High mass-loss AGB stars detected by MSX in the “intermediate” and “outer” Galactic bulge

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ABSTRACT

We present a study of MSX point sources in the Galactic bulge (|l| < 3°, 1° < |b| < 5°), observed at A, C, D and E-band (8 to 21 μm), with a total area ∼ 48 deg2 and more than 7000 detected sources in the MSX D-band (15 μm). We discuss the nature of the MSX sources (mostly AGB stars), their luminosities, the interstellar extinction, the mass-loss rate distribution and the total mass-loss rate in the bulge. The mid-infrared data of MSX point sources have been combined with the near-infrared (J, H and Ks) data of 2MASS survey. The cross-identification was restricted to Ks-band detected sources with Ks ≤ 11 mag. However, for those bright MSX D-band sources ([D] < 4.0 mag), which do not satisfy this criteria, we have set no Ks-band magnitude cut off. The bolometric magnitudes and the corresponding luminosities of the MSX sources were derived by fitting blackbody curves. The relation between M and (Ks-[D]0) was used to derive the mass-loss rate of each MSX source in the bulge fields. Except for very few post-AGB stars, planetary nebulae and OH/IR stars, a large fraction of the detected sources at 15 μm (MSX D-band) are AGB stars well above the RGB tip. A number of them show an excess in (A-[D]0) and (Ks-[D]0) colours, characteristic of mass-loss. These colours, especially (Ks-[D]0), enable estimation of the mass-loss rates (M) of the sources in the bulge fields which range from 10−7 to 10−4 M⊙ yr−1. Taking into consideration the completeness of the mass-loss rate bins, we find that the contribution to the integrated mass-loss is probably dominated by mass-loss rates larger than 3 × 10−7 M⊙ yr−1 and is about 1.96 × 10−4 M⊙ yr−1 deg−2 in the “intermediate” and “outer” bulge fields of sources with mass-loss rates, M > 3 × 10−7 M⊙ yr−1. The corresponding integrated mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass is 0.48 × 10−11 yr−1. Apart from this, the various mid- and near-infrared colour-colour and colour-magnitude diagrams are discussed in the paper to study the nature of the stellar population in the MSX bulge fields.

Key words: stars: AGB and post-AGB – stars: circumstellar dust - stars: mass-loss - dust: extinction - infrared: stars

1 INTRODUCTION

Study of the stellar population of the Galactic bulge fields is of prime importance and plays a crucial role in understanding the formation and evolution of the Galaxy. The high luminosity Asymptotic Giant Branch (AGB) stars are ideal tracers of stellar population in regions of high extinction such as the “intermediate” and “outer” Galactic bulge. Intense mass-loss (≥ 10−6 M⊙ yr−1) phase has been identified with stars evolving along the AGB phase. Hence, these sources are enshrouded with circumstellar envelopes of dust and gas. The low effective temperatures and thermal emission from warm dust make these stars bright in the infrared. Deep and large area infrared surveys offer a unique view of the stellar population towards the inner Galaxy as high interstellar extinction hinders the study at opti-
cal wavelengths. A combination of mid- and near-infrared data is essential to sample the high mass-loss AGB population. Mid-infrared data are more sensitive to the infrared excess which is a consequence of mass-loss in the AGB stars. With the availability of infrared data from surveys like DENIS (Epchtein et al. 1994), 2MASS (Beichman et al. 1998; Skrutskie et al. 2006), ISOGAL (Omont et al. 2003) and MSX (Price et al. 2001), there have been a large number of studies on the AGB population of the Galactic bulge fields (e.g. Glass et al. 1999; Schultheis & Glass 2001; Glass & Schultheis 2002; Groenewegen & Blommaert 2005). In a recent study, Ojha et al. (2003) have combined the mid- and near-infrared photometry from ISOGAL, DENIS and 2MASS to study the nature of ISOGAL sources in the “intermediate” Galactic bulge and discuss their mass-loss rates. Further, the data from GLIMPSE II survey (Ed Churchwell; private communication) will provide an excellent opportunity to study the AGB stars in the inner bulge region. However, the sample has to be restricted to high extinction regions owing to saturation effects of the survey. In the present study we have not included GLIMPSE II data as it does not cover the entire “intermediate” and “outer” bulge regions selected in this paper. The stellar population study of the inner bulge with GLIMPSE II data will be presented in a future paper. The AGB stars contribute more than 70% towards the enrichment of the dust component of the ISM in the solar neighbourhood (Sedlmeyer 1994) and hence it is important to study their mass-loss in different parts of the Galaxy. As discussed in Ojha et al. (2003), the total mass returned to the ISM is dominated by mass-loss rates greater than $10^{-6}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ and hence the detection of the entire population of the high mass-loss stars becomes important for determination of the total mass returned to the ISM and probably the total mass of the bulge.

In this paper, we report the study of the MSX point sources in the “intermediate” and “outer” Galactic bulge fields ($|l| < 3^\circ$, $1^\circ < |b| < 5^\circ$) with a total area ~ 48 deg$^2$ and more than 7000 detected sources in the MSX D-band (15 $\mu$m). Here, the division into the two aforementioned bulge fields is based on the Galactic latitude. The MSX bulge fields in the Galactic latitude bins $1^\circ < |b| < 2^\circ$ and $2^\circ < |b| < 5^\circ$ are defined as the “intermediate” and the “outer” bulge regions, respectively. We restrict our study to the “intermediate” and “outer” Galactic bulge because the extinction here is much less and more homogeneous as compared to the inner bulge. The density of the sources in “intermediate” and “outer” bulge also reduce the number of spurious associations to the minimum. As shown in Price et al. (2001), uniform sky coverage in the MSX bands extends for only the northern latitudes upto $b = 6^\circ$ and the higher latitudes (outer Galaxy) are very sparsely sampled. We have restricted the latitude selection such that the fields covered by us are free from the non-uniform sky coverage beyond $|b| > 5^\circ$. We have combined the mid-infrared data of the MSX point sources with the near-infrared 2MASS data to determine their nature and the interstellar extinction. Most of the sources are AGB stars well above the RGB tip with high mass-loss. We have determined the luminosities and mass-loss rates of the stellar population in the MSX bulge fields.

The outline of the paper is as follows: In §2, we present the MSX and 2MASS observations and describe the correspondence between MSX and 2MASS sources. In §3, we discuss the determination of interstellar extinction in the line of sight of the bulge fields using the isochrone fitting method. The ISOGAL and DENIS associations of the MSX sources in the bulge fields are discussed in §4. §5 presents the estimation of the total mass-loss rate in the “intermediate” and “outer” bulge. In §6, we discuss the derivation of mass-loss rates based on $(K_s-[D]_0)$ colour and the estimation of the mass-loss rate in the ISM. In §7, we present the nature of the MSX sources from the various colour-colour and colour-magnitude diagrams. We summarize our results in §8.

2 OBSERVATIONS AND CROSS-CORRELATION OF MSX AND 2MASS SOURCES

We have used the deep MSX Point Source Catalog Version 2.3 (Egan et al. 2003) in this paper. The catalogue (MSXPSC V2.3) lists the sources detected in MSX mid-infrared bands A, C, D and E with $\lambda(\Delta\lambda)$ corresponding to 8.28(3.36), 12.13(1.72), 14.65(2.23) and 21.34(6.24) $\mu$m, respectively. MSXPSC V2.3 has several improvements over the initial published catalogue, MSXPSC Version 1.2 (Egan et al. 1999). In this latest version, the photometry is based on co-added image plates, as opposed to single-scan data, which results in improved sensitivity and hence reliability in the fluxes. Comparison with Tycho-2 positions indicates that the positional accuracy, $\sigma = 2\arcsec$ at 8 $\mu$m, of the new catalogue is better as compared to MSXPSC V1.2. Also, MSXPSC V2.3 is 100% complete in the A-band ($8 \mu$m) and approaches 100% completeness in the other three bands at the survey sensitivity limit of the MSX image data ($\sim 0.1$ Jy in A-band, which is more sensitive than the other bands by a factor of ~ 10)(Egan et al. 2003).

