

Small molecule based optical monitors: synthesis, characterization, and applications in bioimaging

A Thesis

submitted

by

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for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



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July, 2014

To my loving father

&

To the memory of my mother

Declaration by the Research Scholar

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Small molecule based optical monitors: synthesis, characterization, and applications in bioimaging**”, submitted by me to the Indian Institute of Technology Mandi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a bonafide record of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Subrata Ghosh. The contents of this thesis, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.

In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observation, due acknowledgements have been made wherever the work described is based on the findings of other investigators.

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All the corrections suggested by the referees have been made and provided as addendum at the end of this thesis.

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Thesis Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Small molecule based optical monitors: synthesis, characterization and applications in bioimaging**”, submitted by Mr. Sougata Sinha to the Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a bonafide record of research work carried out by him under my supervision. The contents of this thesis, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Research Guide

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Acknowledgements

It has been quite a learning journey as a researcher. I met many people who encouraged me continuously to start this journey and provided continuous support throughout this journey. First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Subrata Ghosh for his continuous help and guidance in both professional and personal life over the last four years.

I also want to express my everlasting gratitude to Dr. Pranab Sarkar. It is him only who motivated me to do research and supported me continuously in this memorable journey. I shall ever remain grateful to him

I also like to express my deep gratitude to my teacher Mr. Debasis Roy. He has always been my idol. I am blessed that I met him in early stage of my education and I am still learning the science and how to live life every day from him.

My sincere thanks to my teachers Mr. Arun Das, Mr. Sujeet Kumar Roy, Mr. Durga Shankar Roy, Mr. Suprakash Kar, Mr. Dilip Dom, and Mr. Partha Sarathi Mukherjee for their continuous encouragement throughout my carrier.

I wish to express my heartiest thanks to Dr. Alakananda Hazra, Dr. Goutam Brahmachari, Dr. Dr. Naznin Ara Begum, Dr. Bhabatosh Mandal and all my university teachers.

I express my sincere thanks to Prof. T. A. Gonsalves, the Director, IIT Mandi for his support and encouragement. The research facility at Advanced Materials Research Center (AMRC), IIT Mandi is gratefully acknowledged.

It was a nice experience to work with Dr. Chayan Kanti Nandi, Dr. Rik Rani Koner, and Dr. Suman Kalyan Pal. My sincere thanks to Dr. P. C. Ravikumar, Dr. Prem Felix Siril, Dr. A. Chakraborty, Dr. Pradeep Parameswaran, Dr. Venkata Krishnan and Dr. Abhimanew Dhir for their valuable advices during course work and research work.

Thanks to our collaborator Dr. Subhra Kanti Mukherjee, Dr. Anindita Roy and Ms. Trinetra Mukherjee for performing biological studies. I also want to acknowledge the support of USIC (Burdwan University) for the fluorescence microscope facility. I thank Dr. Jomon Mathew for his help in theoretical studies.

Special thanks to Mr. Shiv, Mr. Sunil, Mr. Ashish, Mr. Jay, Mr. Puneet for their help during sample characterization.

Thanks to Somnath and Sunil for their helping hands during thesis preparation.

I would love to thank my group mates Sunil, Pankaj, Gourav, Venkat, and Dr. Suman for providing nice working environment. It was nice to share times with friends like Sunil and Pankaj. I shall not forget the great moments that I had with my other friends particularly Himadri, Shejin and Hemant. I am fortunate to have Bisnu and Joyanta as my friends. Special thanks to Abhishek Chaudhari, Abhishek Gupta, Somnath, Sunil Dutt, Sindhu, Anna, Navneet, Prateep, Ashish, Dr. Rajesh, Dr. Satya, Reena, Tripti, Shilpa, Nerrittee, Dr. Charu, Dr. Ganesh, Ram babu, Guru, Lingeswar, Richa, Pushpendra, Vivek, Salaam, Raj kumar, Dushyant, Neelotpal, Anuradha, Srimanta, Syamantak, Reena, Sujeet, Monisha PV and Imraan for their support and encouragement. I wish to convey my thanks to Mr. Arun, Mr. Nitul, Dhananjay and Arunava for their help during sample analysis at IHBT, Palampur.

