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1 **Flow behaviour of grains through the dosing station of spacecraft under low gravity**  
2 **environments**

3  
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19

20 **ABSTRACT**

21 For the design of the grain-processing stations of spacecrafts, such as EXOMARS 2020,  
22 reliable estimates are required on the internal and bulk flow characteristics of granular media  
23 under the low gravitational environments. Using theoretical and computational modelling, here  
24 we present results on the generic flow behaviour of granular materials through flow channels  
25 under different gravity levels. For this, we use three approaches, viz., (i) a simple one-  
26 dimensional discrete layer approach (DLA) based on hybrid-Lagrange continuum analysis (ii)  
27 three dimensional Kirya structural continuum model and (iii) three dimensional discrete  
28 element modelling (DEM). Each model has its merits and limitations. For the granular simulant  
29 considered here, a good level of agreement is obtained between the results of Kirya model and  
30 DEM simulations on the flow properties of the grains. Some qualitative comparisons are also  
31 reported favourably on the flow characteristics of grains between the results of the experimental  
32 parabolic flight campaign and the DEM simulations. The theoretical and DEM simulations  
33 presented here could help to minimise relying on the complex experimental programmes, such  
34 as the parabolic flight campaign, for evaluating the processing behaviour of grains under low  
35 gravitational environments in future.

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## INTRODUCTION

Space agencies of the world conduct extraterritorial ground exploration operations to explore human life beyond the earth. For example, the European Space Agency (ESA) aims to launch the EXOMARS rover mission to Mars in 2020, which involves operating a rover for the subsurface soil sampling and analysis. Using several electro-mechanical systems within the rover, samples acquired would be mechanically processed and dispensed to different instruments. In the design of the grain processing stations of such spacecrafts, a key requirement is understanding the flow behaviour of granular materials under low gravitational environments (Squyres et al. 2004; Yen et al. 2005; Antony et al. 2016).

Granular materials consist of discrete grains (Duran 1999). Micromechanical behaviours of granular materials have been studied extensively in the past, and they differ from that of conventional solids, liquids and gases states of matter (de-Gennes 1999; Schulze 2007; Lumay et al. 2009; Nguyen et al. 2014). For example the microscopic origin of shear strength is attributed to the contribution of a limited group of contacts, referred to as strong contacts, which depend on their particle-scale properties (Antony 2007, Kruyt and Antony 2007). Recent experimental studies using Digital Particle Image Velocimetry (Albaraki and Antony 2014) provide information on how grain-scale properties influences on the flow behaviour of granular media at both micro and bulk scales under the earth gravity. However, such details are scarce in the literature for the low gravitational environments.

For simulating the processing characteristics of granular materials, DEM is used more commonly in the recent times (Cundall and Strack 1979). DEM models the interaction between contiguous grains as a dynamic process and the time step is advanced using an explicit finite

61 difference scheme (Cundall and Strack 1979). The method enables to predict both the  
62 microscale (internal) and bulk scale mechanical characteristics of granular materials under  
63 different loading and environmental conditions. So far, investigations on the mechanical  
64 behaviour of granular materials are widely reported under the earth gravity conditions, but  
65 relatively to a small extent under other gravitational conditions (Liu and Li 2010; Hofmeister  
66 et al. 2009). Under the low-gravitational conditions, certain material properties such as the  
67 cohesion of the grains could influence on the macroscopic flow properties relatively more with  
68 that of the earth gravitational condition (Walton et al. 2007). This is due to potential changes  
69 in the chemical activity of the grains under low gravitational environments. For example, the  
70 lunar granular surfaces could be chemically more active and result more surface energy when  
71 compared with the same mineralogy of the grains under the earth gravity (Walton et al. 2007).  
72 This could also result the formation of the grains (or their agglomerates) in non-spherical  
73 shapes. For simulating the mechanical behaviour of granular assemblies, some DEM studies  
74 account for the non-spherical shape of the grains by considering them as a collection of  
75 prolates, oblates (Antony and Kuhn 2005), or by fusing individual spheres to construct any  
76 non-spherical shape of the grains (Walton and Braun 1993, Chung and Ooi 2007). Theoretical  
77 analysis have been also reported in the past to determine the bulk flow properties of the grains,  
78 for example using the simple Beverloo equation (Beverloo et al. 1961) comprising an empirical  
79 correlation coefficient. Some studies (Chung and Ooi 2007) on the bulk flow rate of the grains  
80 have reported that such predictions depend on the selection of the correlation coefficient. The  
81 value of this correlation coefficient is not yet well defined to different terrestrial grains and  
82 environments. Furthermore, Beverloo equation does not directly account for the inter-particle  
83 friction of the grains (Beverloo et al. 1961).

84

85 In general, DEM simulations are computationally expensive, especially under the low gravity  
86 conditions (Brucks et al. 2008). It would be desirable to evaluate the flow properties of grains  
87 under the low gravity conditions using DEM and to compare the outcomes with relatively less-  
88 expensive continuum approaches where feasible. The current research focuses on this by  
89 evaluating the influences of grain-scale properties of the non-cohesive grains on their flow  
90 properties under a range of gravitational environments, including that of less than the earth  
91 gravity (low gravity). The study involves applying simple theoretical models and more  
92 extensive discrete element modelling depending on different scenarios.

93

## 94 **THEORETICAL AND NUMERICAL METHODS**

95 The theoretical methods adopted here are of two types namely: Discrete Layer Approach  
96 (DLA) by considering one-dimensional granular flow through a two-dimensional hopper, and  
97 the three-dimensional Kirya's structural model. Results from the three-dimensional DEM  
98 simulations are compared with corresponding Kirya's structural model at later stages.

### 99 **Theoretical Analysis using discrete layer approach (DLA)**

100 In the DLA approach, the particles are represented as discrete layers (Fig. 1). Hence this comes  
101 with the simplification, in which instead of considering individual particles as such, group of  
102 particles are represented as thin discrete layers of height  $h$ , and each layer would represent the  
103 collective flow behaviour of particles within them based on Lagrange approach. The flow  
104 geometry is two dimensional in which the flow of grains occurs along the vertical axis (Fig.1).  
105 For a given steady-state flow rate  $Q$  of the grains through the hopper of a given throat angle,  
106 the model helps to estimate the discharge completion time, the position of the particles with  
107 time (Lagrange coordinate) and the velocity of granular layers within the hopper. Though the  
108 model does not explicitly take into account the gravity term in the final equations, it helps to

109 evaluate the flow trajectories of the layers and the completion time required to empty flow  
 110 funnels under a steady flow rate ( $Q \text{ m}^2/\text{s}$ ) condition by assuming that when other conditions  
 111 are identical, proportionately higher steady flow rates corresponds to flow of materials under a  
 112 relatively high level of gravity and vice versa.

