolyzer splits water into hydrogen and oxygen through the application of an electric current. This method enables on-site hydrogen production using solar-generated electricity, (Khelfaoui, 2020).

Solar Thermochemical Water Splitting: Solar thermochemical water splitting utilizes concentrated solar energy to drive high-temperature thermochemical reactions for hydrogen production. The process involves the use of solar concentrators to focus sunlight onto a reactor containing a thermochemical material, such as metal oxides or metal hydrides. Under high temperatures, the thermochemical material undergoes a series of reactions, releasing hydrogen gas. Solar thermochemical systems offer the advantage of potential high efficiency and the ability to store and release solar energy as hydrogen. (Steinfeld, 2001).

Biological methods

Fermentative hydrogen production from organic compounds

Fermentative hydrogen production from organic compounds offers advantages such as the utilization of renewable feedstocks, production under mild conditions, and the potential for integration with waste treatment processes. However, challenges remain in terms of optimizing process efficiency, scaling up production, and reducing costs. Fermentative

hydrogen production from organic compounds is a biological process where microorganisms, typically anaerobic bacteria, convert organic substrates into hydrogen gas through fermentation. Here's some information on this specific method (Logan, 2008):

Microorganisms Involved

Various anaerobic bacteria, such as *Clostridium species*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, and *Escherichia coli*, are commonly used in fermentative hydrogen production. These bacteria possess hydrogenase enzymes that facilitate the conversion of organic compounds into hydrogen gas, (Hydrogen production by biological processes: a survey of literature, 2001).

Fermentation Process

During fermentation, microorganisms break down complex organic compounds, such as sugars, carbohydrates, and organic acids, into simpler molecules, including hydrogen, carbon dioxide (CO₂), and organic byproducts (e.g., acetate, ethanol). This process occurs in the absence of oxygen and typically operates at mesophilic (moderate) temperatures, (Anish Ghimire, 2015)

Fermentation Pathways

Different pathways are involved in the fermentative hydrogen production process. For example, the sugar fermentation pathway involves the breakdown of sugars into organic acids, which are further converted into hydrogen gas and CO₂. The dark fermentation pathway is a common route used by bacteria like *Clostridium species*, where complex organic compounds are metabolized to produce hydrogen, (Das, 2004).

Factors Affecting Fermentative Hydrogen Production

Several factors influence the efficiency and yield of fermentative hydrogen production. These include the type and concentration of organic substrate, pH level, temperature, retention time, and reactor design. Optimal conditions must be maintained to promote the growth and activity of hydrogen-producing bacteria while minimizing competing reactions (Wang, 2008).

Co-culture Systems: In some cases, researchers use mixed or co-culture systems, combining different species of bacteria to enhance hydrogen production. Each microorganism plays a specific role in the process, such as one species consuming organic sub-

strates and producing organic acids, while another species converts the organic acids into hydrogen gas.

Substrates for Fermentative Hydrogen Production

A wide range of organic compounds can serve as substrates for fermentative hydrogen production. These include sugars (e.g., glucose, sucrose, xylose), lignocellulosic biomass, waste materials (e.g., food waste, agricultural residues), and wastewater from various sources. The choice of substrate depends on availability, cost, and compatibility with the microorganisms used, (Bhatia, 2021).

Dark Fermentation

Dark fermentation is a biological process where certain anaerobic bacteria break down organic compounds in the absence of light to produce hydrogen gas. Common bacteria used in dark fermentation include *Clostridium species* and some strains of *Escherichia coli*. These microorganisms can utilize a variety of organic substrates, such as sugars, starch, cellulose, and wastewater, to produce hydrogen through complex metabolic pathways. Dark fermentation has the advantage of utilizing a wide range of feedstocks, including organic waste, and can operate at ambient temperatures (Rodrigo *et al.*, 2015).

