

Separation Processes

McGraw-Hill Chemical Engineering Series

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McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY

New York San Francisco St. Louis Düsseldorf London
Mexico Panama Sydney Toronto

This book was set in Monotype Times Roman by William Clowes & Sons, Ltd., and printed on permanent paper and bound by The Maple Press Company. The designer was Janet Bollow; the drawings were done by John Foster. The editors were B. J. Clark and Marge Eakins. Charles A. Goehring supervised production.

SEPARATION PROCESSES

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Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress catalog card number: 70-130676

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Preface

This book is intended as a college or university level text for chemical engineering courses. It should be suitable for use in any of the various curricular organizations, in courses such as separation processes, mass-transfer operations, unit operations, distillation, etc. A primary aim in the preparation of the book is that it be complementary to a transport phenomena text so that together they can serve effectively the needs of the unit operations or momentum-, heat-, and mass-transfer core of the chemical engineering curriculum.

It should be possible to use the book at various levels of instruction, both undergraduate and postgraduate. Preliminary versions have been used for a junior-senior course and a graduate course at Berkeley, for a sophomore course at Princeton, for a senior course at Rochester, and for a graduate course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A typical undergraduate course would concentrate on Chapters 1 through 7 and on some or all of Chapters 8 through 11. In a graduate course one could

cover Chapters 1 through 6 lightly and concentrate on Chapters 7 through 15. There is little that should be considered as an absolute prerequisite for a course based upon the book, although a physical chemistry course emphasizing thermodynamics should probably be taken at least concurrently. The text coverage of phase equilibrium thermodynamics and of basic mass-transfer theory is minimal, and the student should take additional courses treating these areas.

Practicing engineers who are concerned with the selection and evaluation of alternative separation processes or with the development of computational algorithms should also find the book useful; however, it is not intended to serve as a comprehensive guide to the detailed design of specific items of separation equipment.

The book stresses a basic understanding of the concepts underlying the selection, behavior, and computation of separation processes. As a result several chapters are almost completely qualitative. Classically, different separation processes, such as distillation, absorption, extraction, ion exchange, etc., have been treated individually and sequentially. In a departure from that approach, this book considers separations as a general problem and emphasizes the many common aspects of the functioning and analysis of the different separation processes. This generalized development is designed to be more efficient and should create a broader understanding on the part of the student.

The growth of the engineering science aspects of engineering education has created a major need for making process engineering and process design sufficiently prominent in chemical engineering courses. Process thinking should permeate the entire curriculum rather than being reserved for a final design course. An important aim of this textbook is to maintain a flavor of real processes and of process synthesis and selection, in addition to presenting the pertinent calculational methods.

The first three chapters develop some of the common principles of simple separation processes. Following this, the reasons for staging are explored and the McCabe-Thiele graphical approach for binary distillation is developed. This type of plot is brought up again in the discussions of other binary separations and multicomponent separations and serves as a familiar visual representation through which various complicated effects can be more readily understood. Modern computational approaches for single-stage and multistage separations are considered at some length, with emphasis on an understanding of the different conditions which favor different computational approaches. In an effort to promote a fuller appreciation of the common characteristics of different multistage separation processes, a discussion of the shapes of flow, composition, and temperature profiles precedes the discussion of computational approaches for multicomponent separations; this is accomplished in Chapter 7. Other unique chapters are Chapter 13, which deals with the factors governing the energy requirements of separation processes, and Chapter 14, which considers the selection of an appropriate separation process for a given separation task.

Problems are included at the end of each chapter. These have been generated and accumulated by the author over a number of years during courses in separation processes, mass-transfer operations, and the earlier and more qualitative aspects of process

selection and design given by him at the University of California and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Many of the problems are of the qualitative discussion type; they are intended to amplify the student's understanding of basic concepts and to increase his ability to interpret and analyze new situations successfully. Calculational time and rote substitution into equations are minimized. Most of the problems are based upon specific real processes or real processing situations. The numbering style of the problems—for example, 5.H₃—is as follows: The first number represents the chapter, the letter represents the position in sequence, and the numerical subscript represents the degree of difficulty. Subscript 1 denotes a problem which is a straightforward application of material presented in the text. Subscript 2 denotes a problem which involves more insight, but which should still be suitable for undergraduate students. Subscript 3 denotes problems requiring still more insight, which are appropriate for the most part for graduate students.