113 For this, it is assumed that the granular material is incompressible – an assumption that in fact  
 114 is not fully valid for planetary regolith. We select an elementary volume of discrete granular  
 115 layer which is also called as a ‘large particle element’ with thickness  $h \ll H$  (Fig. 1). The  
 116 Lagrange coordinate,  $\xi$  is employed as the initial coordinate of centre of the large particle  
 117 element (elementary volume of media) as shown in Fig. 1. Hence that the boundary conditions  
 118 are:

$$119 \quad \begin{cases} t = t_0 : y = \xi \\ t > t_0 : y = f(\xi, t) \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

120 where  $y$  is the Euler coordinate of centre of large particle element.

121 It is necessary to find the law of motion of the elementary volume:

$$122 \quad y = f(\xi, t) \quad (2)$$

123 For incompressible media, the area of elementary volume ( $S$ ) will be constant. Using this  
 124 condition together with the geometrical dimensions of the hopper, the following relations are  
 125 obtained to develop computational schemes for the subsequent analysis:

$$126 \quad y = \frac{h}{h_1} \left( \xi + \frac{a}{2 \tan \alpha_1} \right) - \frac{a}{2 \tan \alpha_1} \quad (3)$$

$$127 \quad h_1 = (h_{11} - h_{12}) / \tan \alpha_1, \quad \alpha_1 = \alpha / 2 \quad (4)$$

128 where,  $h_1$  is the thickness of the particle element at time  $t$  (Fig.1) and  $h_{11}$ ,  $h_{12}$  are defined as

$$129 \quad h_{11} = \sqrt{\left( \xi \tan \alpha_1 + \frac{a}{2} + \frac{h}{2} \tan \alpha_1 \right)^2 - (t - t_0) Q \tan \alpha_1} \quad (5)$$

$$h_{12} = \sqrt{\left(\xi \tan \alpha_1 + \frac{a}{2} - \frac{h}{2} \tan \alpha_1\right)^2 - (t - t_0) Q \tan \alpha_1} \quad (6)$$

131

### 132 **Analysis of factors influencing the granular flow using DLA**

133 Two different heights of the container fill (H) is considered in this study, viz., 0.2m (case1-  
 134  $\xi=0.2$ ) and 0.3m (case2- $\xi=0.3$ ) and various values of flow rate Q. Unless mentioned otherwise,  
 135 the size of the slit 'a' is kept as 0.1m and the hopper angle  $\alpha$  as  $\pi/3$  (Fig. 1). However at later  
 136 stages, the analysis has been extended to different combinations of a and  $\alpha$  to understand their  
 137 individual roles on the characteristics of granular flow.

138 At first, the theoretical results were analysed by tracking the motion/position 'y' of the topmost  
 139 thin discrete layer (h=0.001 m, Fig. 1) with respect to time as presented in Fig. 2.  $T_{\text{empty}}$ , which  
 140 is the emptying time (i.e., time required to complete the flow of granular material through the  
 141 container. This would correspond to the time when y tends to zero). Hence, the value of  $T_{\text{empty}}$   
 142 can be extracted from Fig. 2 and presented in Fig. 3 as a function of granular flow rate. From  
 143 these results, it is evident that the time required to empty the container ( $T_{\text{empty}}$ ) decreases for an  
 144 increase in the flow rate as one could expect (Schulze and Schwedes 1990). However, From  
 145 Fig. 3, it is interesting to note that this decrease in  $T_{\text{empty}}$  occurs at a rapidly decreasing rate for  
 146 the flow rate up to about 0.003 m<sup>2</sup>/s, and this trend tends to diminish beyond a flow rate of  
 147 0.003 m<sup>2</sup>/s for both cases of the container with different heights ( $\xi=0.2$  and 0.3). Hence, in  
 148 general, the low gravity effects are more likely to slow down the flow of grains in the selected  
 149 dosing funnel (hopper) geometry especially when the processing flow rate is relatively low  
 150 (approximately the minimum cut off flow rate is 0.003 m<sup>2</sup>/s).

151 The influence of the hopper angle  $\alpha$  (Fig. 1) on the granular flow behaviour is analysed for a  
 152 typical value of flow rate 0.003 m<sup>2</sup>/s. As discussed above, the corresponding time required to  
 153 empty the container  $T_{\text{empty}}$  is also calculated and presented in Fig. 4. It is evident that the time

154 required to empty the containers due to granular flow increases for increase in the hopper angle.  
 155 This is qualitatively in agreement with the recent experimental studies though conducted under  
 156 the earth gravity (Antony and Albaraki 2014) in which increase in the hopper angle resulted an  
 157 increase in the completion time of the granules. This behaviour is more noticeable for the  
 158 hopper throat angle between  $\pi/2$  and  $\pi/3$ , as well as more significantly when the height of the  
 159 container is relatively high ( $\xi=0.3$ ). Hence for designing the dosing container, hopper throat  
 160 angle of less than  $\pi/3$ , where feasible, is desired from the point of view of maintaining good  
 161 flowability of the grains from the container, especially when the height of the container is more  
 162 than 0.2m ( $\xi>0.2$ ). This could be attributed to the favourable direction of the resultant velocity  
 163 of the grains during the flow. Experimental granular flow studies conducted using Digital  
 164 Particle Image Velocimetry (DPIV) under the earth gravitational condition (Antony and  
 165 Albaraki 2014) have also shown that, for a smaller hopper angle (e.g.  $\pi/6$ ), the direction of the  
 166 resultant velocity of the grains align along the direction of the gravity almost throughout the  
 167 hopper and favours a uniform flow. This trend diminished significantly in the case of a higher  
 168 hopper angle (e.g.  $\pi/2$ ) and resulted a non-uniform funnel flow (Antony and Albaraki 2014)  
 169 with a relatively more time to complete the flow through the hopper.

170 The DLA model was also used to monitor the velocity profile of the particle during granular  
 171 flow in the hopper. The velocity of the particle can be evaluated as:

$$172 \quad v = \frac{dy}{dt} = -\frac{1}{2} \frac{hQ}{h_1 h_{11} h_{12}} \{ \xi \tan \alpha_1 + a/2 \} \quad (7)$$

173 Fig. 5 shows the typical velocity distribution of the particle inside the hopper ( $\xi=0.3$ ,  $\alpha=\pi/3$ ,  
 174  $a=0.1m$ ). The velocity is at a maximum at the exit of the hopper ( $y=0$ ) during granular flow in  
 175 agreement with other studies (Cox and Hill 2005). The above presented DLA analysis helps  
 176 to evaluate some useful flow characteristics of granular media in a simple manner. However,



177 for studying more rigorous three-dimensional flow of grains under the low gravitational  
178 environments, the following analysis is presented.

