

Applications of coordination compounds

The coordination compounds are of great importance. These compounds are widely present in the mineral, plant and animal worlds and are known to play many important functions in the area of analytical chemistry, metallurgy, biological systems, industry and medicine. These are described below:

- Coordination compounds find use in many qualitative and quantitative chemical analyses. The familiar colour reactions given by metal ions with some ligands (especially chelating ligands), as a result of the formation of coordination entities, form the basis for their detection and estimation by classical and instrumental methods of analysis. Examples of such reagents include EDTA, DMG (dimethylglyoxime), α -nitroso- β -naphthol, cupron, etc.
- Hardness of water is estimated by simple titration with Na_2EDTA . The Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} ions form stable complexes with EDTA. The selective estimation of these ions can be done due to differences in the stability constants of calcium and magnesium complexes.
- Some important extraction processes of metals, like those of silver and gold, make use of complex formation. Gold, for example, combines with cyanide in the presence of oxygen and water to form the coordination entity $[\text{Au}(\text{CN})_2]^-$ in aqueous solution. Gold can be separated in metallic form from this solution by the addition of zinc (Unit 6).
- Similarly, purification of metals can be achieved through formation and subsequent decomposition of their coordination compounds. For example,

impure nickel is converted to $[\text{Ni}(\text{CO})_4]$, which is decomposed to yield pure nickel.

- Coordination compounds are of great importance in biological systems. The pigment responsible for photosynthesis, chlorophyll, is a coordination compound of magnesium. Haemoglobin, the red pigment of blood that acts as oxygen carrier is a coordination

compound of iron. Vitamin B12, cyanocobalamin, the anti-pernicious anaemia factor, is a coordination compound of cobalt. Among the other compounds of biological importance with

coordinated metal ions are the enzymes like, carboxypeptidase A and carbonic anhydrase (catalysts of biological systems).

- Coordination compounds are used as catalysts for many industrial processes. Examples include rhodium complex, $[(\text{Ph}_3\text{P})_3\text{RhCl}]$, a Wilkinson catalyst, is used for the hydrogenation of alkenes.

- Articles can be electroplated with silver and gold much more smoothly and evenly from solutions of the complexes, $[\text{Ag}(\text{CN})_2]^-$ and $[\text{Au}(\text{CN})_2]^-$ than from a solution of simple metal ions.

- In black and white photography, the developed film is fixed by washing with hypo solution which dissolves the undecomposed AgBr to form a complex ion, $[\text{Ag}(\text{S}_2\text{O}_3)_2]^{3-}$.

- There is growing interest in the use of chelate therapy in medicinal chemistry. An example is the treatment of problems caused by the presence of metals in toxic proportions in plant/animal systems.

Thus, excess of copper and iron are removed by the chelating ligands D–penicillamine and desferrioxime B via the formation of coordination compounds. EDTA is used in the treatment of lead poisoning. Some coordination compounds of platinum effectively inhibit the growth of tumours. Examples are: *cis*–platin and related compounds.