The total number of sources detected in our fields are 29709, 8125, 7390, and 3380 in the MSX A-, C-, D- and E-bands, respectively. In the study that follows, we have included only good quality MSX data for which the flux quality flags are 3 and 4 (which implies S/N $> 5$). Taking the quality flags into account, the total number of good quality sources in our fields are 24035, 2571, 2550 and 866 in the four bands, respectively. The corresponding average source densities are $\sim 5.0 \times 10^2$ deg$^{-2}$, $\sim 0.5 \times 10^2$ deg$^{-2}$, $\sim 0.5 \times 10^2$ deg$^{-2}$ and $\sim 0.2 \times 10^2$ deg$^{-2}$ in the four bands, respectively.

The MSX catalogue is more sensitive (by a factor of ~ 4 in the A-band) towards the inner Galactic longitudes as compared to the outer longitudes. This is due to the fact that additional maps of regions at $l = 0$ were co-added to the survey data (Sean Carey; private communication). These additional maps are ~ 4 times more sensitive. This is evident from the inspection of the data sets. Hence, for clarity we have divided the catalogue into two sets for our study: “inner” zone ($|l| < 0.5^\circ$) and “outer” zone ($0.5^\circ < |l| < 3.0^\circ$).
The magnitude histograms of the two zones in the MSX A-, C-, D- and E-bands are displayed in Fig. 1. The histograms show the total source counts of the good quality sources. The 50% completeness limits (as determined from the flux histograms) of the “inner” zone are 0.08, 0.40, 0.32 and 1.00 Jy for A-, C-, D- and E-bands, respectively. For the “outer” zone, the 50% completeness limits correspond to 0.16, 1.58, 1.26 and 3.98 Jy for A-, C-, D- and E-bands, respectively.

From the ISOGAL survey, it is seen that a number of the ISOGAL 15\,\mu m sources are AGB stars in the Galactic bulge and the central disk with evidence of mass-loss in majority of the cases (Omont et al. 2003). The mass-loss in AGB stars may be characterized by their 15\,\mu m excess (Omont et al. 1999; Ortiz et al. 2002; Ojha et al. 2003). The MSX D-band is close to this wavelength and hence in the study that follows, our prime focus lies on the sources detected in the D-band. The proportions of D-band sources associated with A, C, and E-band sources are \( \sim 100\% \), \( \sim 91\% \) and \( \sim 33\% \), respectively.

The near-infrared data used in this paper have
been obtained from the 2MASS Point Source Catalogue (2MASSPSC) in the three bands, J (1.25 μm), H (1.65 μm) and K_s (2.17 μm). The full sky 2MASS catalogue covers the entire MSX bulge fields. The 2MASS PSC is >99% complete in the absence of confusion at the 10σ sensitivity limit of 15.8, 15.1 and 14.3 mag in the J-, H- and K_s-band, respectively (Skrutskie et al. 2006). However, the turnover in the source counts in the Galactic plane field occurs nearly 1 mag brighter, because of the effects of confusion noise on the detection thresholds. The primary areas of confusion are (1) longitudes ±75 deg from the Galactic center and latitudes 1 deg from the Galactic plane and (2) within an approximately 5 deg radius of the Galactic center (Skrutskie et al. 2006).

A cross-correlation algorithm similar to the one used by Schuller et al. (2003), to associate the ISOGAL 7 and 15 μm sources with DENIS sources, has been used to search for 2MASS counterparts of the MSX point sources in the bulge fields. However, to restrict the number of spurious detections at the fainter end, we set our magnitude cut at conservative brighter level and retain only those 2MASS sources with K_s < 11 mag for cross-correlating with the MSX catalogue. This 2MASS magnitude cut (K_s ≤ 11 mag) corresponds to an average density of K_s-band sources n ≈ 22 300 per deg^2. However, the density of K_s ≤ 11 mag sources varies from 18 030 to 26 935 per deg^2 depending on the locations of the bulge fields. To search for 2MASS counterparts, we assumed a main association radius (r_a) of 4.0″. The density limit and main association radius are chosen such as to restrict the chance association to less than 10% (where chance association, y = nπr_a^2 ≤ 0.1). As a result, ~ 89% of the MSX D-band sources (2265 sources with quality flags 3 and 4) within the 2MASS observations have an association with a 2MASS source (K_s < 11.0 mag). Also, 2% (48 sources) of the MSX D-band sources have a 2MASS counterpart which are saturated (K_s < 3.5 mag). In Fig. 4 we show the 3-D plots of the MSX source density, the mean ΔV and the total number of 2MASS sources (K_s < 11.0 mag) in the various subfields of the bulge as a function of the Galactic longitude and latitude. This information is also presented in tabular form in Table 3.

Keeping in mind the importance of high mass-loss AGB stars in our study, we introduce two additional samples here. We search for 2MASS counterparts of bright MSX sources detected in the D-band but not associated with 2MASS sources with K_s < 11.0 mag. We restrict our sample to sources brighter than 4th magnitude in the MSX D-band. This magnitude limit was chosen such as to include all the sources with high mass-loss rates (log_{10}(\dot{M} / (M_\odot yr^{-1})) ∼ > 6.0; see §7). There are 165 such sources with good quality MSX D-band photometry. For identifying 2MASS counterparts in this additional sample, we extend the main association radius to a conservative value of ∼ 5″ without any K_s-band magnitude cut. The increase in the association radius by 1″ enables us to include some known high mass-loss peculiar stars (e.g. carbon stars) in the sample (see §7).

However, a crucial point is that the removal of the K_s < 11.0 magnitude cut increases the 2MASS source density to ∼ 10^7 sources per deg^2. Hence, for a main association radius of 5″, the chance association becomes very large (y ≈ 0.6) compared to the 10% limit set for the rest of the sources in the bulge fields. The corresponding pure Poisson chance association is given by 1 − exp(−y) ≈ 0.45. This implies that about half of the 2MASS associations are likely to be spurious. However, it should be kept in mind that all such spurious associations would possibly have a K_s-band counterpart fainter than the 2MASS limit and hence in our study these sources are retained as a lower limit for K_s-band and limit for the high mass-loss end (see §6). We are now left with two samples of these bright MSX D-band sources - 1) Sources having a 2MASS counterpart within 5″ radius, which we designate as sample-A and 2) Sources having no 2MASS counterpart within this radius, which we name as sample-U. In sample-A, we have 125 sources out of which ~ 70% have a single 2MASS association within the 5″ radius. Sample-U contains 42 sources, and we assign a value of K_s = 13.7 (which is the K_s-band limit of the sample-A sources) for all these sources.

For this study, along with the good quality MSX band data, we have used only good quality 2MASS J-, H- and K_s-band magnitudes with ‘rd-flag’ values between 1 and 3 which generally implies best quality detection, photometry and astrometry. However, the 2MASS sources with ‘rd-flag’ value of 6 in the K_s-band (which corresponds to a positive detection with an upper magnitude limit) were also included with good quality sources (‘rd-flag’ 1 – 3) for the determination of mass-loss rate only (see §6).

