

**INVESTIGATION OF TRIBOELECTRIC EFFECT IN POLYMER  
DIELECTRIC AND INORGANIC SEMICONDUCTOR THROUGH  
ENGINEERED INTERFACE FOR ENERGY HARVESTING  
APPLICATIONS**

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**APRIL 2025**

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**Investigation of Triboelectric Effect in Polymer Dielectric  
and Inorganic Semiconductor Through Engineered  
Interface For Energy Harvesting Applications**

by

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**DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING**

Submitted

in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

to the



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

**APRIL 2025**

Dedicated to my beloved Parents, Uncle  
and Brothers

**Shailendra Kumar**

April 2025

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **Investigation of Triboelectric effect in Polymer Dielectric and Inorganic Semiconductor through Engineered Interface for Energy Harvesting Applications** , submitted by **Mr. Shailendra Kumar**, to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a bonafide record of the research work done by him under our supervision and guidance. The contents of this thesis, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Ankur Goswami, for his invaluable guidance and the opportunities he has provided me, which will undoubtedly shape my future career. His encouragement to delve deeply into scientific research and pursue meaningful work has been truly inspiring.

I am deeply grateful to the members of my SRC Prof. Bhabani K. Satapathy, Prof. Bijay P. Tripathi, and Prof. Dhiman Mallick for their insightful suggestions, constructive criticisms, and invaluable guidance throughout my tenure. Their feedback greatly contributed to the improvement of my thesis work. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Sumit Sinha-Ray and Prof. Krishna Balasubramanian for granting me access to their laboratories, where I could fabricate electrospun nanofibers and utilize the Keysight source meter. Without their generous support, the successful conclusion of my research might not have been possible. I am equally thankful to the Head of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Prof. Jayant Jain, and esteemed faculty members Prof. Rajesh Prasad, Prof. Sangeeta Santra, and Prof. Laxmi Narayan Ramasubramanian for their invaluable feedback and encouragement. I am also deeply appreciative of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering for providing access to all the necessary facilities that enabled me to carry out my experiments effectively. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Brijesh, Mr. Amit, and Mr. Mohit for their tremendous support in operating various equipment and for granting me the opportunity to handle them independently. Their assistance was instrumental in the smooth progression of my research.

The journey of research is often challenging, but it is made significantly more enjoyable by the camaraderie and support of the lab fraternity. I am immensely grateful to my seniors—Dr. Chetan Singh, Dr. Vickey Nandal, and Dr. Ranjeet Kumar—who were always willing to extend their help and guidance. A special thanks to my labmates in the

---

Advanced Materials System Laboratory: Dr. Rajesh Kumar Jha, Mr. Durgesh Banswar, Mr. Jay Krishna Anand, Mr. Chhotrai Soren, Mr. Ujjawal Chitnis, Ms. Sonika Singh, Ms. Shalini Singh, Mr. Sooraj Kumar, Ms. Rashi R, Mr. Prashant Sharma, Mr. Tarun Pratap Singh, Mr. Bhawesh Thakur, Mr. Tulip Biswas, Mr. Ashwani, Dr. Amit Kumar, Dr. Dheeraj Kumar Rana, Ms. Kiran, Mr. Syed Junaid, and Mr. Amey Raghuvir Parnaik. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and camaraderie have been invaluable and have made this journey truly memorable. I am also profoundly thankful to my friends, whose constant encouragement has been a source of strength throughout my doctoral studies.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support provided by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), which has been instrumental in enabling my doctoral research.

Finally, I extend my sincerest gratitude to my family for their unwavering love and support. To my parents, Mrs. Lali Devi and Mr. Suresh Prasad; my uncles, Mr. Mahesh Prasad, Mr. Ganesh Prasad, and Mr. Ram Naresh Prasad; my sisters, Poonam, Guriya, and Sashi Prabha; and my brothers, Dr. Mithlesh Kumar, Kamlesh Kumar (ACP), Deven-dra Kumar, and Raghwendra Kumar—your love, encouragement, and faith in me have given me the strength to overcome challenges with courage and determination. I am forever indebted to you for your tireless efforts and constant belief in my success.

(Shailendra Kumar)

## ABSTRACT

Triboelectric Nanogenerators (TENGs) are a cutting-edge technology that converts ambient mechanical energy into electrical energy, with enormous potential to use in self-powered gadgets, wearable electronics, and sustainable energy systems. Although significant progress has been achieved, issues remain in increasing energy conversion efficiency, durability, scalability for real-world applications. Further issues pertaining to efficiency and figure of merit is still not well structured in the existing literature. Hence, reporting the efficiency and the performance of TENG in majority of the cases are misleading. This thesis addresses the above issues by focussing on the design and manufacture of high-performance TENGs employing advanced nanostructured materials (both polymers and semiconductors), optimised surface engineering methods, using in house-built testing equipment.

