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# Immobilization of deep eutectic solvent in electrospun polyurethane nanofibers for application in the separation of rare earth elements

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## **ABSTRACT**

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PU nanofibers by electrospinning. After optimizing the electrospinning machine parameters, the fibers were made of PU with 10, 20, and 30 wt.% DES. All DES-PU nanofibers exhibited stability without any significant swelling or loss of materials during equilibrations. The extraction data of La, Ce, Nd and Eu in TOPO-LA DES loaded nanofibers as a function of HNO $_3$  concentration exhibited faster kinetics, a decrease in the extraction of a given lanthanide with an increase in the concentration of HNO $_3$ , and an increase in the extraction of La $^{3+}$  to Eu $^{3+}$ . It was observed that lanthanides could be completely deloaded with > 2 M HNO $_3$  from TOPO-LA DES-loaded PU nanofibers. Among different leaching agents including hydrophilic DESs tested, HNO $_3$  was found to be the best leachant of REEs from Kerala sand. The REEs extraction from leach liquor (0.5 M HNO $_3$ ) showed that Th is extracted with high efficiency (95%) and Ce, La, and Nd are extracted with moderate efficiency (35–50%) in the presence of a large excess of Fe $^{3+}$  ions. Th was found to sorb efficiently from 4 HNO $_3$  also.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Polyurethane nanofibers deep eutectic solvent electrospinning separation

rare earth elements

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carrying out EDXRF analysis at the Gemological Institute of India, Mumbai.
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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

# **Additional information**

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