Donald N. Hanson participated actively in the early planning stages of this book and launched the author onto this project. Substantial portions of Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9 stem from notes developed by Professor Hanson and used by him for a number of years in an undergraduate course at the University of California. The presentation in Chapter 11 has been considerably influenced by numerous discussions with Edward A. Grens II. The reactions, suggestions, and other contributions of teaching assistants and numerous students over the past few years have been invaluable, particularly those from Romesh Kumar, Roger Thompson, Francisco Barnés, and Raul Acosta. Roger Thompson also assisted ably with the preparation of the index. Thoughtful and highly useful reviews based upon classroom use elsewhere were given by William Schowalter, J. Edward Vivian, and Charles Byers.

Thanks of a different sort go to Edith P. Taylor, who expertly and so willingly prepared the final manuscript, and to her and several other typists who participated in earlier drafts.

Finally, I have three special debts of gratitude: to Charles V. Tompkins, who awakened my interests in science and engineering; to Thomas K. Sherwood, who brought me to a realization of the importance and respectability of process design and synthesis in education; and to the University of California at Berkeley and numerous colleagues there who have furnished encouragement and the best possible surroundings.

C. Judson King

Contents

CHAPTER 1	USES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SEPARATION PROCESSES	1
	An Example: Cane Sugar Refining	2
	Another Example: <i>p</i> -Xylene Manufacture	10
	A Third Example: Sour Mash Whiskey	15
	Importance and Variety of Separations	17
	Economic Significance of Separation Processes	19
	Characteristics of Separation Processes	23
	<i>Separating Agent</i>	23
	<i>Separation Factor</i>	25
	Inherent Separation Factors: Equilibration Processes	32
	<i>Vapor-Liquid Systems</i>	32
	<i>Binary Systems</i>	34
	<i>Liquid-Liquid Systems</i>	36
	<i>Liquid-Solid Systems</i>	40
	<i>Systems with Infinite Separation Factor</i>	44
	<i>Sources of Equilibrium Data</i>	44
	Inherent Separation Factors: Rate-Governed Processes	45
	<i>Gaseous Diffusion</i>	45
	<i>Reverse Osmosis</i>	46
		xi

CHAPTER 2	SIMPLE EQUILIBRIUM PROCESSES	62
	Equilibrium Calculations	62
	<i>Binary Vapor-Liquid Systems</i>	62
	<i>Ternary Liquid Systems</i>	63
	<i>Multicomponent Systems</i>	63
	Analysis of Simple Equilibrium Separation Processes	67
	<i>Process Specification: The Description Rule</i>	68
	<i>Algebraic Approaches</i>	69
	<i>The Lever Rule</i>	80
	<i>Graphical Approach to Systems with Two Conserved Quantities</i>	84
 CHAPTER 3	 ADDITIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING PRODUCT PURITIES	 93
	Incomplete Mechanical Separation of the Product Phases	94
	<i>Entrainment</i>	94
	<i>Washing</i>	97
	<i>Leakage</i>	99
	Flow Configuration and Mixing Effects	100
	<i>Mixing within Phases</i>	100
	<i>Flow Configurations</i>	103
	Batch Operation	106
	<i>Both Phases Charged Batchwise</i>	106
	<i>Rayleigh Equation</i>	106
	<i>Comparison of Yields from Continuous and Batch Operation</i>	112
	<i>Multicomponent Rayleigh Distillation</i>	113
	<i>Fixed-Bed Processes</i>	114
	<i>Chromatographic Separations</i>	120
	Mass- and Heat-Transfer Rate Limitations	124
	<i>Equilibration Separation Processes</i>	124
	<i>Rate-Governed Separation Processes</i>	129
	Stage Efficiencies	137
 CHAPTER 4	 MULTISTAGE SEPARATION PROCESSES	 146
	Increasing Product Purity	146
	<i>Multistage Distillation</i>	146
	<i>Plate Towers</i>	151
	<i>Countercurrent Flow</i>	159
	Reduced Consumption of Separating Agent	162
	<i>Multieffect Evaporators</i>	162