179 **Analysis of the discharge rate of grains under low gravity using Kirya's structural**  
180 **continuum model**

181 Here, the aim is to study on when other conditions are identical between different cases, to  
182 what extent the steady state granular flow rate ( $Q$ ) of frictional grains (inter-particle friction)  
183 varies if the gravitation field of the container is different from that of earth gravity  $g_0$  (reference  
184 gravity level). For selected cases, DEM simulations are reported later for the purpose of  
185 comparisons. Such an analysis would provide beforehand indications of the variations in the  
186 flow properties when actual experiments are conducted to corresponding conditions in the  
187 parabolic flight campaign in the future.

188 The theoretical analysis was performed based on Kirya's three-dimensional structural  
189 continuum model and the details can be found elsewhere (Kirya 2009). As the original  
190 description of this model is in Russian, and for the benefit of the wider audience of this journal,  
191 we describe the key developments of Kirya's model here. In brief, the flow trajectories of the  
192 grains inside a smooth hopper is divided into different zones A-E (Fig.6a). In zone A, the  
193 granular medium particles are interconnected and move at a low speed parallel to the walls of  
194 the hopper. In zone B, the particles slide relative to each other, and their trajectories are bent  
195 towards the axis of the hopper. In zone C, the granular particles form movable vaults moving  
196 downward, while the particle velocities increase substantially, and their trajectories approach  
197 vertical lines. In the zone of collapse (mixing) D, connections between particles are destroyed,  
198 while they are in continuous chaotic motion, colliding with each other, and their speed increases  
199 due to gravity. In zone E, the particles are stationary (Kirya 2009). In the present case, the  
200 objective is to focus on the exit flow rate of the grains from the hopper. Hence the description  
201 of exit flow zone-D bounded by a parabola (Fig. 6b) is considered here. In this zone, the

202 granular particles collide with other particles continuously and in a chaotic movement. The  
 203 grains are in a free disperse state and their movement can be described by the Navier Stokes  
 204 equations for granular materials (Kirya 1999, Kirya 2009). The boundary between the dynamic  
 205 arc C, and the exit flow zone D could be represented in the form of a parabola (Fig. 6b) in the  
 206 following form (Kirya 2009):

$$207 \quad y = h_c \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{2x}{a} \right)^2 \right] \quad (8)$$

208 Where  $h_c$  is the height of parabola, which can also be defined as:

$$209 \quad h_c = \frac{a}{4} \frac{1 + \sin\varphi}{\cos\varphi} = \frac{a}{4} \left( \mu + \sqrt{1 + \mu^2} \right) \quad (9)$$

$$210 \quad \mu = \tan\varphi \quad (10)$$

211 In which  $\mu$  is the coefficient of inter-particle friction,  $\varphi$  is the angle of internal friction and  $a$  is  
 212 the size of the opening (Fig.6b).

213 The parabola shown in Fig. 6b can be substituted by linear sections. The equation of the linear  
 214 boundary has the following form:

$$215 \quad y = h_c \left[ 1 - \frac{2|x|}{a} \right] \quad (11)$$

216  
 217  
 218 in which  $-a/2 \leq x \leq a/2$ . By using Bernoulli equation to the cross-sections 1-1 and 2-2 for  
 219 considered triangle, we obtain

$$220 \quad y_1 + \frac{P_1}{\gamma} + \frac{v_1^2}{2g} = y_2 + \frac{P_2}{\gamma} + \frac{v_2^2}{2g} + \zeta \frac{v_2^2}{2g} \quad (12)$$

221 where  $y_1, y_2$  are levels of sections 1-1 and 2-2 respectively;  $P_1, P_2$  are normal tensions at the  
 222 points of interceptions of sections 1-1 and 2-2 with lateral sides of the triangle;  $v_1, v_2$  are  
 223 corresponding velocities of particles at the above said points;  $g$  is gravitational acceleration;  $\gamma$

224 is the unit weight of granular material;  $\zeta$  is Darcy-Weissbakh coefficient of local loss  
 225 characterizing the loss of mechanical energy of granular flow by collisions between particles  
 226 (Shterenliht, 1984). By substituting  $y_1=y$ ,  $y_2=0$ ,  $p_1=0$ ,  $p_2=0$ ,  $v_1=v_d$ ,  $v_2=v_e$  in to Eq. (12)  
 227 and after transformations, the value of velocity of particles of granular material on the chink  
 228 exit from the tank can be written as

$$229 \quad v_e = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+\zeta}} \sqrt{2gy + v_d^2} \quad (13)$$

230 Where  $v_d$  is the velocity of particles at a point of intersection and can be expressed as

$$231 \quad v_d = \sqrt{\frac{2g\sigma_2}{\gamma}} \quad (14)$$

$$232 \quad \sigma_2 = \gamma \left( \frac{1}{\mu} + \mu - \sqrt{1 + \mu^2} \right) x \quad (15)$$

233 Substituting Eqs.(14) and (15) into Eq.(13) results as:

$$234 \quad v_e = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+\zeta}} \sqrt{2g \left( y + \frac{\sigma_2}{\gamma} \right)} \quad (16)$$

235 The volume expenditure of granular material per unit length through the chink is defined as:

$$236 \quad Q = \int_{-a/2}^{a/2} v_e dx \quad (17)$$

$$237 \quad Q = \frac{2}{3} a^{3/2} \sqrt{g} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+\zeta}} \frac{K_1^{3/2}}{K_1 - \chi'} \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{\chi'}{K_1} \right)^{3/2} \right] \quad (18)$$

238 where,

$$239 \quad K_1 = \frac{1}{2} \left( \mu + \sqrt{1 + \mu^2} \right) \quad (19)$$

$$240 \quad \chi' = \mu + \frac{1}{\mu} - \sqrt{1 + \mu^2} \quad (20)$$

241 The coefficient of loss,  $\zeta$  at the movement of granular material in the zone of flow out can then  
 242 be defined as

$$243 \quad \zeta = K_2 \frac{\kappa^2 d^2 h_c}{a^3} \quad (21)$$

244 where  $K_2$  is unit dimensionless coefficient dependent on the conditions of flow out from the  
245 tank ( $\approx 1$ );  $d$  is the diameter of the particle (average size in the analysis);  $a$  is width of the exit  
246 flow channel in zone D; and  $\kappa$  ( $=10$ ) is the kinetic coefficient which characterizes the loss of  
247 mechanical energy flow by collisions between particles (Kirya 2009). The size of the opening  
248  $a$  is kept as 10mm (Fig.6b) for the analysis. Furthermore, from Eqs.(9) and (19) it follows that  
249  $h_c = K_1 a/2$ . Hence Eq.(21) can be written more generally as:

$$250 \quad \zeta = K_1 K_2 \frac{\kappa^2 d^2}{2a^2} \quad (22)$$

251  
252 Using Eq.(18), the effects of friction coefficient on the flow properties (Nedderman 1992) of  
253 grains (uniform grain size 100 $\mu$ m) are studied here under a range of gravity levels. The friction  
254 coefficient was varied from 0.1 – 0.5 and gravity from 20– 200% of earth gravity and the results  
255 are presented in Fig.7. In this, the flow rate ( $Q$ ) under a given gravity level ( $g$ ) is normalised  
256 with respect to that of earth gravity condition ( $Q_0, g_0$ ). The results show that the flow rate  
257 increases with the gravity (Sun and Sankaran 2012). However this increase is more dominant  
258 in the case of low frictional materials ( $\mu \leq 0.3$ ) and under relatively high gravity ( $g > g_0$ ). For  
259 particles with friction coefficient greater than 0.3, interparticle friction does not have a  
260 dominant effect on the granular flow rate under the low gravity environments ( $g < g_0$ ).

