International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Digital Rotameter for Flow Measurement Using ATmega8 Microcontroller

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ABSTRACT:

Fluid flow measurement plays a vital role in various industrial and laboratory processes. Traditional rotameters, though reliable, often require manual observation and interpretation, which can lead to human errors and delays in data processing. This paper introduces a Digital Rotameter system using an ATmega8 microcontroller to automate and digitize the measurement of fluid flow. The system employs a laser and Light Dependent Resistor (LDR) sensor to detect the bob's position within the rotameter tube. The change in resistance is translated into voltage and processed using an operational amplifier (op-amp) to provide accurate analog signals to the ATmega8. This microcontroller then converts the analog data using its built-in ADC, processes it to determine the flow rate, and displays it in realtime on a 16x2 LCD. Additionally, the system incorporates relay drivers to automate external device control based on flow readings. This design is both cost-effective and reliable, making it suitable for applications in fluid monitoring, process automation, and academic research.

***Keywords*:** Digital Rotameter, ATmega8, Sensor, Flow Measurement, Microcontroller, LCD Display, Op-Amp, Relay Driver, Automation

I. Introduction:

Kondekar Shivdarshan, Warkad Shivam

Measuring the flow rate of liquids is crucial in industries like water treatment, chemical processing, and pharmaceuticals. Traditional rotameters offer a simple and visual way to measure flow using a float (bob) inside a tapered tube. However, they lack the ability to store data or interface with control systems.

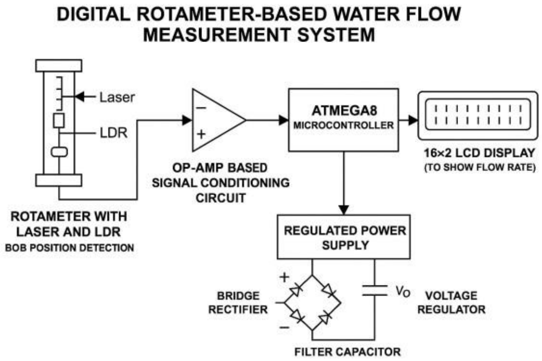
This project aims to convert the analog readings of a conventional rotameter into digital values using an embedded system. By using a laser and LDR to detect the position of the bob and converting this signal into a readable electrical format, the system achieves automatic flow measurement. The ATmega8 microcontroller processes the signal, calculates the flow rate, and displays it on an LCD. This allows for real-time monitoring and can even control external devices using relays.

II.Objectives:

- To design and develop a digital rotameter using the ATmega8 microcontroller.
- To use a laser and LDR pair for detecting the bob's position.
- To convert the analog signal using an opamp and feed it into the microcontroller's ADC.
- To display the flow rate on an LCD screen.
- To automate control actions using relay drivers.
- To calibrate and test the accuracy of the system.

III.Block Diagram Description:

The main blocks of the system include:



1. Laser-LDR Sensor Pair: The laser is focused across the rotameter. The LDR detects the laser beam, and its resistance changes as the bob blocks the beam.
2. Op-Amp Circuit (LM358): Converts resistance change from the LDR into a voltage level suitable for ADC
3. ATmega8 Microcontroller: Receives the analog input, processes it, and converts it into flow rate.
4. LCD Display (16x2): Shows the calculated flow rate in real-time.
5. Relay Driver Circuit: Allows the system to trigger external devices based on flow conditions. 6. Power Supply Unit: Converts AC mains into regulated DC power.

IV. Component Description:

1. ATmega8 Microcontroller : 8-bit AVR microcontroller with ADC, timers, and digital I/O.Handles signal processing and output display.
2. LDR (Light Dependent Resistor) :Changes resistance depending on light intensity.

Used to sense interruption by the bob.

