

## SAR Remote Sensing for Environmental Monitoring

Pradnya R Maheshmalkar<sup>1\*</sup>, Shafiyoddin B Sayyad<sup>2</sup>, Shivanand V Kshirsagar<sup>1</sup>, Kirti R Desai<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Physics, Mrs. K. S. K. College, Beed, Maharashtra, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Physics, Milliya College, Beed, Maharashtra, India

<sup>3</sup>Department of Physics, Balbhim College, Beed, Maharashtra, India

### ABSTRACT

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This paper describes the satellite resources and advances in remote sensing for environmental planning, monitoring and management. Satellites provide a great deal of the remote sensing imagery commonly used today. Remote-sensing technologies have been applied widely in environmental monitoring, in agriculture for Improvement of a Crop /soil status, climate change detection, flood prediction, mapping etc.,. Remote sensing is a popular technique that is using in the mapping and monitoring of earth features. Sensors will progressively provide a better understanding of our activities in urban as well as rural areas. The advancement allow for monitoring earth features can be derived from the spectral properties of remotely-sensed imagery. Synthetic Aperture Radar can be used to retrieve information about some physical parameters of the targets under study by using electromagnetic radiations. This review provides the basis for the discussion, of the applicability of the SAR Remote Sensing for environmental monitoring.

**Keywords:** Remote Sensing, SAR, Environment

### I. INTRODUCTION

Remote sensing is the art and science of deriving useful information from imagery and other data acquired from a distance. The implementation of Remote Sensing requires better understanding of sustainable environmental management. A wide variety of remote sensing systems are used today to provide information about the earth, its atmosphere, oceans, and land surfaces. Remote sensing can efficiently monitor the environment and provide a

scientific basis for the valuable re-establishment of the environment. Many environmental indicator based on remote sensing are estimated to reflect environmental status.

SAR is a type of active data collection where a sensor produces its own energy and then records the amount of that energy reflected back after interacting with the Earth. Problems associated with environmental factors in almost all parts of the globe. Knowledge about the management of these problems is important

for any task planning in order to satisfy the environmental conditions.

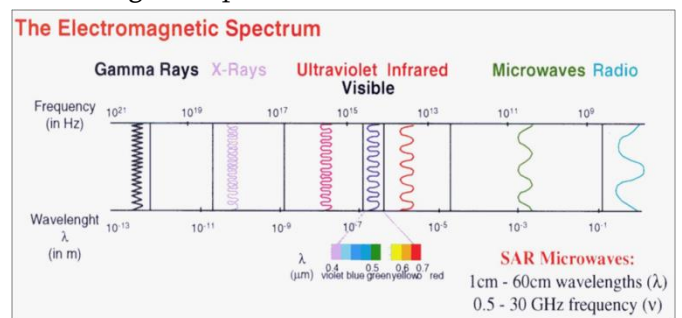
The natural environment is essential for human survival and development since it provides water resources, land resources, biological resources and climate resources etc. The development trend and future directions are put forward to direct the research and application of environmental monitoring and protection in the new era. Global and regional environmental monitoring relies heavily on remote sensing satellite and sensors which are capable of quickly collecting spatial and spectral information of large-extent entities on the Earth's surface. With the fast development of space technologies, remote sensing data are becoming more and more abundant [1]. SAR is an active radar technology that senses microwave signals reflected off Earth's surface, which means [SAR imagery](#) can be created day or night and in virtually any kind of weather. The result is cloud-free, high-contrast imagery. After the radar sends its microwave signal toward a target, the target reflects part of the signal back to the radar antenna. This reflection is called "backscatter." Various properties of the target (land, water, trees, etc.) affect how much the target backscatters the return signal [2]. SAR has a significant advantage over optical sensors because it can acquire data in poor weather conditions; therefore, it has special value in the field of agricultural remote sensing [3].

In this paper the identification and characterization of environmental features from polarimetric SAR images has been addressed. This review also updates the discussion on opportunities for future research, applying existing methods to recent advances in technology and planned globe observation task.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Most remote sensing devices detect variations in electromagnetic energy. The electromagnetic spectrum is the range of all types of electromagnetic energy according to frequency or wavelength,

ranging from shorter wavelengths (ultraviolet) to longer wavelength (near infrared, thermal, microwave). A spectral signature is the degree to which energy is reflected in different regions of the spectrum by different Earth surface materials, enabling them to be detected by visual or digital means from remotely sensed imagery. Finding distinctive spectral response patterns is the key to most procedures for computer-assisted interpretation and digital processing of satellite images [4]. Satellite imagery is made possible by remote sensing instruments that measure energy across the electromagnetic spectrum.