In Table 4, we present the full catalogue of MSX–2MASS sources from the bulge fields (see Fig. 4 and Table 1), a sample of which is given in this paper. Figure 4 shows the histogram of positional difference of MSX D-band–2MASS cross-identified sources in the bulge fields. The rms of the differences of MSX–2MASS association is ∼ 0.7″. The histogram peaks at ∼1.0″ and the almost exponential decreasing trend with increasing distance indicates good quality associations, which implies that the number of spurious associations would be minimal in our cross-correlated sample.

3 INTERSTELLAR EXTINCTION AND FOREGROUND DISK STARS

In most parts of the Galactic bulge, the interstellar extinction is not homogeneous and occurs in clumps, hence, a detailed extinction map is essential in stellar population studies (Schultheis et al. 1999). Inspite of the recent improvements in the extinction measurements of the Galactic bulge (Schultheis et al. 1999; Dutra et al. 2001; Marshall et al. 2006; Indebetouw et al. 2005), the determinations are still uncertain. In this paper, the method as described in

1 Table 1 is only available in the electronic form via the VizieR Service at the CDS.

2 Table 2 is available in the electronic form via the VizieR Service at the CDS.
Ojha et al. (2003) which is based on the procedure outlined in Schultheis et al. (1999) is used to determine the interstellar extinction. The MSX catalogue was divided into 60 subfields. This enables in decreasing the effects of variable and patchy extinction present in the entire bulge field. For $|l| < 1.0^\circ$, we have 0.5 deg$^2$ fields with steps of 0.5 deg in longitude and 1.0 deg in latitude. For rest of the fields, the field size was increased to 1.0 deg$^2$ with steps of 1.0 deg both in longitude and latitude. This ensures appreciable statistical sample in each field to derive mean $A_V$. The fact that we use 1 deg$^2$ subfields to derive extinction gives some dispersion of the order of typically 1.5 mag in $A_V$ (see Table 1). However, at Galactic latitudes greater than 1 deg (where our fields are located), the clumpiness of interstellar extinction is less prominent (Schultheis et al. 1999). The subfields are listed in Table 1 and the field centres are displayed in
the various plots of Fig. 2. Figure 3 shows the $J - K_s$ colour-magnitude diagrams for a few selected MSX fields presented in Fig. 2 and listed in Table 1. Figure 4 shows the $J - K_s$ colour-magnitude diagrams for two sample fields ($-0.5° < l < 0.0°$, $3° < b < 4°$; $-2.0° < l < -1.0°$, $-2° < b < -1°$).

As is clearly seen in Figs. 3 and 4, the $J - K_s$ colour-magnitude diagrams of 2MASS sources in the bulge fields show a well-defined red giant and AGB sequence shifted by fairly uniform extinction, with respect to the reference $K_{db}$ vs. $(J - K_s)_0$ of Bertelli et al. (1994) with $Z = 0.02$ and a distance modulus of 14.5 (distance to the Galactic Centre : 8 kpc). However, a point to be noted here is that the intrinsic depth of the bulge is about 0.3 mag (Glass et al. 1995). We have assumed $A_J/A_V = 0.256$ and $A_{K_s}/A_V = 0.089$ (Glass 1999) and calculated the individual extinction values of the 2MASS bulge sources as described in Ojha et al. (2003). The mean $A_V$ value for each field has been determined by a Gaussian fit to the $A_V$ distribution. It should be noted here that owing to low star counts, we have increased the size of some bins (e.g. $0.0 < l < 0.5$; $4.0 < b < 5.0$ & $0.5 < l < 1.0$; $4.0 < b < 5.0$ are merged into one bin) to estimate the mean extinction values. The details of the subfields, giving the mean $A_V$, the total number of sources and the statistics of the background and foreground population are listed in Table 1. To derive the dereddened magnitudes for the MSX sources, we have used the extinction law $-A_A/A_V = 0.022$; $A_C/A_V = 0.023$; $A_D/A_V = 0.013$; $A_E/A_V = 0.016$ (Messineo et al. 2002).

As seen in Fig. 4, the 2MASS sources with anomalously low values of $A_V$ are probably foreground stars. For each field we empirically define an isochrone “F” for which we assume that all the sources left of it are foreground stars. Also seen in Fig. 4 and in each of the bulge fields, these foreground stars are around the isochrone with $A_V \sim 0$ mag and clearly left of the bulk of the stars grouped around the isochrone with mean $A_V$ of the field. These foreground stars will be no longer considered in the following discussions of bulge stars. However, this empirical way of rejecting foreground population does not exclude foreground stars with significant mass-loss.

There are also a number of stars with $J - K_s$ values significantly larger than the bulk of the other stars in each bulge field (right of the isochrone empirically defined as “B” in Fig. 4). The sources to the right of this isochrone are termed as “B-sources”. We can see three reasons for such an excess in $J - K_s$: 1) intrinsic $(J - K_s)_0$ excess induced by a large mass-loss, which should be accompanied by a large 15 $\mu$m excess; 2) spurious association or wrong photometry which is rather unlikely for 2MASS sources well above the detection limit. 3) excess in $A_V$ which should probably be due to a patchy extinction on the bulge line of sight (additional extinction from dust layers behind the Galactic centre for background stars appears unlikely at such high galactic}

Figure 3. Histogram of positional difference (in arcsec) between good quality MSX D-band (quality flags 3 and 4) and 2MASS cross-identified sources. The MSX–2MASS association was limited to $r < 4''$ for bulk of the sources and increased to $5''$ for sample A sources (see the text).

Figure 4. Color-magnitude diagrams ($J - K_s/K_s$) of 2MASS sources in a few selected MSX bulge fields. The CM diagrams for all the bulge fields will be available in electronic form via the VizieR Service at the CDS.

3 The $J - K_s/K_s$ colour-magnitude diagrams of 2MASS sources in the bulge fields are available in electronic form via the VizieR Service at the CDS.
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4 ISOGAL AND DENIS ASSOCIATION

We have also cross-correlated all the MSX sources with the ISOGAL sources in the bulge fields. The ISOGAL Point Sources (IGPSC; Schuller et al. 2003) have been obtained from the VizieR Service at CDS. ISOGAL Point Source Catalogue contains about 10^5 stars, with associated K, J, and I DENIS data for most of them (see Schuller et al. 2003). The MSX and ISOGAL associations were searched within a radius of 6" (size of the ISO pixel). There are a total of about 2110 ISOGAL sources at 7 and 15 μm in the MSX bulge fields (total area ~ 48 deg^2). Out of this 194 ISOGAL sources at 7 μm have a MSX A-band association and 55 ISOGAL sources at 15 μm have MSX D-band association. The corresponding magnitude limits for these associated sources are 7.8 and 4.6 mags in the A- and D-band, respectively.