CONTENTS

xiii

Other Separation Processes	164
<i>Liquid-Liquid Extraction</i>	165
<i>Fluid-Solid Processes</i>	167
<i>Rate-Governed Separation Processes</i>	169
<i>Countercurrent Distribution</i>	171
Cocurrent, Crosscurrent, and Countercurrent Flow	178
Problem Specification	181
<i>Listing Variables and Equations</i>	181
<i>The Description Rule</i>	186
<i>Total Condenser versus Partial Condenser</i>	188
<i>Applications to Other Separation Processes</i>	192
 CHAPTER 5 BINARY MULTISTAGE SEPARATIONS: DISTILLATION	 212
Binary Systems	212
Equilibrium Stages	214
McCabe-Thiele Diagram	215
<i>Equilibrium Curve</i>	215
<i>Mass Balances</i>	219
<i>Internal Vapor and Liquid Flows</i>	221
<i>Operating Lines</i>	224
RECTIFYING SECTION	224
STRIPPING SECTION	225
<i>Intersection of Operating Lines</i>	227
<i>Multiple Feeds and Sidestreams</i>	229
The Design Problem	232
<i>Specified Variables</i>	232
<i>Graphical Stage-to-Stage Calculation</i>	233
<i>Feed Stage</i>	237
<i>Allowable Operating Conditions</i>	240
<i>Limiting Conditions</i>	241
<i>Allowance for Stage Efficiencies</i>	243
Other Problems	245
Multistage Batch Distillation	249
<i>Batch versus Continuous Distillation</i>	254
<i>Effect of Holdup on the Plates</i>	255
 CHAPTER 6 BINARY MULTISTAGE SEPARATIONS: GENERAL GRAPHICAL APPROACH	 263
<i>General Properties of the yx Diagram</i>	263
Choice of Flow Basis	264
<i>Constant Total Flows</i>	266
<i>Constant Inert Flows</i>	271

Curved Operating Lines	276
<i>Enthalpy Balance: Distillation</i>	276
<i>Miscibility Relationships: Extraction</i>	287
<i>Independent Specifications: Separating Agent Added to Each Stage</i>	294
Processes without Discrete Stages	301
<i>Countercurrent Flow</i>	301
<i>Transfer Units</i>	303
<i>Cocurrent Flow</i>	308
<i>Axial Mixing</i>	311
<i>Transfer Units versus Equilibrium Stages</i>	315
<i>Fixed-Bed Solid-Fluid Separation Processes</i>	315
 CHAPTER 7 PATTERNS OF CHANGE AND COMPUTATIONAL APPROACHES	 334
Binary Multistage Separations	335
<i>Unidirectional Mass Transfer</i>	338
<i>Constant Relative Volatility</i>	339
<i>Enthalpy-Balance Restrictions</i>	341
<i>Phase Miscibility Restrictions</i>	344
Multicomponent Multistage Separations	346
<i>Absorption</i>	347
<i>Distillation</i>	350
KEY AND NONKEY COMPONENTS	353
EQUIVALENT BINARY ANALYSIS	358
MINIMUM REFLUX	360
<i>Extraction</i>	364
<i>Extractive and Azeotropic Distillation</i>	371
Computational Approaches	377
<i>Stage-to-Stage Methods</i>	378
<i>Group Methods</i>	378
<i>Successive Approximation Methods</i>	378
 CHAPTER 8 GROUP METHODS	 390
Linear Stage Exit Relationships and Constant Flow Bases	391
<i>Countercurrent Separations: Discrete Stages</i>	391
<i>Countercurrent Separations: Continuous Plug Flow</i>	398
<i>Chromatographic Separations</i>	404
INTERMITTENT CARRIER FLOW	405
CONTINUOUS CARRIER FLOW	408
Nonlinear Stage Exit Relationships and Varying Flow Bases	416
<i>Binary Countercurrent Separations: Discrete Stages</i>	416