**Fig. 1. Remote Sensing Studies in Microwave region of the EM Spectrum**

Electromagnetic radiation in the microwave wavelength region is used in remote sensing to provide useful information about the Earth's surface (atmosphere, land and ocean). A microwave imaging system which can produce high resolution image of the earth is the synthetic aperture radar (SAR). The intensity in a SAR image depends on the amount of microwave backscattered by the target and received by the SAR antenna [5]. With the rapid development of different remote sensing satellites capturing information from the earth by sensing energy in different portions of the electromagnetic spectrum, complementary information about the area captured by different satellites is available [6]. SAR uses the microwave range for remote sensing. It works on the longer wavelength range as compared to optical images. Hence, it can penetrate through cloud and vegetation cover. SAR gives the surface characteristics and moisture content. SAR was developed to improve

the azimuth resolution of the RADAR systems. SAR can provide a quantitative estimation of ground changes and can be used in all weathers. PInSAR (Polarimetric SAR) is used in land cover classification and change detection. Limitation of SAR is that it gives less accuracy in dense vegetation and also affected by seasonal changes [7].

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several research studies showed the fundamentals of electromagnetic radiation, its interactions with the Earth's surface and atmosphere, as well as development and applications of remote sensing. Many scholars carried out studies based on the SAR Remote Sensing.

Physics is the most fundamental of all the sciences and scientific developments or technologies. Applied physics does the role of their application to modern technologies. Applied physics describes the laws and phenomenon of nature with their application in different fields like Physics of imaging, Atmospheric Physics, Nanotechnology, Remote Sensing etc. Electromagnetic radiation in the microwave wavelength region is used in remote sensing to provide useful information about the Earth's surface (atmosphere, land and ocean). A microwave imaging system which can produce high resolution image of the earth is the synthetic aperture radar (SAR). The intensity in a SAR image depends on the amount of microwave backscattered by the target and received by the SAR antenna [5]. Probably the most important area in which data from remote sensing can be used is that of regional and global monitoring of changes in land use, vegetation cover and environmental media. Earth observation systems are most suited for delivering information for such monitoring purposes as they cover extensive areas. They record regularly and guarantee comparable information over long periods of time (e.g. from Landsat). Remote sensing data are an important basis for dealing with questions in landscape ecology. It makes it possible to get

current information on large areas of land. Used alongside visual evaluation and superimposing other geographical data it is possible to classify land use areas as well as carry out a whole range of other thematic evaluations. The information from remote sensing data for landscape ecology comes from different regions of the spectrum, depending on the backscattering properties of different surface materials such as soil, vegetation type or areas of water and the sensor used [8]. SAR remote sensing can use different imaging parameters, such as the incident angles and the polarization configurations of the sensor, to obtain a wealth of information. Based on these characteristics and advantages, SAR remote sensing has considerable potential in the field of agricultural remote sensing [9]. SAR remote sensing allows all weather, global scale imaging and estimation of important bio and geophysical parameters about the Earth's surface. The development of multi-parameter SAR techniques such as Polarimetric SAR (POLSAR) and Polarimetric Interferometric SAR (POLInSAR) is advancing rapidly, and these novel radar technologies are constantly extending decisively the range of applications of radar in remote sensing. Due to the polarimetric radar sensors (ENVISAT ASAR, ALOS-PALSAR, TerraSAR-X and RADARSAT-2), it is now shown that the accelerated advancement of POLSAR techniques is of direct relevance and of priority to local-to-global environmental ground-truth measurement and validation, stress assessment, and stress-change monitoring of the terrestrial and planetary covers. POLSAR and POLINSAR remote sensing techniques offer efficient and reliable means of collecting information required to extract biophysical and geophysical parameters about the Earth's surface and have found successful applications in crop monitoring and damage assessment, in forestry clear cut mapping, deforestation and burn mapping, in land surface structure (geology) land cover (biomass) and land use, in hydrology (soil moisture, flood delineation), in sea ice monitoring, in