Figure 5. Colour-magnitude diagrams (J − Ks/Ks) of MSX–2MASS sources in two MSX bulge fields. The four isochrones (Bertelli et al. 1994), placed at 8 kpc distance for a 10 Gyr population with Z=0.02 are shown in the figure for AV = 0 mag, for the AV limit adopted for the “foreground” sources (defined as “F”), for mean AV value of the field and for the AV limit adopted for the “B-sources”, respectively.

respectively. We have checked the consistency of MSX and ISOGAL 15 μm magnitudes for the 38 strongest sources (with |D| < 4.0 mag; among our sample-A). The average difference is [15]_MSX - [15]_ISO = -0.10 ± 0.43 mag, where the large dispersion is probably related to the source variability. We have searched the DENIS counterparts for only the ISOGAL cross-correlated MSX sources. More than 99% of the ISOGAL sources in the bulge fields have a DENIS counterpart. There are 435, 61 and 54 2MASS Ks-band sources which have associations with DENIS Ks, DENIS Ks & MSX D-band sources and DENIS Ks, MSX D-band & ISOGAL 15 μm sources, respectively. For the ISOGAL cross-correlated sources, we have complemented the 2MASS and MSX sources in our catalogue (Table 2) by the DENIS and ISOGAL data. Within the ISOGAL fields (Ojha et al. 2003), more than 95% of MSX sources having 2MASS association have an ISOGAL counterpart. We have used the DENIS and ISOGAL data, wherever available, in the estimates of the bolometric magnitudes (see §5) and the mass-loss rates (see §6) in order to mitigate the effects of variability. Hence, for the bulge sources with DENIS and ISOGAL associations, we have used the average of the 2MASS and DENIS values for the Ks-band magnitude and the MSX and ISOGAL 15 μm values for the D-band magnitudes.

5 BOLOMETRIC MAGNITUDES AND LUMINOSITIES

After dereddening (see §3), the bolometric magnitudes (Mbol) are derived by integrating the flux densities over the wavelength range between 1.25 μm < λ < 15 μm by fitting a blackbody curve. For each object we used the dereddened J-, Ks-, A-, D-band magnitudes and the estimated AV values as input parameters. The main error of the bolometric corrections results from the interstellar extinction values which gives an error of ~ 0.2 - 0.3 mag in Mbol. The assumption of a blackbody curve for the AGB spectra is less than opti-
mal given the presence of strong molecular bands. We have compared the results obtained from the blackbody fitting with that derived using multi-band bolometric correction for AGB stars (Cecile Loup; private communication). However, this method is valid for limited range of colours and luminosities. The difference in \( M_{\text{bol}} \) derived for from the two methods peaks around \( \sim 0.1 \) mag which is not that significant. As mentioned in the previous section, we have used the average of DENIS & 2MASS \( K_s \)-band and MSX D-band & ISO GAL 15 \( \mu \)m magnitudes when available. This helps in reducing the uncertainties in \( M_{\text{bol}} \) and \( M \) determinations by about a factor \( \sqrt{2} \). At the same time, it is to be noted that large amplitude variable stars such as Miras do show variations in the \( K_s \)-band upto \( \sim 2.5 \) mag (Groenewegen 2006; Glass et al. 2001). However, the amplitude of intensity variation depends on the period of these sources and is typically in the range \( 0.5 – 1.0 \) mag. Hence, using only single-epoch measurements give us larger errors in the bolometric magnitude determination. The uncertainties due to this variability can only be reduced by obtaining time-consuming light curve measurements and this is beyond the scope of this present work. It is also important to note that there are 239 ISO GAL 15 \( \mu \)m sources which have not been detected in the MSX D-band (15 \( \mu \)m) in our sample. These sources have also been used in our sample to determine the \( M_{\text{bol}} \) and \( M \). The \( M_{\text{bol}} \) and luminosity (\( L(L_\odot) = 10^{(M_{\text{bol}}+4.75)/2.5} \)) values of each source are given in Table 1, a sample of which is given in this paper. Figure 5 shows the histograms of bolometric magnitudes and luminosities of the sources in MSX bulge fields. The approximate bulge RGB tip is predicted to be at \( K_s \sim 8.0 \) mag (Frogel et al. 1999) which translates to \( M_{\text{bol}} \sim -3.5; L \approx 2000L_\odot \). This implies that the distributions are clearly incomplete below the luminosity of the bulge RGB tip.

6 MASS-LOSS RATE (\( \dot{M} \)) IN THE BULGE

We have used the dust radiative transfer models for oxygen-rich AGB stars from Groenewegen (2006) to derive the mass-loss rates of the sources in the MSX bulge fields. These models are simulated for values of \( L = 3000L_\odot \), distance = 8.5 kpc, expansion velocity = 10 km s\(^{-1}\), dust-to-gas ratio = 0.005, and no interstellar reddening. Our derivations are based on the model for an oxygen-rich AGB star with \( T_{\text{eff}} \) of 2500 K and 100% silicate composition is used. We have used the empirical relation between \( M \) and \( (K_s-[L\text{W}3])_0 \) to determine the mass-loss rate of each star. The luminosity distribution of the sources in our MSX bulge fields peaks at \( \sim 8000 L_\odot \) (see Fig. 3). Using the scaling law given in Groenewegen (2006), we have scaled the model curve for this peak luminosity. It should be noted that the empirical values tabulated by Groenewegen (2006) are for \( M < 2 \times 10^{-7} M_\odot \text{ yr}^{-1} \). For the high mass-loss end (see Fig. 8) we have extrapolated the above empirical relation used by us. It should also be noted here that the mass-loss rate derivations rely on the accurate estimates of the extinction and the corrections applied to the \( K_s \) magnitudes. On the other hand, the colour such as \( ([A]-[D])_0 \), which depends little on extinction, allows a direct measure of the mass-loss rates. However, we do not use this colour for mass-loss estimates primarily because it is less sensitive especially for the large and small mass-loss rates. The model based on the synthetic colours of AGB stars by Jeong et al. (2002) has also been used in literature for derivation of mass-loss rate (Ojha et al. 2003). We show a comparison of the Groenewegen’s model with that of Jeong et al. (2002) which is significantly different. In Fig. 7 we present the mass-loss rates derived as a function of \( (K_s-[L\text{W}3])_0 \), using the empirical model of Groenewegen (2006) and the empirical relation (\( \dot{M} \) vs. \( (K_s-15) \)) of Jeong et al. (2002). Here, in place of these colours, we use \( (K_s-[D])_0 \). This is justified because the central wavelength of MSX-D band is 14.65 \( \mu \)m which is close to 15 \( \mu \)m and falls within the LW3/ISO filter (12 – 18 \( \mu \)m). It is seen that for Vega the difference in magnitudes \( ([D] - [15]) \) is 0.04 mag which is negligible. It is to be noticed that in the whole range of mass-loss we are interested in, \( \dot{M} \geq 10^{-7} M_\odot \text{ yr}^{-1} \), the curve based on Groenewegen’s model gives lower values of mass-loss by factors \( \geq 3 \) as compared to the scale of Jeong et al. (2002) for similar colour indices. In this paper, we present the mass-loss rates derived from the models of Groenewegen (2006). The two mass-loss rate scales are also presented later in the discussions of the nature of the MSX bulge sources (see Figs. 11 and 12).