261

### 262 **DEM modelling of gravity effects on flow rate (Q) of the grains**

263 The objective of this section is to evaluate the macroscopic flow rate  $Q$  of the sandstone grains  
264 passing through a typical spacecraft flow channel of the grain-processing station using DEM  
265 simulations. The results are also compared with corresponding continuum analysis using the  
266 Kirya's continuum model as described in the previous section. DEM models the interaction  
267 between individual grains as a dynamic process and the time advancement is based on  
268 Newton's law of motion and using an explicit finite difference scheme (Cundall and Strack

269 1979). For more details of the DEM simulation methodology for low gravity levels, the readers  
270 could refer to the work of Nakashima et al. (2011), though their work pertains to two-  
271 dimensional conditions for studying the angle of repose of granular materials post-flowing  
272 through hopper under low gravity conditions. However, in the present paper, the DEM  
273 simulations are presented for three-dimensional conditions. The dimensions of the three  
274 dimensional flow channel (hopper) are presented in Fig.8. Discrete spherical particles (normal  
275 size distribution with an average size of  $100\mu\text{m}$ , and the ratio of maximum to minimum size of  
276 the grains=1.6) were initially created in a random static packing inside the hopper assembly  
277 with typical material properties of sandstone grains and hopper (Table 1). After generating the  
278 initial random assembly of the grains inside the hopper geometry to the required initial porosity,  
279 they were allowed to flow through by opening the throat of the hopper.

280

281 Fig.9 shows the time required to empty the sandstone grains from the hopper under different  
282 gravity levels. This presents on the strong influence of gravity plays on the flow characteristics  
283 of the grains, i.e., at the low gravity levels (about  $g < 0.6g_0$ ) the flow of the grains is significantly  
284 slow when compared with that of earth gravity. The emptying time tends to be inversely  
285 proportional to the level of gravity. Similar generic trends are also reported earlier in the  
286 experimental investigation using grains passing through the hourglass (Le Pennec et al. 1995,  
287 Hofmeister et al. 2009).

288

289 To understand on the extent to which the DEM simulation results agree with continuum  
290 analysis under different gravity levels, Kirya's model (as described in the previous section) is  
291 used for the geometrical conditions and material properties used in the present DEM  
292 simulations. The average flow rate obtained from the DEM simulations is compared with the  
293 flow rate obtained from the Kirya's model in Fig.10. Interestingly, a good level of agreement

294 is obtained between these results based on the two different approaches, especially when  $g \leq g_0$ .  
295 This helps to assess the bulk flow rate of grains through the hopper flow devices under low  
296 gravity more easily using the Kirya's model as DEM simulations are computationally more  
297 expensive (Cundall and Strack 1979). However, DEM simulation data could give more  
298 information on the internal and discrete behaviour of the grains inside the flow devices, which  
299 is outside the scope of the current work.

300

301 The flow characteristics of sandstone using DEM is compared qualitatively with the  
302 observations made from a parabolic flight test (Thomson, 1986) and presented in Fig.11. For  
303 this, a preparatory experiment involved studying the mass flow of grains through the hopper,  
304 and then to increase the gravity level rapidly to  $2g_0$  to completely evacuate the grains quickly  
305 (without any particles sticking to the wall surfaces to avoid potential contaminations). In this  
306 case, flow of the sandstone material through the funnel geometry was observed and a  
307 significant level of blockage of the grains occurred in the funnel under the lunar gravity level.  
308 This was also quantified using corresponding DEM simulations (as described earlier). The  
309 containment of the particles in the funnel was observed (Fig.11). Further tests were carried out  
310 by simulating a  $2g_0$  gravity environment with the remaining stuck in the hopper. Also, the  
311 gravity environment of the experiment was suddenly increased to  $2g_0$  level which completely  
312 ejected the blocked grains and this agreed with the DEM simulation results as well. The total  
313 mass of grains ejected from the funnel increased drastically under the  $2g_0$  gravity environment  
314 and within a short simulation time-steps, all the particles were discharged out of the hopper  
315 (Fig. 11). However, further experimental studies are required to make detailed measurements  
316 and their quantitative comparisons with the results based on the DEM and theoretical analysis,  
317 although creating a long duration low-gravitational environmental for experimental testing is a  
318 stiff challenge yet.

319

320 **CONCLUSIONS**

321 Both continuum and discrete approaches have been used in this study to understand the flow  
322 characteristics of granular materials through flow geometries under different gravitational  
323 environments. Though the DLA approach is the most simplest of all, it helps to evaluate the  
324 dynamic nature of the grains such as the completion time of the flow under different  
325 gravitational conditions. Furthermore, the results on the bulk flow properties under low  
326 gravitational levels of the grains based on the Kirya's approach agreed well with that of the  
327 DEM simulations. A simple continuum approach such as Kirya's model could help to estimate  
328 the three dimensional flow behaviour of frictional grains more quickly unlike in the case of  
329 DEM simulations, which involve a significantly high amount of computational time and  
330 resources, especially for studying the low gravitational behaviour of granular materials. The  
331 present analysis helps to estimate the granular flow measures at different gravity levels  
332 including low gravity. The approaches outlined here could help to minimise using parabolic  
333 flight campaigns (which are more expensive with respect to manpower, flight costs and  
334 managing the risks) for evaluating the flow properties of cohesionless and frictional grains.  
335 Further detailed studies are required and underway to understand on the internal mechanics,  
336 physics and bulk dynamic flow characteristics of more realistic granular simulants, and suitable  
337 mechanisms to enhance granular flow under the low gravitational environments.