The thesis is divided into three major components. The first component comprised of two sections. The first section focusses on the design and development of a horizontal contact-separation mode triboelectric nanogenerator (HCS-TENG), in which all input parameters (such as applied force, motor speed, tribo-plate separation, and operating frequency) were considered for performance evaluation and shed light on the efficiency and figure of merit of the proposed devices. The second section deals with the design, construction, and optimisation of a sliding contact photovoltaic triboelectric nanogenerator (SC-PTENG), an equipment that generates energy from mechanical friction and as well as in tandem external light.

The second component of the thesis to explore the opportunities to use polymer materials for the TENG applications for wearable devices. Using electrospun polyacrylonitrile (PAN) doped with multiwall carbon nanotube (MWCNT), to facilitate charge transfer, stacked in various combination of layers the triboelectric performance was investigated. Except PAN, inorganic polymer such as polydimethylsiloxane (PDMS) has been also explored for the above applications targeting flexible devices. Both polymers showed

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significant increases in energy conversion efficiency and electrical output performance. Conductive fillers, such as MAX phase was used to improve overall electrical performance in PDMS.

The third component explores the synergistic effect of both tribo and photo voltaic effect in energy harvesting in two semiconductor (GaAs and Si p-n junction) and semiconductor metal junction (GaAs and Si with Cu/Al). A thorough examination of semiconductor bandgaps reveals the possibility for tailored nanostructures to increase TENG performance, indicating a possible route towards more efficient and sustainable energy harvesting systems.

Keywords: Triboelectric Nanogenerator, energy harvesting, Polyacrylonitrile, Multi-wall Carbon Nanotube, Polydimethylsiloxane, MAX phase, Semiconductors, Self-Powered Wearable systems, Tactile sensing.

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## सारांश:

ट्राइबोइलेक्ट्रिक नैनोजेनरेटर (टीईएनजी) एक अत्याधुनिक तकनीक है जो परिवेशीय यांत्रिक ऊर्जा को विद्युत ऊर्जा में परिवर्तित करती है, जिसमें स्व-संचालित गैजेट, पहनने योग्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और टिकाऊ ऊर्जा प्रणालियों में उपयोग की भारी क्षमता होती है। यद्यपि महत्वपूर्ण प्रगति हासिल की गई है, वास्तविक दुनिया के अनुप्रयोगों के लिए ऊर्जा रूपांतरण दक्षता, स्थायित्व, स्केलेबिलिटी बढ़ाने में समस्याएं बनी हुई हैं। दक्षता और योग्यता के आंकड़े से संबंधित अन्य मुद्दे अभी भी मौजूदा साहित्य में अच्छी तरह से संरचित नहीं हैं। इसलिए, अधिकांश मामलों में TENG की दक्षता और प्रदर्शन की रिपोर्ट करना भ्रामक है। यह थीसिस उन्नत नैनोसंरचित सामग्रियों (पॉलिमर और अर्धचालक दोनों), अनुकूलित सतह इंजीनियरिंग विधियों, घर-निर्मित परीक्षण उपकरणों का उपयोग करके उच्च प्रदर्शन वाले टीईएनजी के डिजाइन और निर्माण पर ध्यान केंद्रित करके उपरोक्त मुद्दों को संबोधित करती है।

थीसिस को तीन प्रमुख घटकों में व्यवस्थित किया गया है। पहले घटक में दो खंड शामिल थे। पहला खंड एक क्षैतिज संपर्क-पृथक्करण मोड ट्राइबोइलेक्ट्रिक नैनोजेनरेटर (एचसीएस-टीईएनजी) के डिजाइन और विकास पर केंद्रित है, जिसमें सभी इनपुट मापदंडों (जैसे लागू बल, मोटर गति, ट्राइबो-प्लेट पृथक्करण और ऑपरेटिंग आवृत्ति) पर विचार किया गया था। प्रदर्शन मूल्यांकन और प्रस्तावित उपकरणों की दक्षता और योग्यता के आंकड़े पर प्रकाश डालना। दूसरा खंड एक स्लाइडिंग संपर्क फोटोवोल्टिक ट्राइबोइलेक्ट्रिक नैनोजेनरेटर (एससी-पीटीईएनजी) के डिजाइन, निर्माण और अनुकूलन से संबंधित है, एक उपकरण जो यांत्रिक घर्षण और बाहरी प्रकाश से ऊर्जा उत्पन्न करता है।