\(^4\) Catalogue of MSX sources from the bulge fields with \( \dot{M} > 3 \times 10^{-7} M_\odot \text{ yr}^{-1} \) is available in the electronic form via VizieR Service at the CDS.
Table 3. Sample catalogue of MSX sources from the bulge fields with $\dot{M} > 3 \times 10^{-7} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$. Data for each source are displayed in two lines, with the MSX standard name (e.g. MSX6C-G359.4989-03.301) and the IRAS name if any. In order to make the easy comparison with available ISOGAL 7 and 15 $\mu$m magnitudes, [7] & [15], and IRAS flux densities (in Jy) at 12 & 25 $\mu$m, S12 & S25, MSX intensities are given in magnitudes for bands A ($\sim 8 \, \mu$m) and D ($\sim 15 \, \mu$m), and in flux densities (in Jy) for bands C ($\sim 12 \, \mu$m) and E ($\sim 21 \, \mu$m).

| Name (MSX6C) | $I$ | $J$ | $H$ | $K_s$ | $[A]$ | $[D]$ | maxC | maxE | $A_V$ | $L$ | $M$ |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-----|-----|
|              | ($b$) | ($deg$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($mag$) | ($10^4 \, L_\odot$) | ($M_\odot/yr$) |
| G000.7554-01.0352 | 0.8 | 11.17 | 9.59 | 8.80 | 3.27 | 1.36 | 4.9 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 0.80 | 7.0 $\times 10^{-6}$ |
| 17482-2848 | -1.0 | | | | | | | | | | |
| G000.0100-03.0215 | 0.0 | 12.49 | 11.92 | 9.82 | 2.99 | 1.59 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 8.7 | 0.99 | 6.3 $\times 10^{-6}$ |
| G000.0157+01.6944 | 0.0 | 12.92 | 11.42 | 10.74 | 2.75 | 1.15 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 6.9 | 1.05 | 1.6 $\times 10^{-5}$ |
| G000.0157+01.6944 | 0.0 | 12.92 | 11.42 | 10.74 | 2.75 | 1.15 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 6.9 | 1.05 | 1.6 $\times 10^{-5}$ |
| G359-9506-02.0090 | -3.0 | 14.62 | 12.21 | 9.38 | 2.90 | 1.34 | 5.3 | 5.6 | 22.6 | 1.71 | 2.9 $\times 10^{-6}$ |
| G359.9506-02.0090 | -2.0 | | | | | | | | | | |
| G359.8576+01.0049 | -3.0 | 14.62 | 12.21 | 9.38 | 2.90 | 1.34 | 5.3 | 5.6 | 22.6 | 1.71 | 2.9 $\times 10^{-6}$ |
| 17358-2800 | 1.7 | 2.9 | 4.6 | | | | | | | | |
| 17382-2830 | 1.0 | 3.47 | 1.54 | 2.0 | 4.3 | | | | | | |

Figure 7. The figure shows the mass-loss rates as a function of $(K_s-[D])_0$ colour (see text) for the Groenewegen (dotted line) and Jeong (solid line) models.

sources in the “inner” and “outer” zones in the bulge fields. There are certain issues regarding the mass-loss estimates which need to be mentioned. It should be noted that using the empirical model of Groenewegen (2006) includes uncertainties in the determination of the mass-loss rates arising from the following reasons: (1) The relation was derived for oxygen-rich AGB stars in the solar neighbourhood. It has also been argued that metallicity affects the dust-to-gas ratio and the outflow velocity from evolved stars (Habing et al. 1994). This is directly related to the mass-loss and, therefore, the colour-mass-loss relation could possibly differ in different environments such as between the Galactic bulge and the Magellanic Clouds. (2) It is important to emphasize that the AGB stars are variable in nature. The average $K$ amplitude of sources associated with known LPVs (Glass et al. 2001) is $\sim 1.0$ mag, which amounts to a factor of $\sim 2 - 5$ uncertainty in the determination of $\dot{M}$. (3) The model of Groenewegen (2006) used is valid for a limited range of luminosity and expansion velocity and are simulated for AGB stars. Groenewegen (2006) have also mentioned about the caveat of post-AGB model simulation. Here the model for post-AGB sources is calculated under the assumption that the effective temperature and luminosity do not change over the time for the dust shell to drift away. So using the colour-mass-loss relation for sources having these parameters beyond the range (i.e sources with high luminosity and expansion velocity like PNe and post-AGB or sources with lower luminosity like T-Tauri stars) will have a large uncertainty in their mass-loss estimation. The classical AGB luminosity limit is $\log L(L_\odot) \sim 4.74$ (Marigo et al. 1998; Zijlstra et al. 1996). Hence, in our MSX bulge fields, sources having luminosity values beyond this cut-off limit will have larger uncertainties in the mass-loss estimation. These sources and their contribution to the integrated mass-loss rate will be discussed in detail later in this section.

The mass-loss rates for the objects in the MSX bulge fields range from $10^{-7}$ to $10^{-4} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$. As is obvious from the comparison of the two histograms in Fig. 3 the number of sources is incomplete for $M \lesssim 3 \times 10^{-7} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$ (Groenewegen’s model) in the “inner” zone, and, more severely, for $M \lesssim 2 \times 10^{-6} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$ in the “outer” zone. The source excess seen particularly in the “inner” zone for $K_s-[D] \sim 9 - 10$, is most likely due to spurious association of the sample-A and sample-U sources (see §2), which makes the estimated mass-loss rates appear smaller than their actual values. Numerical values of the mass-loss rates of individual sources are given in Table 3. The number distribution of mass-loss rates in the “inner” and “outer” bulge zones as a function of $M$ are displayed in Fig. 4. In Fig. 10 we plot the corresponding values of the average total mass-loss rate per square degree and per 0.5 bin of $\log M$ for the “inner” zone. We do not attempt to build the same plot for the “outer” zone because all the mass-loss bins in this zone, except $M \sim 0.3 - 3 \times 10^{-5} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$, would be very uncertain. This is due to the incompleteness of the lower mass-loss bins.
Figure 9. Distribution of mass-loss rates ($\dot{M}$) of MSX sources in the “inner” (left) and “outer” (right) bulge zones. The mass-loss rates are inferred from the Groenewegen’s model using the $(K_s-[D])_0$ colour.

Figure 8. $K_s-[D]$ colour distribution of MSX sources. The mass-loss rate scales displayed at the top of the figure are from the models of Groenewegen (upper panel) and Jeong (lower panel). The full line histogram represents the stars of the “inner” zone ($|l| < 0.5^\circ$) and the dashed line denotes stars of the “outer” zone ($0.5^\circ < |l| < 3.0^\circ$) in the bulge (Fig. 2 and Table 1).

Figure 10. Average total mass-loss rate per square degree and per 0.5 bin of log ($\dot{M}$) as a function of $\dot{M}$ for MSX sources in the “inner” bulge zone.

and the uncertainty in $K_s-[D]_0$ for $\dot{M} \gtrsim 3 \times 10^{-5} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$. Numerical values of the integrated mass-loss rate in the “inner” zone are displayed in Table 4, where we have limited the integration to mass-loss rates, $\dot{M} > 3 \times 10^{-7} \, M_\odot \, yr^{-1}$.
for which the data are reasonably complete. The first row shows the value of mass-loss rate per square degree averaged over all the fields in the “inner” zone. In the next five rows, we give the integrated mass-loss in the five latitude bins which cover the bulge zone. The table also lists the corresponding integrated mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass (in yr$^{-1}$). The integrated mass-loss rate in the entire “inner” zone for the bulge fields is 1.96 $\times$ 10$^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$ and the corresponding integrated mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass is 0.48 $\times$ 10$^{-11}$ yr$^{-1}$ (see Table 4). For the rest of the discussion that follows, it should be kept in mind that the integrated mass-loss rate is only for the “inner” zone and the contribution from the “outer” zone is not included.