338

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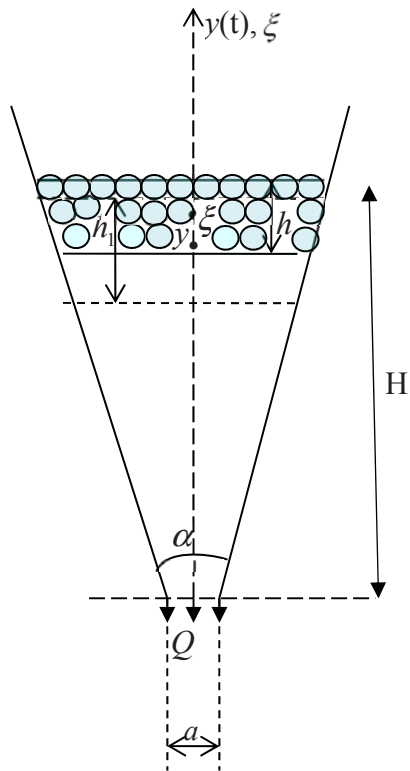
421 **Table 1.** Material properties used in the DEM simulations

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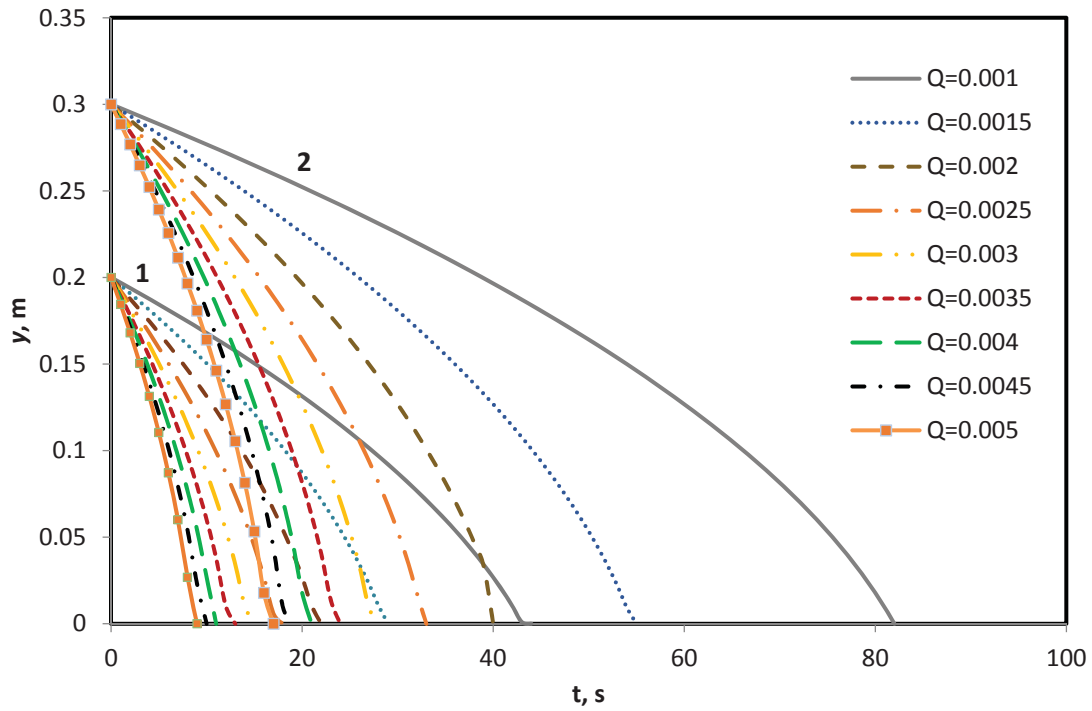
wall normal stiffness = $1e8$ N/m	wall shear stiffness = $1e8$ N/m
grain normal stiffness = $1e8$ N/m	grain shear stiffness = $1e8$ N/m
grain contact normal strength= $1e8$ Pa	grain contact shear strength= $1e8$ Pa
grain contact friction coefficient = 0.6	initial porosity = 0.36
wall friction coefficient = 0.6	grain density = $2900$ kg/m <sup>3</sup>

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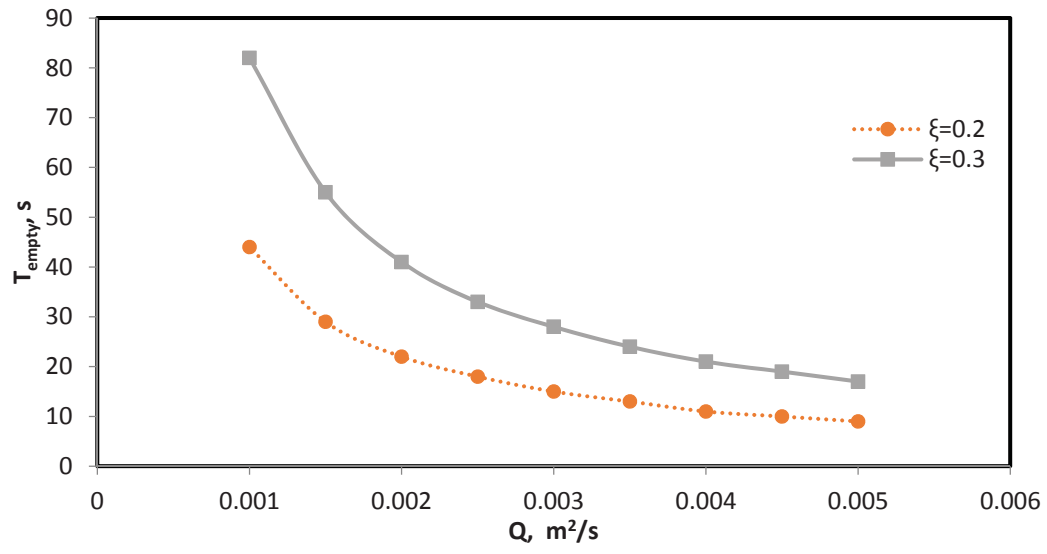
422