थीसिस का दूसरा घटक पहनने योग्य उपकरणों के लिए TENG अनुप्रयोगों के लिए पॉलिमर सामग्री का उपयोग करने के अवसरों का पता लगाता है। चार्ज ट्रांसफर की सुविधा के लिए, मल्टीवॉल कार्बन नैनोट्यूब (एमडब्ल्यूसीएनटी) के साथ डोप किए गए इलेक्ट्रोस्पून पॉलीएक्रिलोनिट्राइल (पैन) का उपयोग करके, परतों के विभिन्न संयोजनों में स्टैक करके ट्राइबोइलेक्ट्रिक प्रदर्शन की जांच की गई। पैन को छोड़कर, लचीले उपकरणों को लक्षित करने वाले उपरोक्त अनुप्रयोगों के लिए पॉलीडिमिथाइलसिलोक्सेन (पीडीएमएस) जैसे अकार्बनिक पॉलिमर का भी पता लगाया गया है। दोनों पॉलिमर ने ऊर्जा रूपांतरण दक्षता और विद्युत उत्पादन प्रदर्शन में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि दिखाई। पीडीएमएस में समग्र विद्युत प्रदर्शन को बेहतर बनाने के लिए मैक्स चरण जैसे प्रवाहकीय भराव का उपयोग किया गया था।

तीसरा घटक दो अर्धचालक ( GaAs और Si p-n जंक्शन) और अर्धचालक धातु जंक्शन (Cu/Al के साथ GaAs और Si ) में ऊर्जा संचयन में ट्राइबो और फोटोवोल्टिक प्रभाव दोनों के सहक्रियात्मक प्रभाव का पता लगाता है। सेमीकंडक्टर बैंडगैप की गहन जांच से TENG प्रदर्शन को बढ़ाने के लिए अनुरूपित नैनोस्ट्रक्चर की संभावना का पता चलता है, जो अधिक कुशल और टिकाऊ ऊर्जा संचयन प्रणालियों की दिशा में एक संभावित मार्ग का संकेत

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देता है।

मुख्य शब्द: ट्राइबोइलेक्ट्रिक नैनोजेनरेटर, ऊर्जा संचयन, पॉलीएक्रिलोनिट्राइल, मल्टीवॉल कार्बन नैनोट्यूब, पॉलीडिमिथाइलसिलोक्सेन, मैक्स चरण, सेमीकंडक्टर, स्व-संचालित पहनने योग्य सिस्टम, स्पर्श संवेदन।

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## List of Abbreviation

|                         |                                         |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>AC</b>               | Alternating Current                     |
| <b>AFM</b>              | Atomic Force Microscopy                 |
| <b>ATR</b>              | Attenuated Total Reflectance            |
| <b>Au</b>               | Gold                                    |
| <b>CB</b>               | Carbon Black                            |
| <b>CFs</b>              | Cigarette Filters                       |
| <b>CNT</b>              | Carbon Nanotube                         |
| <b>CPD</b>              | Contact Potential Difference            |
| <b>CS</b>               | Contact Separation                      |
| <b>DMF</b>              | Dimethylformamide                       |
| <b>FEM</b>              | Finite Element Method                   |
| <b>FOM</b>              | Figures of Merit                        |
| <b>FOM<sub>P</sub></b>  | Performance Figure of Merit             |
| <b>FOM<sub>S</sub></b>  | Structural Figure of Merit              |
| <b>FOM<sub>m</sub></b>  | Material Figure of Merit                |
| <b>FOM<sub>nm</sub></b> | Normalized Material Figure of Merit     |
| <b>FTIR</b>             | Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy |
| <b>GQD</b>              | Graphene Quantum Dots                   |
| <b>HCS</b>              | Horizontal Contact Separation           |
| <b>HMI</b>              | Human Machine Interaction               |
| <b>HOMO</b>             | Highest Occupied Molecular Orbital      |