Photofermentation

Photofermentation involves the use of photosynthetic bacteria, such as purple non-sulfur bacteria (e.g., *Rhodobacter spp.*, *Rhodospseudomonas spp.*), to produce hydrogen gas in the presence of light. These bacteria have the ability to perform both photosynthesis and hydrogen production. Light energy is used to generate ATP (adenosine triphosphate), which is then used by specific enzymes to produce hydrogen. Photofermentation typically requires organic substrates, such as carbohydrates or organic acids, as carbon sources. However, some photosynthetic bacteria can utilize volatile fatty acids produced from organic waste materials. (Reungsang, 2018).

Algae-Based Systems

Certain species of microalgae, such as *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*, have the ability to produce hydrogen gas through a process called photobiological hydrogen production. These microalgae use light energy and enzymes called hydrogenases to split water molecules and produce molecular hydrogen. The

process occurs under anaerobic conditions when the algae are deprived of sulfur and undergo cellular stress. Algae-based systems for hydrogen production offer the advantage of utilizing sunlight as an abundant and renewable energy source, (Khetkorn, 2017).

Genetic Engineering

Advances in genetic engineering techniques have enabled the modification of microorganisms to enhance their hydrogen production capabilities. Researchers have focused on engineering bacteria to optimize hydrogen-producing enzymes, improve metabolic pathways, and increase hydrogen yield. For example, introducing hydrogenase enzymes from hydrogen-producing bacteria into other microorganisms can enhance their hydrogen production efficiency. Genetic engineering also offers the potential for tailoring microorganisms to utilize specific substrates or to withstand harsher operating conditions, (Gupta, 2013).

Solar-Driven Biological Processes

Solar energy can also be harnessed in biological systems for hydrogen production. For example, certain photosynthetic microorganisms, such as green algae or cyanobacteria, can use sunlight to drive the process of photosynthesis, which results in the production of hydrogen gas as a byproduct. These systems, known as photobiological systems, use genetically engineered or naturally occurring microorganisms to convert solar energy into hydrogen through biological pathways (Azwar, 2014).

The utilization of solar energy for hydrogen production offers several advantages, including the production of clean and renewable hydrogen fuel, potential integration with existing solar energy infrastructure, and the ability to store and transport energy in the form of hydrogen. However, challenges remain in terms of improving efficiency, scaling up production, and reducing costs for widespread implementation, (Kayfeci, 2019).

Hydrogen production from biomass

Hydrogen production from biomass refers to the process of extracting hydrogen gas from various forms of organic matter, including plant biomass, agricultural residues, and organic waste materials.

Biomass as Feedstock: Biomass is a renewable and abundant resource that can be used as a feedstock for hydrogen production. It includes various organic

materials such as energy crops (e.g., switchgrass, miscanthus), agricultural residues (e.g., corn stover, rice husks), forestry residues, dedicated energy crops (e.g., algae), and organic waste, (e.g., sewage sludge, food waste), (Jhonsan, 2007).

Thermochemical Processes: Thermochemical processes are commonly employed for biomass-to-hydrogen conversion. These processes include gasification and pyrolysis, (Zhang, 2010).

Gasification: Biomass gasification involves heating biomass in a controlled environment with limited oxygen supply. This thermochemical conversion produces a gas mixture known as syngas, which contains hydrogen (H₂), carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂), and other trace gases. The syngas can be further processed to separate and purify hydrogen gas.

Pyrolysis: Biomass pyrolysis involves heating biomass at high temperatures in the absence of oxygen, resulting in the decomposition of biomass into bio-oil, char, and gases. The produced gases, including hydrogen, can be separated and utilized.

Biological Processes: Biological methods can also be employed for hydrogen production from biomass. Anaerobic fermentation or dark fermentation using specialized microorganisms, such as Clostridium species, can break down biomass into hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and organic acids. The process occurs in the absence of light and oxygen and operates at moderate temperatures.

Biochemical Processes: Biomass can undergo biochemical processes, such as enzymatic hydrolysis and fermentation, to produce hydrogen. Enzymes can break down complex carbohydrates present in biomass into simple sugars, which are then fermented by specific microorganisms to generate hydrogen, (Vasic, 2021).

Hydrogen production from biomass offers the advantage of utilizing renewable feedstocks, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and potentially integrating with existing biomass supply chains. Ongoing research focuses on improving conversion efficiency, exploring novel feedstocks, and developing cost-effective technologies.

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