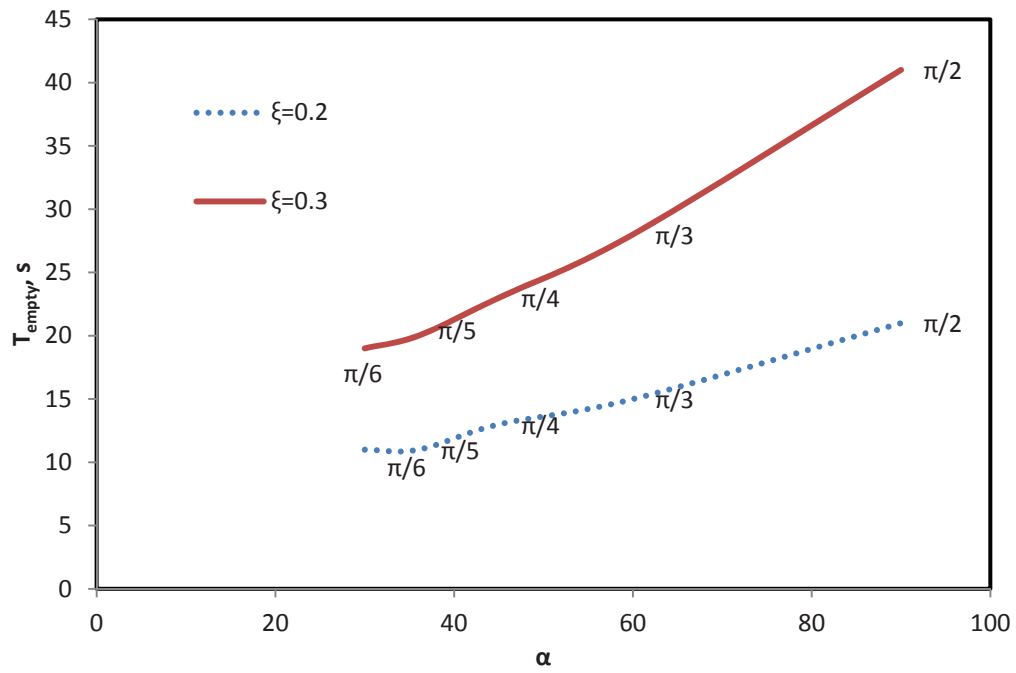
**Fig. 1:** Schematic diagram of a typical discrete layer of grains used in DLA



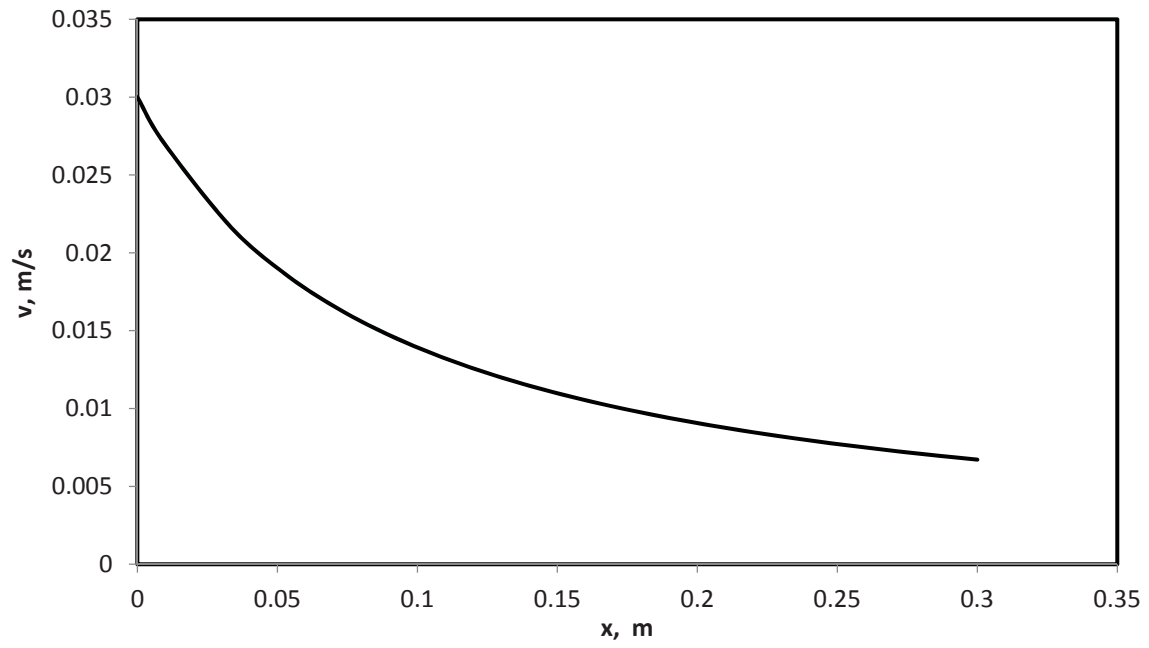
**Fig. 2:** Location of the top most discrete layer ( $y$  in Fig.1) with time ( $t$ ) under different flow rates  $Q$  ( $\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ ) (case-1:  $H=0.2\text{m}$ , case-2:  $H=0.3\text{m}$ )