Here, we would like to discuss about the sources with luminosities beyond the classical AGB limit of Log L(L_\odot) > 4.74. There are 18 such sources in the “inner” zone for which we derive the integrated mass-loss rate. Out of these only three sources have mass-loss rates $M > 3 \times 10^{-7}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$. The uncertainty in the mass-loss estimation of these three sources will not affect the integrated mass-loss rate as they contribute less than 4% to the total mass-loss. We have also examined the nature of all these 18 sources in various CM and CC diagrams. Except for one source which has a faint $K_s$-band magnitude (12.3 mag), rest of sources are very bright in $K_s$ (< 5.6 mags) with 4 of them saturated in 2MASS ($K_s < 3.5$ mag). All of these sources are also bright in the MSX D-band (< 2.8 mag). Referring to Figs. 11 and 13 we see that the majority of these sources have blue colours ($K_s$-[D])$_0$ ∼ 2; ([A]-[D])$_0$ ∼ 1. This implies that they are mostly foreground sources which have possibly not been removed using our foreground source rejection procedure (see §3). The foreground (or early-type) nature of these sources were further verified in the ($I - J$)/($K_s - [D]$) CC diagram based on the discussion presented in Schultheis et al. (2002; cf Fig. 2). Among these 18 sources, there are two sources which show large color excess in the diagrams discussed above. These are likely to be YSOs. Additional spectrophotometric and photometric observations are required to understand the nature of these luminous sources. However, the uncertainties involved in the mass-loss rates of these sources do not influence the estimation of the integrated mass-loss rate as their contribution is negligible as is already mentioned.

We have also calculated the integrated mass-loss rate for the “intermediate” ($|l| < 3.0^\circ$, $1^\circ < |b| < 2^\circ$) and the “outer” ($|l| < 3.0^\circ$, $2^\circ < |b| < 5^\circ$) bulge fields. For $M > 3 \times 10^{-7}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$, the integrated mass-loss rates are 3.87 $\times$ 10$^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$ and 1.32 $\times$ 10$^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$ in the two bulge fields, respectively. In comparison, Ojha et al. (2003) derive values of 3.7 $\times$ 10$^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$ and 0.4 $-$ 1.0 $\times$ 10$^{-11}$ yr$^{-1}$ for the integrated mass-loss rate and mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass, respectively, using ISO-CAM 7 and 15 $\mu$m observations. It should be noted here that the Galactic bulge fields presented in Ojha et al. (2003) cover $-1.5^\circ < l < +1.6^\circ$; $-3.8^\circ < b < -1.0^\circ$, $b = +1.0^\circ$ with a total area of $\sim 0.29$ deg$^2$ whereas the area covered in this present work is much larger and hence offers better statistics than the sample of Ojha et al. (2003). The sensitivities of the MSX and 2MASS data also allow us to probe the high mass-loss end with a better statistical sample.

Le Bertre et al. (2001; 2003) have studied the Galactic mass-losing AGB stars and concluded that the replenishment to the ISM is dominated ($\geq$ 50%) by AGB stars with mass-loss rates $\geq 10^{-6}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$. These sources constitute $\sim$10% of their sample and noticeably there are no AGB stars in their sample with mass-loss rates $> 10^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$. Although sources with mass-loss $\geq 10^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ are known to exist (Habing 1996). The sensitivities of the data sets used by us probe these rare high mass-loss stars. In our MSX bulge fields, we have a total of 42 sources displaying mass-loss $\geq 1.0 \times 10^{-3}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ which significantly contribute to the mass returned to the ISM. In comparison, the stellar population studies in the solar neighbourhood by Jura & Kleinmann (1989) identify 63 sources with mass-loss rates $\geq 10^{-6}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ out of which only 21 sources in their sample have mass-loss rates $\geq 1.0 \times 10^{-5}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$. From their sample it is seen that oxygen- and carbon-rich AGB stars have almost equal contribution to the replenishment of the ISM which amounts to $3 - 6 \times 10^{-4}$ $M_\odot$ kpc$^{-2}$ yr$^{-1}$. From the MSX bulge fields we estimate the total mass replenishment to the ISM to be $\sim 9 \times 10^{-3}$ $M_\odot$ kpc$^{-2}$ yr$^{-1}$, which is not surprising given the large number of high mass-loss AGB stars (M $\geq 1.0 \times 10^{-3}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$) detected in our sample.

However, it should also be kept in mind that the sample of Jura & Kleinmann (1989) is incomplete at both the lower and the high mass-loss ends. Since the low mass-loss end is incomplete in our sample, we refrain from making any comparison with other studies.

### Table 4. Integrated mass-loss (in $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$) and integrated mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass (in yr$^{-1}$) in the “inner” bulge zone with $M > 3 \times 10^{-7}$ $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$. The mass-loss rates are calculated using the model of Groenewegen (2006).

| Inner Fields | $M_\odot$ yr$^{-1}$ deg$^{-2}$ | yr$^{-1}$ |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| All         | 1.96 $\times$ 10$^{-4}$       | 0.48 $\times$ 10$^{-11}$ |
| 1.0$^\circ$ < | | |
| 1.5$^\circ$ < | | |
| 2.0$^\circ$ < | | |
| 3.0$^\circ$ < | | |
| 4.0$^\circ$ < | | |

### 7 Nature of the MSX Sources

In this section, we discuss the various colour-magnitude and colour-colour diagrams. This enables us to study the nature of the sources in the MSX bulge fields. As has been mentioned earlier, we present only sources with good quality MSX and 2MASS data.

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7.1 Colour-magnitude diagrams

In Figs. 11, 12, 13 and 14, we present the dereddened $(K_s-[D])_0/(K_s)_0$, $(K_s-[D])_0/(K_s)_0$, $(A-[D])_0/(A)_0$ and $(K_s-[A])_0/(A)_0$ colour-magnitude diagrams of MSX sources in the two bulge zones, respectively.

Figures 11 and 12 show the two colour-magnitude diagrams involving the $(K_s-[D])_0$ colour which has been used in §6 for the derivation of the mass-loss rates of the sources. The mass-loss rate scales derived from Jeong et al. (2002) and Groenewegen (2006) are displayed on the top panel of these two figures. It is interesting to see that the sources from sample-A (which are plotted in red colour) are mostly high mass-loss stars with $(K_s-[D])_0 \gtrsim 6.5$, corresponding to a mass-loss rate $> 5 \times 10^{-6} M_{\odot}$ yr$^{-1}$ based on the Groenewegen’s scale. The sample-U sources (shown in blue) extend the high mass-loss sequence beyond the sample-A sources. It should be kept in mind that the straight line sequence seen for the sample-U sources is partly due to the assigned lower limit of 13.7 mag on the $K_s$-band magnitude. It is worth recalling here that these two samples constitute sources brighter than 4th mag in MSX D-band with no 2MASS counterpart with $K_s \lesssim 11.0$ mag within 4$''$ search radius. Sample-A includes sources having a 2MASS counterpart within an extended 5$''$ search radius without any $K_s$-band magnitude cut and sample-U comprises of sources having no 2MASS counterpart within this radius. We have assigned $K_s = 13.7$ mag for all the sample-U sources. Another distinct feature which is seen in the “inner” zone is branching of the sources into two sequences with an appreciable gap around $(K_s-[D])_0 \gtrsim 5.5$. It is also interesting to note that majority of the ISOGAL sources seen in the “inner” bulge zone, i.e. lower luminosity sources, occupy the low mass-loss end of the plots. Our prime focus in this study is to identify the nature of high mass-loss stars in the bulge fields. We therefore selected sources with large mass-loss rates ($> 3 \times 10^{-5} M_{\odot}$ yr$^{-1}$ as per the Groenewegen’s scale) and surveyed the VizieR and SIMBAD database for identification with known objects. Since majority of these high mass-loss sources are known IRAS sources, we used a search radius of 10$''$ by taking into consideration the typical IRAS PSC error ellipse of $\sim 10'' \times 20''$. We have grouped these sources identified in VizieR/Simbad into four major classes – Planetary nebulae & post AGB stars, maser & OH/IR sources, peculiar sources (which also include variable stars) and IRAS sources which only have IRAS names but no other classifications. We have marked these four classes in the colour-magnitude diagrams using different symbols (see caption of Fig. 11).