1. Laser Diode :Constant light beam source aimed at the LDR. Any obstruction (bob) alters the light intensity on LDR.
2. LM358 Op-Amp Amplifies small voltage changes from the LDR. Used to create a readable signal for the ADC.
3. 16x2 LCD DisplayDisplays real-time flow rate.Connected to digital I/O of ATmega8.
4. Relay Driver (ULN2003)Controls high-power devices.Triggered by ATmega8 based on flow rate logic.
5. Power Supply (Adapter, Bridge Rectifier, Filter Capacitors, 7805 Regulator) Converts AC to 5V DC for powering the microcontroller and other circuits.

V.Working Principle:

The bob inside the rotameter rises or falls depending on the flow rate.A laser beam is aligned to point across the bob's path.As the bob blocks or uncovers the laser beam, the light intensity received by the LDR changes. The LDR is part of a voltage divider, so its resistance change leads to a corresponding voltage changeThe op-amp circuit amplifies this voltage and feeds it to the ATmega8's ADC. The microcontroller converts this analog voltage to a digital value and calculates the flow rate based on calibration.The flow rate is displayed on an LCD. If it exceeds a certain value, the relay is triggered to activate/deactivate a device.
Industrial Flow Monitoring: Automation in chemical and pharmaceutical plants.
Water Treatment Systems: Accurate flow regulation and remote monitoring. Laboratory Research: Continuous observation of fluid behavior.
Educational Demonstrations: Embedded systems and sensor interfacing projects.
Smart Agriculture: Monitoring irrigation systems.

VI. Software Implementation:

The microcontroller is programmed using Embedded C and uploaded via ISP (In-System Programming) using AVR tools. Initialization: Set up LCD, ADC, and I/O pins. ADC Reading: Read voltage signal from LDR circuit through ADC channel. Flow Rate Calculation: Convert ADC values to flow rate using calibration logic.Display Update: Show the result on a 16x2 LCD in real-time. Relay Control: Trigger relays if flow crosses specific limits.

VII. Logic Flow (Steps):

- LDR + Laser form a sensor pair. LDR is in a voltage divider circuit.
- Op-Amp (LM358) amplifies voltage change from LDR.
- ATmega8 ADC pin takes input from OpAmp.
- 16x2 LCD is connected to PORTD for displaying output.
- Relay driver (ULN2003) is connected to PORTB for controlling loads.
- Power Supply section includes 7805 regulator for 5V DC output.

VIII. Calibration and Testing:

Calibration Process: Use a standard rotameter to compare flow at different levels. Measure corresponding ADC value from LDR circuit. Map each ADC value to a known flow rate in LPM (liters per minute).

Testing Conditions: Tested with varying water flow through rotameter. Verified ADC to flow rate conversion on LCD. Checked relay switching at set thresholds.Conclusion from Results:The system consistently converts bob position to digital flow rate. Relay switching is reliable. Laser-LDR sensing is accurate and stable.

IX. Observations and Results:

Tested with varying water flow through rotameter.
Verified ADC to flow rate conversion on LCD. Checked relay switching at set thresholds.

X.Advantages and Limitations:

Advantages:

Accuracy: Uses precise optical sensing for bob position.
Automation: Removes need for manual reading. Cost-Effective: Built using affordable and widely available components.
Compact and Portable: Simple design enables easy installation.
Real-Time Display: Flow data is continuously updated on the LCD.
Control Integration: Can control devices based on flow conditions via relay.

Limitations:

Laser Alignment: Requires accurate alignment with LDR.
Ambient Light Sensitivity: Needs shielding from external light sources.
Calibration Needs: Accuracy relies on precise calibration.
Fluid Type Limitations: Best suited for clear or translucent fluids.

XI. Future Scope:

Wireless Transmission: Incorporate Bluetooth or Wi-Fi for remote monitoring.
IoT Compatibility: Link with IoT dashboards for cloud-based flow monitoring. Mobile Application: Develop an Android/iOS app to view real-time data. Auto Calibration: Program automatic calibration based on fluid properties.
Graphical Interface: Use graphical LCDs for flow . vs. time visualization.
Multiparameter Support: Measure temperature, pressure along with flow

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