**Fig. 3:** Variation of the time to empty the hopper with the granular flow rate ( $Q$ )

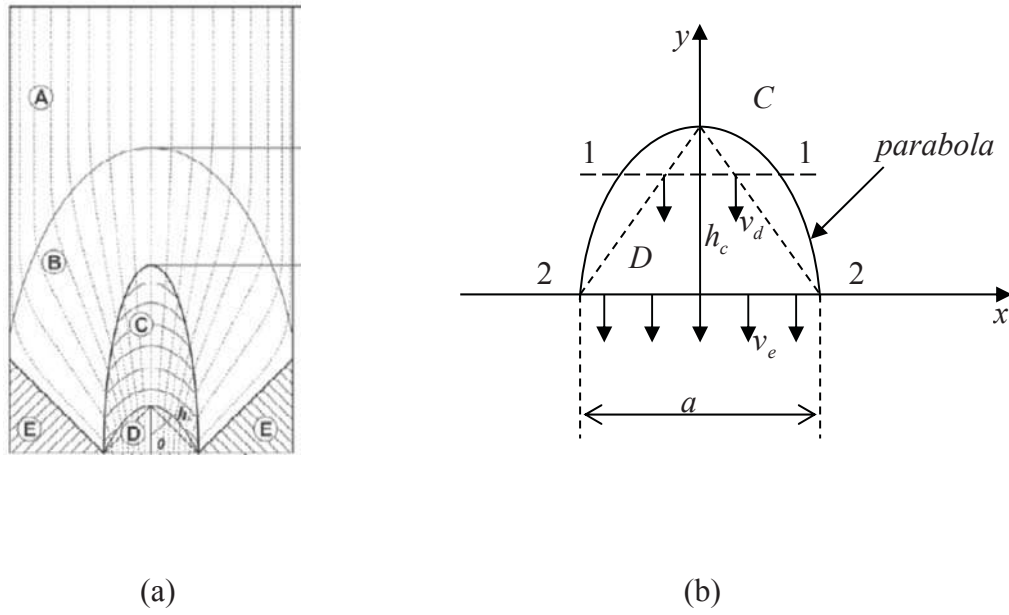


**Fig. 4:** Time to empty the particles from the hopper in relation to the hopper angle ( $\alpha$ )

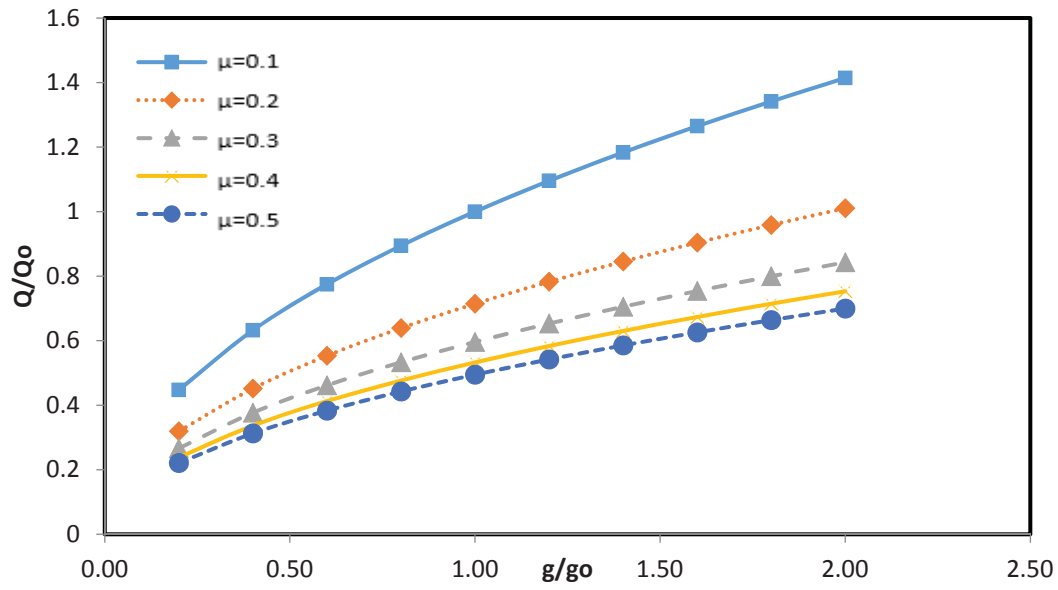


**Fig. 5:** Variation of the normal velocity of the particles with  $x$  ( $\xi = 0.3$ )

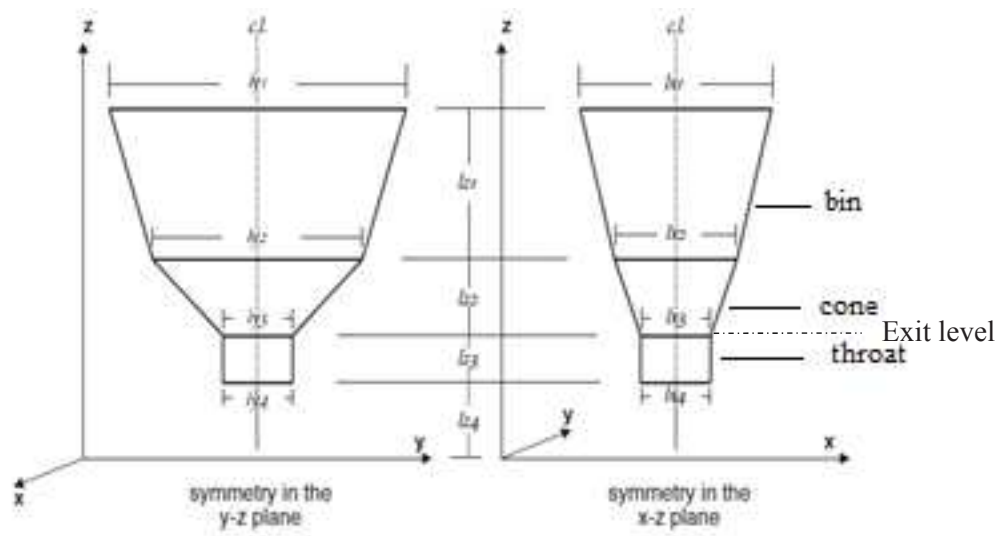




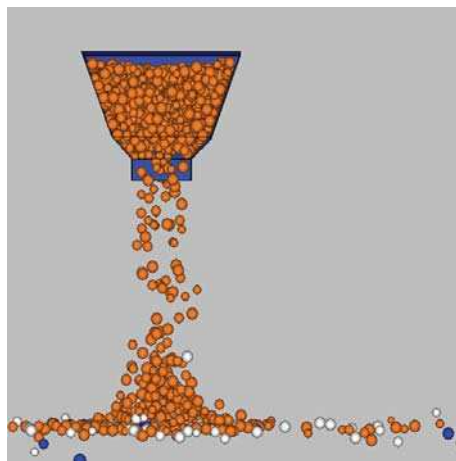
**Fig. 6:** (a) Zones of flow of the granular particles inside a hopper (Kirya, 2009) (b) expanded diagram of Zone D



**Fig. 7:** Effects of friction coefficient and gravity on the granular flow rate using Kirya's structural model

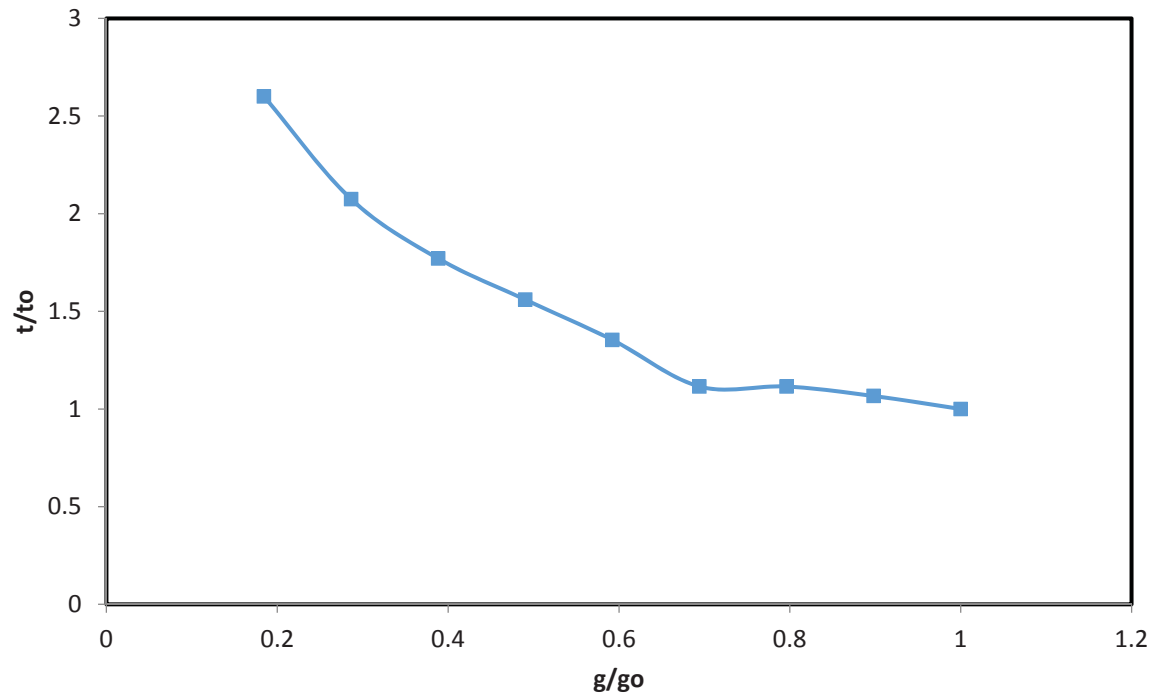


(a)