Constant Separation Factor and Constant Flow Bases	422
<i>Binary Countercurrent Separations: Discrete Stages</i>	422
<i>Multicomponent Countercurrent Separations: Discrete Stages</i>	427
APPROXIMATE SOLUTION	428
CHAPTER 9 LIMITING FLOWS AND STAGE REQUIREMENTS; EMPIRICAL CORRELATIONS	442
Minimum Flows	443
<i>Binary Separations</i>	443
LINEAR STAGE EXIT RELATIONSHIP	444
SELECTION OF ACTUAL FLOWS	445
GENERAL EXPRESSION FOR LINKED INTERSTAGE FLOWS	445
<i>Multicomponent Separations</i>	448
SINGLE SECTION	448
TWO SECTIONS	449
<i>Multiple Sections</i>	454
Minimum Stage Requirements	455
<i>Energy Separating Agent versus Mass Separating Agent</i>	455
<i>Discrete Stages</i>	456
<i>Continuous Countercurrent Contacting</i>	459
Empirical Correlations for Actual Design and Operating Conditions	459
<i>Stages versus Reflux</i>	459
<i>Distribution of Nonkey Components</i>	463
CHAPTER 10 STAGE-TO-STAGE METHODS	471
Binary Separations	471
Multicomponent Separations	472
<i>Multicomponent Distillation</i>	472
<i>Extractive and Azeotropic Distillation</i>	479
<i>Other Separation Processes</i>	479
CHAPTER 11 SUCCESSIVE APPROXIMATION METHODS	496
Convergence Methods	497
<i>Desirable Characteristics</i>	498
<i>Direct Substitution</i>	498
<i>First Order</i>	500
<i>Second and Higher Order</i>	501
<i>Initial Estimates and Tolerance</i>	502
<i>Multivariable Convergence</i>	502
<i>Choosing $f(x)$</i>	506
Phase Equilibrium	506

Physical Properties	510
Single-Stage Equilibration Separation Processes	510
<i>One Unknown</i>	510
<i>Two Unknowns</i>	515
Multistage Separation Processes	519
<i>Underwood Equations</i>	519
<i>General Strategy</i>	520
<i>Solution of Component Mass Balances</i>	524
<i>Selection of Convergence Loop</i>	527
BP METHOD	529
SR METHOD	529
<i>Convergence Methods: BP⁺ Arrangement</i>	531
TEMPERATURE LOOP	531
TOTAL PHASE FLOW-RATE LOOP	534
<i>Convergence Methods: SR Arrangement</i>	535
TOTAL PHASE FLOW-RATE LOOP	535
TEMPERATURE LOOP	536
<i>Allowance for Stage Efficiencies</i>	537
<i>Relaxation Methods</i>	538
<i>Simulation of Multistage Separation Processes</i>	539

CHAPTER 12 CAPACITY AND EFFICIENCY OF CONTACTING DEVICES 544

Factors Limiting Capacity	545
<i>Flooding</i>	545
PACKED COLUMNS	546
PLATE COLUMNS	546
LIQUID-LIQUID CONTACTING	548
<i>Entrainment</i>	549
PLATE COLUMNS	550
OTHER DEVICES	552
<i>Pressure Drop</i>	552
PACKED COLUMNS	553
PLATE COLUMNS	553
<i>Residence Time for Good Efficiency</i>	553
<i>Range of Satisfactory Operation</i>	554
PLATE COLUMNS	554
<i>Comparison of Performance</i>	555
<i>Packed versus Plate Columns</i>	558
<i>Other Contacting Devices</i>	562
Factors Influencing Efficiency	563
<i>Mass-Transfer Rates</i>	573
<i>Flow Configuration and Mixing Effects</i>	578

COCURRENT FLOW: NO AXIAL MIXING IN EITHER PHASE	578
COMPLETE MIXING OF ONE PHASE	579
CROSSCURRENT FLOW: PLATE GEOMETRY	581
CROSSCURRENT FLOW: COMPLETE MIXING OF ONE PHASE	581
CROSSCURRENT FLOW: NO AXIAL MIXING IN EITHER PHASE	582
CROSSCURRENT FLOW: PARTIAL MIXING IN ONE PHASE	584
<i>Entrainment</i>	586
<i>Summary of A.I.Ch.E. Tray-Efficiency Prediction Method</i>	586
<i>Chemical Reaction</i>	591
<i>Surface Tension Gradients: Interfacial Area</i>	592
<i>Density and Surface Tension Gradients: Mass-Transfer Coefficients</i>	595
<i>Surface Active Agents</i>	598
<i>Heat Transfer</i>	599
<i>Multicomponent Systems</i>	602
Alternative Definitions of Stage Efficiency	602
<i>Criteria</i>	602
<i>Murphree Liquid Efficiency</i>	603
<i>Overall Efficiency</i>	604
<i>Vaporization Efficiency</i>	605
<i>Hausen Efficiency</i>	605
Compromise between Efficiency and Capacity	606
<i>Countercurrent versus Cocurrent Operation</i>	607
<i>A Case History</i>	608