oceans and coastal monitoring (oil spill detection) etc.,[10]. A Polarimetric SAR system measures the backscattered energy of the targets in the scene, including its polarization state. The interaction of the transmitted wave with a scattering object transforms its polarization. Polarization signature is a graphical representation of the backscattered power received from a target, as a function of the polarizations of the incident and scattered electromagnetic waves. A tool named "POLSIC", with basic capability to calculate and represent 3D Polarimetric signatures (Co-polarized and Cross polarized) has been developed, still in an experimentation phase, in order to encourage and develop Polarimetric signature studies of various possible targets/class [11]. Remote sensing techniques based on identifying temporal changes have been trialed on data acquired from the LANDSAT Thematic Mapper (TM), a sensor with moderate spatial resolution (i.e., 12–50 meter pixel size) and medium temporal resolution (i.e., 4–16 day revisit time). The technique trialed on LANDSAT TM data aimed to map the visible indirect temporal land changes associated with illegal waste disposal. These visible indirect temporal land changes include thermal anomalies and/or vegetation stress. Land degraded by the presence of illegal waste is usually noticeable for its spectral signature stability over time in comparison to other features such as urban areas, sea, salt evaporation pools, cultivation systems, etc. [12]

Polarimetric SAR (PolSAR) is a well established technique, which allows the identification and separation of scattering mechanisms in the polarization signature for purposes of classification and parameter estimation. Polarimetric SAR (PolSAR) is sensitive to the orientation and characters of object and polarimetry could yield several new descriptive radar target detection parameters and lead to the improvement of radar detection algorithms. Target decomposition theory has been used for information extraction in PolSAR and it can also explore the phase message in PolSAR data [13]. An attempt has been to

develop a Polarimetric Signature Calculation and Visual Representation Tool assigned name "POLSIC", to generate Co-polarized and Cross polarized signatures, based on the calculation of Stokes Matrix and the backscattered power at various ellipticity and orientation angles. The input parameters required for the developed tool, are the amplitude and phase values of all the four polarizations, for each target using any quadpol radar imagery. In this study, RADARSAT-2 imagery has been used to obtain the amplitude and phase values of each target, in all four polarization states. Polarimetric signatures were generated for various urban targets using the developed tool. Vegetated land, built up in the city, built up within lake, and road were found to have an overall higher polarimetric response (backscattered power) as compared to grass lawn, fallow land and minimum in case of water body. Such Polarimetric responses were obtained due to factors like surface roughness and orientation of the target with respect to the radar look angle. The shape of the signature also indicates the scattering characteristics [11]. Different remote sensing datasets, e.g., Landsat TM&OLI, Gaofen-1 and MODIS, have different characteristics, such as spatial resolution, spectral range and resolution. Remote sensor monitoring of soil pollution is mainly based on hyper spectral images, because the hyper spectral remote sensing is able to obtain the quantitative information of soil composition (e.g., organic matter, minerals) due to the characteristics of high spectral resolution. Vegetation indexes are effective and empirical indicators that reflect the status of vegetation on the ground and describe ecological conditions. Soil moisture is a key component of the global water and energy exchange among hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere. Vegetation moisture is an indicator reflecting the growth of vegetation [14].

The change in land use from rural to urban is monitored to estimate populations, predict and plan direction of urban sprawl for developers, and monitor adjacent environmentally sensitive areas or hazards.

Temporary refugee settlements and tent cities can be monitored and population amounts and densities estimated. Analyzing agricultural vs. urban land use is important for ensuring that development does not encroach on valuable agricultural land, and to likewise ensure that agriculture is occurring on the most appropriate land and will not degrade due to improper adjacent development or infrastructure. Remote sensing methods can be employed to classify types of land use in a practical, economical and repetitive fashion, over large areas [15].

Currently available satellite imagery has been applied to numerous applications in disaster prediction, investigation and/or management at global, regional and local scales. The data have been mostly used for more detailed assessments of an event's aftermath and reconstruction, as well as in post-disaster scientific research [16].

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Various opportunities provided by recent advances in technology and data acquisition. Recent advances in Remote Sensing techniques and availability of satellite data **are needed for global, regional and local environmental monitoring**. Remote sensing data can be used for various applications i.e., for monitoring of earth resources, Retrieval of earth surface parameters, Management of earth surfaces etc .The usefulness of remote sensing technique will be improved if the capabilities are operated through the Microwave Synthetic Aperture Radar Imaging. SAR remote sensing is an imaging active microwave remote sensing technique which provides higher spatial resolution data. Interpretation and analysis of remote sensing imagery involves the identification and /or measurement of various targets in an image in order to extract useful information about them. In general, it is clear from this review paper that SAR remote sensing is now prominent potential towards accurate technique for environmental conservation management. In future, remote sensing tools will be

highly useful not only for decision making but also understanding the global change issue of earth surfaces. Satellite imagery is a great data source for quickly responding to different emergency events.

This paper concludes that SAR remote sensing has great potential and will play a more significant role in the Environmental Monitoring.

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