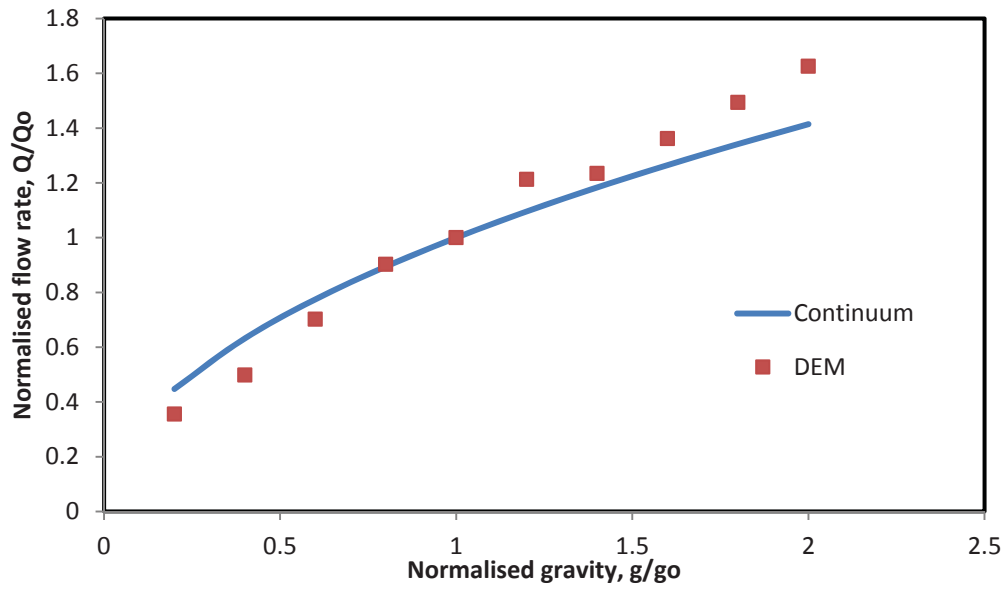


(b)

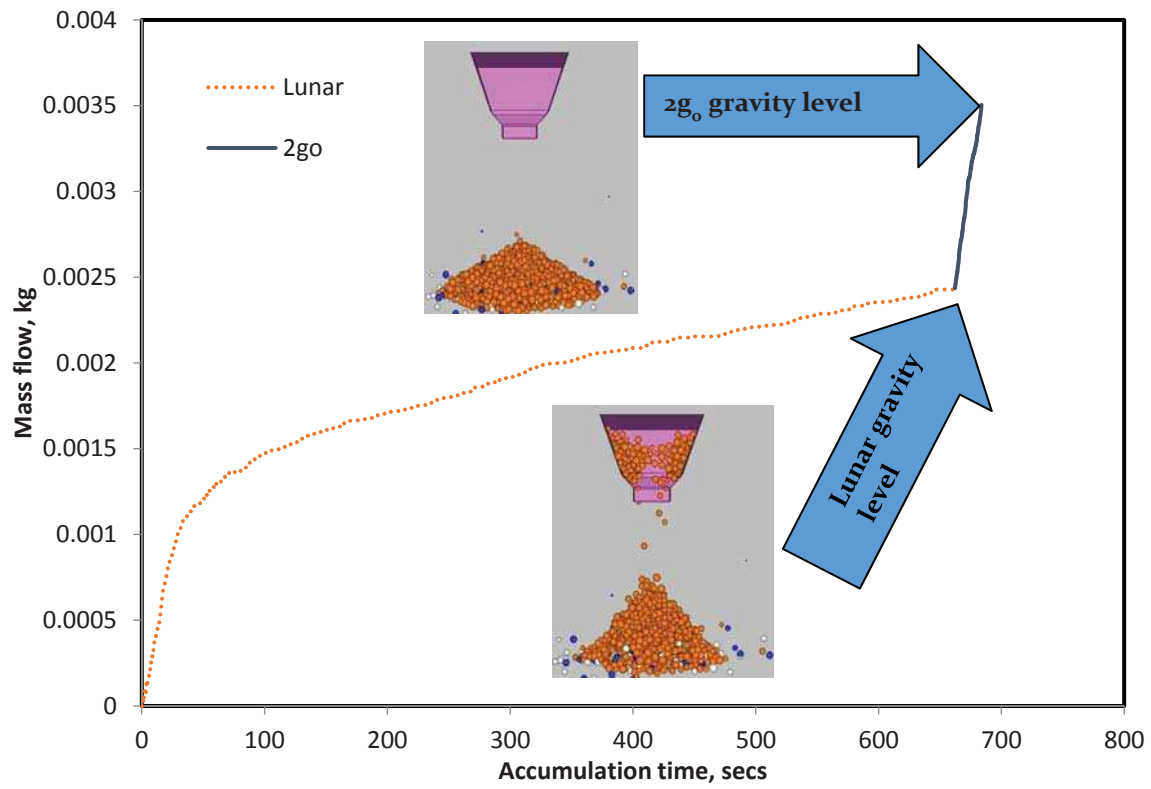
**Fig. 8:** (a) Dimensions of the granular flow container scaled to slit opening width  $l_{x4} = l_{y4} = 10$  mm.  $l_{x1} = l_{y1} = 35$ mm;  $l_{x2} = l_{y2} = 22$ mm;  $l_{x3} = l_{y3} = 10$ mm;  $l_{x4} = l_{y4} = 10$ mm;  $l_{z1} = 18$ mm;  $l_{z2} = 4$ mm;  $l_{z3} = 4$ mm. (b) a typical snap shot of the flow of sandstone grains from the DEM simulation.



**Fig. 9:** Variation of the emptying time of the grains with gravity



**Fig. 10:** Comparison of the flow rate ( $Q$ ) of the sandstone grains obtained from DEM simulations and Kirya's continuum model under different gravity levels ( $g$ )



**Fig. 11:** Mass of sandstone grains exited from the flow chamber under the lunar gravity ( $1/6^{\text{th}}$  of  $g_0$ ) and  $2g_0$  gravity levels

## FIGURE CAPTIONS

**Fig. 1:** Schematic diagram of a typical discrete layer of grains used in DLA

**Fig. 2:** Location of the top most discrete layer ( $y$  in Fig.1) with time ( $t$ ) under different flow rates  $Q$  ( $\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ ) (case-1:  $H=0.2\text{m}$ , case-2:  $H=0.3\text{m}$ )

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