I thankfully acknowledge my special friend Debalina for her inspiration and motivation.

Words will be less to describe the support, encouragement and unconditional love provided by my family members. I want to express my sincere thanks to my uncles, aunties and elder sister. They taught me the value of hard work in every stage of my life. At last but not the least, thanks to my parents, what I am today is just because of them. To my mother, you always expected the best from me and I do not know how much I could fulfill your expectations. I wish you could have seen my research journey. This thesis is dedicated to you.

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Abstract

Given the potential applications of sensing materials in our daily life and also the market size of such materials, starting from electronics to biomedical applications, efforts are being made throughout the world toward their development with improved properties.

On the other hand, development of cell permeable materials for staining/imaging bio-relevant analytes in living system has attracted great attention of scientific community as this non-destructive technique helps in understanding various biological events. Often chemical sensing agents with low toxicity are employed extensively for bioimaging.

The present thesis entitled ‘Small molecule based optical monitors: synthesis, characterization and applications in bioimaging’ contains six chapters. Chapter 1 provides brief introduction about fluorescent chemical sensors, their sensing mechanisms, and about the importance of metal ion sensing. Chapter 2 describes an approach for fabrication of fluorescent imine and the applications of such imine as a ratiometric sensor (**CRZ 1**) for paramagnetic metal ions $\text{Fe}^{3+}/\text{Cu}^{2+}$. Probe **CRZ 1** contains one carboxylated unit, which act as a ‘locking unit’ restricting the possibility of E/Z-isomerization and ESIPT making **CRZ 1** fluorescent. **CRZ 1** was found to be an efficient fluorescent chemical sensor for the selective sub-micromolar ratiometric detection of $\text{Fe}^{3+}/\text{Cu}^{2+}$ over a wide range of metal ions. Chapter 3 mainly focuses on the utility of an unsymmetric benzophenone-based imine. A benzophenone-based half condensed Schiff base **BZP** has been applied for selective detection of Al^{3+} . Due to combined effect of photoinduced electron transfer (PET), excited state intramolecular proton transfer (ESIPT) and E/Z-isomerization, the half condensed probe was found to be almost non-fluorescent. Remarkable fluorescence enhancement was noticed upon the addition of Al^{3+} into a methanolic solution of

BZP. This probe (**BZP**) can detect micromolar level of Al^{3+} and can distinguish Al^{3+} , Ga^{3+} , In^{3+} from the absorption and emission profile. The selectivity was tested over 24 different metal and non-metal ions (Li^+ , Na^+ , K^+ , NH_4^+ , Ba^{2+} , Ca^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , Mn^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Cr^{3+} , Sn^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Cd^{2+} , Co^{2+} , Ni^{2+} , Hg^{2+} , Sr^{2+} , Ag^+ and Pb^{2+}).

As demonstrated in the beginning, in many occasions fluorescent chemical sensors are widely applied as bioimaging agents for tracking/imaging metal ions in living systems. Chapter 4 offers a quick look on the importance of metal ions in living systems followed by a brief history on the development of bioimaging materials for metal ion tracking/imaging. Utilization of a benzo[h]chromene derivative (synthesized following a multicomponent one pot procedure), 2-amino-4-phenyl-4H-benzo[h]chromene-3-carbonitrile **1**, as a chemical sensor for Pb^{2+} via ‘turn on’ fluorescence signaling was described in Chapter 5. The selectivity was tested over a range of seventeen different metal and non-metal ions. Addition of Pb^{2+} to a methanolic solution of **1** changed the weak blue emission of **1** to a glowing green emission along with a prominent red shift (26 nm) in the emission band. Sensor **1** can easily penetrate the cell membrane without causing any harm to the living cells and can image Pb^{2+} inside living system. Chapter 6 describes our systematic approach towards the development of cell permeable molecular probes with higher wavelength excitation and emission profile for imaging of zinc in living systems. Probes such as **Tris 2**, **L5** and **TRZ** were found to be efficient fluorescent chemical sensors for zinc in biofriendly medium. All these three probes were non-fluorescent initially. The metal-induced turn-on fluorescence was used as a potential tool to image zinc in living cells, both *in vitro* and *in vivo*.