In Fig. 13 we have plotted the $(A-[D])_0/(A)_0$ colour-magnitude diagram. There is a gap seen around $(A-[D])_0 \sim 2.5$. Among the sources to the right of this gap (the redder sources) the majority are known post AGB and planetary nebulae. In this figure it is also clearly evident that sources from sample-A are redder than the rest. Figure 14 shows $(K_s-[A])_0/(A)_0$ colour-magnitude diagram. The $(K_s-[A])_0/(A)_0$ diagram seems to be the best criterion for the detection of large amplitude LPVs (Glass et al. 1999, Schultheis et al. 2000). We see two interesting sequences in this colour-magnitude diagram. The sources seem to branch out into two for $(K_s-[A])_0 \gtrsim 2$, with an appreciable gap between the two. The upper sequence primarily consists of sources with $J - K$ excess and the lower sequence mostly comprises of sources which do not have any D-band association. Interestingly, the majority of the sources in the lower sequence do not have either C- or E-band association and are fainter in $K_s$ (> 9 mag). The sources from sample-A seem to extend the sequence with increasing slope of the
High mass-loss AGB stars detected by MSX in the Galactic bulge

Figure 12. $K_{s0}/(K_{s0}-[D])_0$ magnitude-colour diagram of MSX sources with 2MASS counterparts. The symbols are same as shown in Fig. 11.

The sample-U sources seem to form a parallel sequence and occupy the red end. As has been mentioned earlier, it must be noted that this sequence is also a result of the assigned lower limit of 13.7 mag on the $K_s$-band magnitude of the sources in this sample. In both the above diagrams the ISO-GAL sources are towards the blue end.

7.2 Colour-colour diagrams

The colour-colour diagrams are also useful for discriminating between different classes of objects and to study their nature. Ortiz et al. (2005), have studied the evolution of carbon- and oxygen-rich AGB stars, post-AGB stars and planetary nebulae using mainly data from MSX. In comparison to their Fig. 3, we have plotted the $(D - E)/(A - D)$ colour-colour diagram in Fig. 13. We have plotted the reddened colours to facilitate comparison with the plot of Ortiz et al. (2005). As noted by Ortiz et al. (2005), we also find a distinct gap in the plot which is shown as a solid line based on the visual inspection of our data, in addition to the line (dotted one) from Ortiz et al. (2005). The solid line based on our estimate allows to discriminate few additional borderline objects. In this figure, we have plotted the known high mass-loss sources, which have already been identified. Apart from these we have also searched the VizieR and SIMBAD database for known counterparts of all the additional sources lying to the right of the gap, which were missed out in the earlier selection based on Fig. 11 which included only good quality $K_s$-band sources. Majority of the known IRAS and

Figure 13. $[D]_0/([A]-[D])_0$ magnitude-colour diagram of good quality MSX sources. The IRAC 8 µm magnitude is used in place of MSX A-band for the Groenewegen models. The symbols are same as shown in Fig. 11.

Figure 14. $[A]_0/(K_s-[A])_0$ magnitude-colour diagram of MSX sources (quality flags of 3 & 4) with 2MASS counterparts. The upper panel shows the “outer” zone ($0.5^\circ < |l| < 3.0^\circ$) and the lower panel shows the “inner” zone ($|l| < 0.5^\circ$) of the bulge. The symbols are same as in Fig. 11. The cyan circles represent the sources without D associations.

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maser sources lie to the left and lower end of the plot. Planetary nebulae populate mostly the region beyond the gap. Ortiz et al. (2005) suggest that the gap seen is due to the rapid evolution of stars as they cross the dotted line which can be considered as a transition boundary. This is in good agreement with the different population of sources found on either side of the gap in Fig. 15.

Using MSX and 2MASS mid- and near-infrared colour-colour diagrams, Lumsden et al. (2002), Sevenster (2002) and Messineo et al. (2004) have studied different classes of evolved stars with circumstellar envelopes. In Fig. 15 we present the different colour-colour diagrams of the MSX bulge fields for good quality flags in all the MSX bands and also in the $K_s$-band. The plots are shown in the units of the reddened flux ratio rather than the colour index for easy comparison with the plots of Lumsden et al. (2002). In Fig. 15, we plot the $F_{21}/F_8$ vs. $F_8/F_K$ flux ratios. According to Lumsden et al. (2002), the oxygen- and carbon-rich populations separate out clearly in this colour-colour diagram (see Figs. 10 & 11 of Lumsden et al. 2002). However, we do not see any such separation here in our MSX bulge fields. The OH/IR stars and the planetary nebulae mostly have $F_{21}/F_8$ flux ratios $\gtrsim 1$ consistent with the trend seen in Fig. 10 of Lumsden et al. (2002). The mid-infrared colours of planetary nebulae are similar to HII regions but mostly planetary nebulae are bluer because they are not embedded in molecular clouds. Figure 15 shows the $F_{12}/F_8$ vs. $F_{21}/F_{14}$ colour-colour diagram. This diagram is useful to distinguish between the AGB and the post-AGB phases and to locate post-AGB stars which have redder colours due to their colder envelopes (Sevenster 2002; Messineo et al. 2004). The transition from a blue ($< 2.38$) to red ($> 2.38$) $F_{12}/F_8$ flux ratio may correspond to a transition off the AGB to proto-planetary nebulae and from a blue ($< 1.90$) to red ($> 1.90$) $F_{21}/F_{14}$ flux ratio indicates a later evolutionary transition, when mass-loss starts to drop down several order of magnitudes and there is the onset of the fast wind (Messineo et al. 2004). Most of the MSX sources show $F_{12}/F_8 < 2.38$ and $F_{21}/F_{14} < 1.90$ as expected for AGB stars. In Fig. 16, we plot the $F_{21}/F_8$ vs. $F_{14}/F_8$ colour-colour diagram. We do not see any trend separating the oxygen-rich population from the carbon-rich one as pointed out by Lumsden et al. (2002). The majority of the sources are OH/IR stars and IRAS sources which occupy the central region of the plot. The planetary nebulae are mostly above $F_{21}/F_{14} \gtrsim 1$ and $F_{14}/F_8 \gtrsim 1$. We see a gap around $F_{14}/F_8 \sim 3$. This could possibly suggest the transition from the AGB to the more evolved phase. In Fig. 16, we plot the $F_{21}/F_8$ vs. $F_{14}/F_{12}$ flux ratios. The MSX sources with $F_{21}/F_8 \gtrsim 5.96$ (see also Fig. 15) probably represent post-AGB stars (Messineo et al. 2004).