|                              |                                          |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>ICSD</b>                  | International Crystal Structure Database |
| <b>IoT</b>                   | Internet of Things                       |
| <b>KPFM</b>                  | Kelvin Probe Force Microscopy            |
| <b>LED</b>                   | Light Emitting Diode                     |
| <b>LUMO</b>                  | Lowest Unoccupied Molecular Orbital      |
| <b>MDO</b>                   | Mixed Domain Oscilloscope                |
| <b>MS</b>                    | Metal Semiconductor                      |
| <b>MWCNT</b>                 | Multiwall Carbon Nanotube                |
| <b>n-GaAs</b>                | N-type Gallium Arsenide                  |
| <b>NGs</b>                   | Nanogenerators                           |
| <b>P-TENG</b>                | Photovoltaic Triboelectric Nanogenerator |
| <b>PAN</b>                   | Polyacrylonitrile                        |
| <b>PCB</b>                   | Printed Circuit Board                    |
| <b>PCE</b>                   | Power Conversion Efficiency              |
| <b><math>Pd_{max}</math></b> | Maximum Power Density                    |
| <b>PDMS</b>                  | Polydimethylsiloxane                     |
| <b>PLC</b>                   | Programmable Logic Controller            |
| <b>PMC</b>                   | PAN-MWCNT Composite                      |
| <b>PMxC</b>                  | PDMS-MAX Phase Composite                 |
| <b>PTFE</b>                  | Polytetrafluoroethylene                  |
| <b>PV</b>                    | Photovoltaic                             |
| <b>PVAc</b>                  | Polyvinyl Acetate                        |
| <b>rGO</b>                   | Graphene Oxides                          |
| <b>SCS</b>                   | Sliding Contact Separation               |
| <b>TEGs</b>                  | Triboelectric Generator                  |
| <b>TEM</b>                   | Transmission Electron Microscopy         |
| <b>TENG</b>                  | Triboelectric Nanogenerator              |

|                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>TGA</b>             | Thermogravimetric Analysis |
| <b>TiO<sub>2</sub></b> | Titanium Dioxide           |
| <b>TVNG</b>            | Tribovoltaic Nanogenerator |
| <b>XRD</b>             | X-ray Diffraction          |

## List of Symbols

|                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| $I_{sc}$                             | Short circuit current                 |
| $Q$                                  | Transferred free charge               |
| $S$                                  | Contact area                          |
| $\varepsilon_{r1}, \varepsilon_{r2}$ | Relative permittivity of tribo layers |
| $\varepsilon_0$                      | Air permittivity                      |
| $x(t)$                               | Separation distance                   |
| $v(t)$                               | Vibrational speed                     |
| $\sigma_T$                           | Tribo charge density                  |
| $\phi$                               | Work function                         |
| $V_{OC}$                             | Open circuit voltage                  |
| $D$                                  | Displacement current                  |
| $Al$                                 | Aluminum                              |
| $Cu$                                 | Copper                                |
| $\sigma$                             | Surface charge                        |
| $Q_{SC}$                             | Charge density                        |
| $\varepsilon'$                       | Dielectric constant                   |
| $\varepsilon''$                      | Dielectric loss                       |
| $\kappa'$                            | Conductance                           |
| $\varepsilon$                        | Permittivity of material              |
| $I_{drift}$                          | Drift current                         |
| $I_{diff}$                           | Diffusion current                     |
| $E$                                  | Electric field                        |
| $q$                                  | Electric charge                       |
| $n$                                  | Electron doping density               |
| $D_n$                                | Diffusion constant                    |

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| $c$             | Capacitance                         |
| $Z$             | Impedance                           |
| $R_L$           | Output resistive load               |
| $X_C$           | Capacitive reactance                |
| $\varepsilon_0$ | Permittivity of vacuum              |
| $x_{\max}$      | Maximum gap between the TENG layers |
| $E_m$           | Maximum input energy                |
| $m$             | Mass                                |
| $V$             | Velocity                            |
| $\sigma_s$      | Surface charge density              |
| $D$             | Electric flux density               |
| $\rho_v$        | Volumetric charge density           |
| $P_{d\max}$     | Maximum power density               |

## List of Materials Properties

| Physical                      | Materials               |                       |                   |               |         |           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|-----------|
| Properties                    | PDMS                    | MWCNT                 | MAX phase         | PAN           | Silicon | n-GaAs    |
| Chemical Formula              | $(C_2H_6OSi)_n$         | $C_xH_y$              | $Ti_3AlC_2$       | $(C_3H_3N)_n$ | -       | -         |
| Molecular Weight (g/mol)      | 95,000                  | 12.01                 | 194.60            | 83.12         | 28.0    | 145       |
| Dielectric Constant           | 3-40                    | 200-290               | 8-15              | 4.2-5.5       | 11.7    | 12.85     |
| Electrical Conductivity (S/m) | $10^{-14}$ - $10^{-16}$ | $2.73 \times 10^{-3}$ | $3.2 \times 10^6$ | $10^{-2}$     | $10^3$  | $10^{-6}$ |
| Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> )  | 0.965                   | 1.7-2.1               | 2.36              | 1.184         | 2.3     | 5.3       |