CHAPTER 13 ENERGY REQUIREMENTS OF SEPARATION PROCESSES 625

Minimum Isothermal Work of Separation	625
<i>Gas Mixtures</i>	626
<i>Liquid Mixtures</i>	630
<i>Significance of W_{\min}</i>	631
<i>Available Energy</i>	632
Net Work Consumption	633
Single-Stage Separation Processes	634
Classification of Multistage Separation Processes	648
<i>Potentially Reversible Processes: Close-Boiling Distillation</i>	649
<i>Partially Reversible Processes: Absorption</i>	652
<i>Irreversible Processes: Membrane Separations</i>	655
Reduction of Energy Consumption	658
<i>Irreversibilities within a Separation Process</i>	658
<i>Binary Distillation</i>	658
<i>Multicomponent Distillation: Sequencing of Columns</i>	665
<i>An Example: Manufacture of Ethylene and Propylene</i>	670

<i>Mass Separating Agent</i>	675
<i>Ideal Cascades</i>	675
<i>Efficiency of Heat Supply and Removal</i>	680
<i>Isothermal Distillation</i>	688
CHAPTER 14 SELECTION OF SEPARATION PROCESSES	697
Factors Influencing the Choice of a Separation Process	697
<i>Feasibility</i>	698
<i>Product Value</i>	700
<i>Damage to Product</i>	700
<i>Classes of Processes</i>	701
<i>Separation Factor and Molecular Properties</i>	702
<i>Experience</i>	706
Illustrative Examples	706
<i>Separation of Xylene Isomers</i>	706
<i>Concentration of Fruit Juices</i>	715
<i>The Artificial Kidney</i>	726
<i>Descaling of Sea Water</i>	731
Solvent Selection	735
Selection of Equipment: Extraction	740
CHAPTER 15 OPTIMAL DESIGN AND OPERATION OF SEPARATION PROCESSES	750
Optimization	751
<i>Distillation</i>	751
OPTIMUM REFLUX RATIO	752
OPTIMUM PRODUCT PURITIES AND RECOVERY FRACTIONS	755
OPTIMUM PRESSURE	757
OPTIMUM COLUMN DIAMETER	760
<i>Multieffect Evaporation</i>	761
Overdesign Factors	769
Dynamic Behavior of Separation Processes	771
<i>Control of Separation Processes</i>	771
<i>Cyclically Operated Separation Processes</i>	778
APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF PHASE EQUILIBRIUM AND ENTHALPY DATA	786
APPENDIX B. NOMENCLATURE	788
INDEX	801

1

Uses and Characteristics of Separation Processes

Die Entropie der Welt strebt einem Maximum zu.

CLAUSIUS

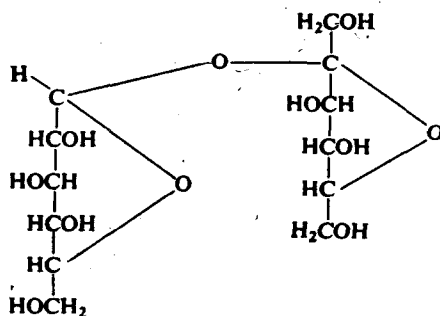
When salt is placed in water it dissolves and tends to form a solution of uniform composition throughout. There is no simple way to separate the salt and the water again. This tendency of substances to mix together intimately and spontaneously is a manifestation of the second law of thermodynamics, which states that all natural processes take place so as to increase the entropy, or randomness, of the universe. In order to separate a mixture of species into products of different composition we must create some sort of device, system, or process which will supply the equivalent of thermodynamic work to the mixture in such a way as to cause the separation to occur.

For example, if we want to separate a solution of salt and water we can (1) supply heat and boil water off, condensing the water at a lower temperature, (2) supply refrigeration and freeze out pure ice, which we can then melt at a higher temperature; (3) pump the water to a higher pressure and force it through a thin solid membrane that will let water through preferentially to salt. All three of these approaches (and numerous others) have been under active study and development for producing fresh water from the sea.