7.3 Population of carbon stars in the bulge fields

We have investigated the nature of the red sources (with $J - K_s > 3$) in the various diagrams presented. They occupy the high mass-loss end of Figs. 11 and 12 as expected. From the loci of the Groenewegen’s models, it is difficult to comment on whether these sources are carbon-rich or oxygen-rich AGB stars. The population of carbon-rich stars if present in the bulge would be crucial in our understanding of the bulge formation, star formation history in the bulge and the nature, formation and evolution of this rare population itself. Except for the peculiar 34 carbon stars detected by Azzopardi et al. (1991), there has been no other carbon star detection in the bulge. The bulge membership and nature of these stars have been a matter of much debate (Ng 1998; Whitelock 1993). In Figs. 11 and 12 we see sources falling on the locus of the carbon-rich AGB star model. But based on just the colour and magnitude, it is impossible to confirm or reject the possibility of finding carbon stars in the bulge. Apart from observations focussed on the Galactic bulge, there are several other studies based on the near- and mid-infrared colour-colour and colour-magnitude diagrams to identify carbon star populations in different Galactic environments (van Loon et al. (1998); Buchanan et al. (2006); Thorndike et al. (2007); Groenewegen et al. (2007)), van Loon et al. (1998) have presented the $(H - K)$ vs. $(K - [12])$ colour-colour diagram to distinguish between carbon and oxygen rich AGB stars. The Figs. 3a and b of van Loon et al. (1998) show the Galactic sample of AGB stars from Guglielmo et al. (1993). In their figures, the oxygen and carbon rich sequences clearly separate out. In Fig. 14 we have plotted the similar colour-colour diagram ($(H - K_s)/(K_s - C)$) of the sources in our bulge fields. In this plot we have plotted only sources from sample-A and rest of the bulge fields. Sources from sample-U, which do not have
High mass-loss AGB stars detected by MSX in the Galactic bulge

Figure 16. The near- and mid-infrared colour-colour diagrams for the two bulge zones (open black circles). The rectangular box shown in (b) is based on the criteria discussed in Messineo et al. (2004). The symbols are same as shown in Fig. 11.

$H$-band magnitudes, are excluded. To compare with the figures of van Loon et al. (1998), we have plotted here the reddened colours. The scatter in our plot makes it difficult to differentiate the two sequences. In their study of luminous sources in the LMC, Thorndike et al. (2007) have used the $((H-K)/(K-[A]))$ colour-colour diagram to classify different stellar populations. In Fig. 18, we have plotted a similar reddened $((H-K_s)/(K_s-[A]))$ colour-colour diagram for the sources in the MSX bulge fields. Here also we see the branching off sources into two sequences similar to that seen in Fig. 13. The oxygen- and carbon-rich AGB star models of Groenewegen (2006) trace the sources in the upper sequence better. However, given the scatter in the plot, it is difficult to identify any carbon-rich AGB star sequence as shown in Thorndike et al. (2007). We also derive similar conclusions from the investigation of the $((J-K_s)/(K_s-[A]))$ colour-colour diagram (not presented in this paper) based on the plots presented in Buchanan et al. (2006) and Groenewegen et al. (2007). However, it is interesting to note that there are two known carbon stars (IRAS 17534-3030 and IRAS 17547-3249) in our sample, one each in the “inner” and the “outer” zone. These sources classified as carbon stars (Groenewegen et al. 2002; Volk et al. 2000; Guandalini et al. 2006) do not seem to fall on the carbon-rich model curve shown in Figs. 11, 12, 13 and 14. One of the two carbon stars (IRAS 17534-3030), which lies in the “inner” zone of sample-A, has good quality 2MASS $H$, $K_s$, MSX A- and C-band data and is shown in Fig. 17 and Fig. 15. It is seen to lie far away from the carbon line. Here, we would like to recall that for sample-A sources, the chance associations are large ($\approx 0.6$; see §2) and hence the possibility of a spurious 2MASS association. However, for this particular source which is from sample-A, we have checked the near- and mid-infrared colours in detail. Comparing the colours with the plots presented in Lumsden et al. (2002), we see that the flux ratios agree well with the carbon star population except for the $F_{21}/F_8$ and $F_{21}/F_{12}$ ratios which are marginally on the redder side. It is worth mentioning here that this carbon star IRAS 17534-3030 is a well known extreme carbon star which has been recently studied by Pitman et al. (2006) using ISO-SWS spectra. They predict the presence of nitride dust in the star. Apart from this, only near-infrared colour-colour diagrams have also been used to identify carbon stars. Based on the study of Kerschbaum & Hron (1994), we have also checked the...
(J - H) vs (H - Ks) colour-colour diagram (not presented in this paper). Here also, we are unable to identify any carbon star sequence except for the identified carbon star IRAS 17534-3030 whose (J - H)/(H - Ks) colours are consistent with the locus of carbon stars. Lebzelter et al. (2002) and Cioni & Habing (2003), have shown the use of the (I - J) vs (J - K) colour-colour diagram to discriminate between the oxygen- and carbon-rich populations for the LMC. Since most of the sources (including the two known carbon stars) in our sample do not have I counterparts, we have not presented this colour-colour diagram in this paper. From the figure of Ortiz et al. (2005), the carbon stars are seen to populate the lower left corner (bluer end - [14.7]-[21.3]) colour ranging from ~0.2 to 0.8 and [8.3]-[14.7] colour ranging from ~0 to 1.5) of the diagram. One of the two carbon stars in our sample falls in this region (see Fig. 15). Other than this, there is no such distinct population seen among the sources belonging to our bulge fields. We infer that based on only the colour-colour and colour magnitude diagrams we cannot conclusively comment on the presence or absence of carbon stars in the bulge.

8 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have presented in detail the study of the AGB population detected by MSX in the “intermediate” (|l| < 3.0°, 1° < |b| < 2°) and “outer” (|l| < 3.0°, 2° < |b| < 5°) Galactic bulge fields covering a large area of 48 deg². We have shown that the MSX data in conjunction with the 2MASS database can be potentially used to detect AGB stars well above the RGB tip with the determination of their luminosities (provided they belong to the bulge) and mass-loss rates. The sensitivities of the two surveys enable us to sample the high mass-loss end, characterized by excess in Ks-[D]₀ colour due to circumstellar dust emission, with better statistics. We have derived the mass-loss rates of all the MSX sources which range from 10⁻⁷ to 10⁻⁴ M☉ yr⁻¹ and estimated the integrated mass-loss rate in the MSX bulge fields. Taking the completeness into account, we have limited the integration to mass-loss rates, M > 3 × 10⁻⁷ M☉ yr⁻¹ for the “inner” zone (|l| < 0.5°) only. There is a factor of ∼3 increase in the estimated integrated mass-loss rate in the “intermediate” (3.87 × 10⁻⁴ M☉ deg⁻² yr⁻¹) as compared to the “outer” (1.32 × 10⁻⁴ M☉ deg⁻² yr⁻¹) bulge regions. The average integrated mass-loss rate is estimated to be 1.96 × 10⁻⁴ M☉ deg⁻² yr⁻¹ and the corresponding integrated mass-loss rate per unit stellar mass is 0.48 × 10⁻¹¹ yr⁻¹. Apart from the mass-loss derivations, we have used the various colour-magnitude and colour-colour diagrams to discuss in detail the nature of the MSX sources in the bulge fields and the location of the planetary nebulae, post-AGB stars, OH/IR sources etc. in these diagrams.

Studies based on proposed Spitzer IRAC and MIPS photometric surveys of the innermost Galaxy including the most obscured and crowded region would in future enable us to unravel in detail the late stages of stellar evolution particularly of the infrared-luminous AGB stars, the mass-loss of which is crucial in understanding the later stellar fate and hence the dust in the universe. Future infrared mission (e.g. WISE ; Duval et al. 2004) hold the key to such studies.
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