The fact that naturally occurring processes are inherently mixing processes has been recognized for over a hundred years, and has led to the reverse procedure of "unmixing" or *separation processes* becoming one of the most challenging categories of engineering problems. We shall define separation processes as *those operations which transform a mixture of substances into two or more products which differ from one another in composition*. The many different kinds of separation process in use and their importance to mankind should become apparent from the following three examples, which concern basic wants of mankind: food, drink, and clothing.

AN EXAMPLE: CANE SUGAR REFINING

Common white granulated sugar is typically 99.9 percent sucrose, and is one of the



Sucrose

purest of all substances produced from natural materials in such large quantity. Sugar is obtained from both sugar cane and sugar beets.

Cane sugar is normally produced in two major blocks of processing operations (Wills, 1954; Spencer & Meade, 1945). Preliminary processing takes place near where the sugar cane is grown (Hawāii, Puerto Rico, etc.) and typically consists of the following basic steps, shown in Figure 1-1.

1. *Washing and Milling.* The sugar cane is washed with jets of water to free it from any field debris and is then chopped into short sections. These sections are passed through high-pressure rollers which squeeze sugar-laden juice out of the plant cells. Some water is added toward the end of the milling to leach out the last portions of available sugar. The remaining cane pulp is known as *bagasse*, and is used for fuel or for the manufacture of insulating fiber board.

2. *Clarification.* Milk of lime [$\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$] is added to the sugar-laden juice, which is then heated. The juice next enters large holding vessels in which coagulated colloidal material and insoluble calcium salts are settled out. The scum withdrawn from the bottom of the clarifier is filtered to reclaim additional juice, which is recycled.

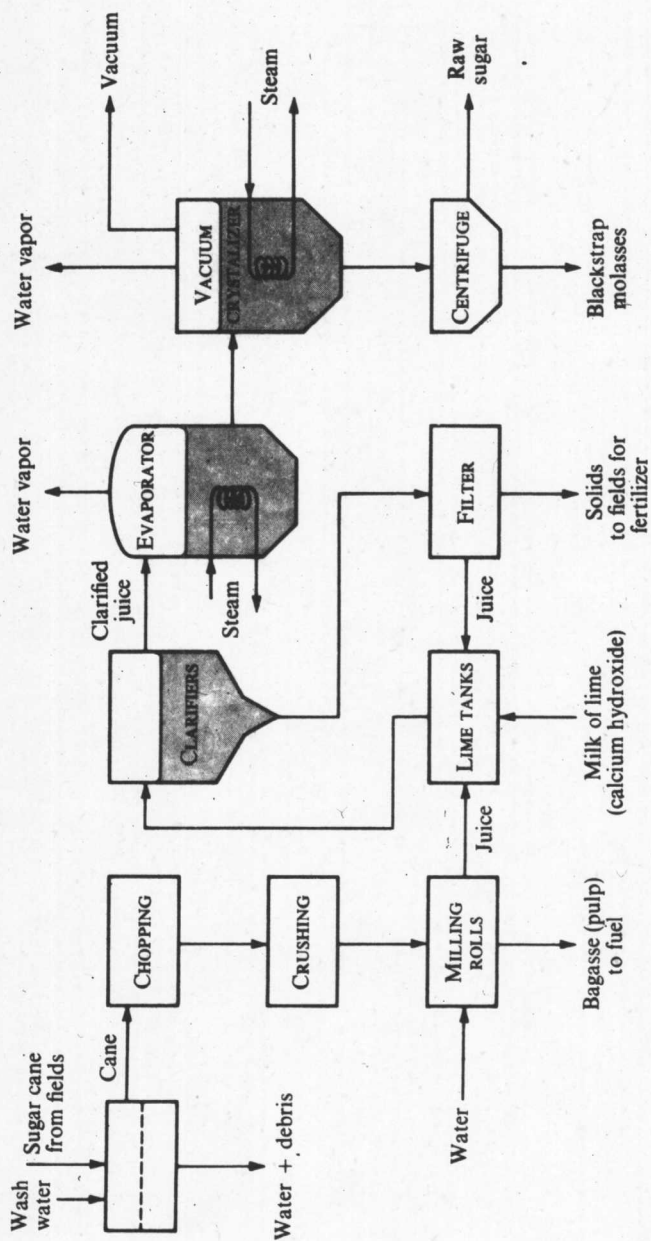


Fig. 1-1 Processing steps for producing raw sugar from sugar cane.