

SILVER NANOPARTICLE DISPERSIONS FOR ANTIMICROBIAL FINISHING OF TEXTILES

by

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**Dedicated to my parents, my family, friends and to
all my teachers**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled '**Silver Nanoparticle Dispersions for Antimicrobial Finishing of Textiles**', being submitted by **Ms. Sangita Paul** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under our guidance and supervision and fulfilled the requirements for submission of the thesis which has attained the standard required for a Ph.D. degree of this institute.

The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or in full, to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

Silver is a known antimicrobial agent since ancient times. Silver nanoparticles (AgNPs) show efficient antimicrobial property due to their large surface area, which provides better contact with microorganisms. The surface activity and colour (optical properties) of the AgNPs is dependent on their size, shape, size distribution and chemical–physical environment. The antibacterial activity of AgNPs was also recognized to be related to their shape and size. For effective antimicrobial activity (i.e. > 80%) on textile substrates, finishes based on silver nanoparticles (usually spherical) are applied on textiles/substrates in concentrations from 5 ppm to 350 ppm and even as high as 1000 ppm. This imparts high yellowness index and patchy appearance to the treated fabric which is aesthetically undesirable. Further, most of these silver nanoparticles (AgNPs) are available in dispersion form, which are stable for a limited period. This limits commercial application of antimicrobial silver based finish. Moreover, the reproducibility of the colour, particle size and stability of the dispersion is an issue. Further, AgNP treated fabrics are either not durable to washing or they show only acceptable wash durability to mild washing conditions.

In this study, AgNP dispersions were synthesized via chemical reduction method in an aqueous medium in the presence of shape directing agents. The effect of concentration of reducing agent and temperature of synthesis was investigated and the two parameters were found to have profound effect on the shape and size of AgNPs. Tuning of borohydride concentration and synthesis temperature in a narrow range could yield anisotropic AgNPs of peak value of average size ~3 nm, which is the smallest reported till date. Similarly, isotropic AgNPs of peak value of average size ~2.6 nm could also be obtained. The AgNP dispersions obtained under the study were extremely stable to different pH conditions, accelerated gravity and high temperature, which gave the dispersions a shelf life of over 2 years under normal

room conditions. AgNP dispersions also had good compatibility with different auxiliaries used in finishing formulations.

Antimicrobial activity (AM) of AgNPs is usually attributed to their shape and size. As-prepared anisotropic AgNPs, having comparatively larger size, showed higher AM activity (MBC value 0.09-0.1 ppm) than the spherical AgNPs of smaller size (MBC value 0.2-0.25 ppm) indicating higher activity of anisotropic shapes. However, detailed investigations revealed that the AM activity is greatly influenced by the clustering behaviour of AgNPs, which in turn is affected by the shape of the AgNPs. Use of suitable surfactants in appropriate concentrations could enhance the AM activities of both the AgNP dispersions in such a way that AM activity could be directly related to the available surface area of the AgNPs in dispersion. The MBC values of 0.055 ppm and 0.025 ppm could be obtained for well dispersed anisotropic and isotropic AgNPs, respectively. These values are the lowest ever reported in the literature for the two types of AgNP dispersions. The results showed that contrary to the earlier belief, the different AM activities shown by AgNPs of different shapes are influenced more by their clustering behaviour rather than their shapes.

The as-synthesized AgNPs were applied to different textile substrates, such as cotton, A. vera/cotton union fabrics, nylon and wool, and fixed by curing them at different temperatures. It was found that AgNPs could adhere well when fixed at temperatures higher than 120 °C. The AM activity could be retained to a great extent even after 20 home laundry washes. The result has significance due to the fact that these particles could be fixed without the use of any binder.

The application of AgNP dispersions at concentrations as low as 0.1 ppm could result in high AM activity in the range of 98-100%.

The anisotropic AgNPs having optical appearance of blue colour, when applied to textile substrate, could result in optical brightening of the substrates in addition to providing high AM activity. Also, due to the high AM activity of these dispersions, isotropic AgNPs could be applied at very low concentrations to yield antimicrobial fabrics with high aesthetics and low yellowness index.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	Page No
Certificate	i
Acknowledgement	iii
Abstract	v
List of Figures	xiii
List of Tables	xxiv
List of Symbols and abbreviations	xxvi
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Literature Review	3
1.2.1 An overview on the synthesis of AgNPs	3
1.2.2 Antimicrobial mechanism of AgNPs	7
1.2.3 Unique optical properties of AgNPs	8
1.2.4 Shape-controlled synthesis of AgNPs	10
1.2.5 Effect of different surfactants on properties of AgNPs dispersion	26
1.2.6 Application of AgNPs on textiles	27
1.2.7 Environmental issues or concerns of using AgNPs	29
1.3 Existing gaps in the literature and motivation for research	31
1.4 Objectives of the research	33
1.5 Organisation of the thesis	34
Chapter 2: Synthesis of AgNP dispersion of different shapes and sizes	

2.1	Introduction	37
2.2	Experimental	38
2.2.1	Materials	38
2.2.2	Synthesis of silver nanoparticle dispersion of different shapes	38
2.2.3	Conversion from ionic silver to AgNP particles	39
2.2.4	Characterization	39
2.2.5	Ageing of AgNP dispersions	40
2.3	Results and Discussion	40
2.3.1	Effect of sodium borohydride concentration	40
2.3.2	Effect of temperature	45
a	Blue region	46
b	Yellow region	49
2.3.3	Size and shape analysis of AgNPs	52

Chapter 3: Characteristics of AgNP dispersions

3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Experimental	57
3.2.1	Materials	57
3.2.2	Synthesis of AgNP dispersion of different shapes	58
3.2.3	Characterizations	58
3.3	Results and Discussion	59
3.3.1	Stability under different pH conditions	59
3.3.2	Effect of ageing at high temperature	61
3.3.3	Effect of storage time	63
3.3.4	Stability under accelerated gravity (g) conditions	66

3.3.5	Effect on dilution with tap water	71
3.3.6	Compatibility with different types of surfactants	71
3.3.7	Compatibility with binders	71

Chapter 4: Aggregation behaviour of different shaped AgNPs in aqueous media and its effect on antimicrobial activity

4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	Experimental	74
4.2.1	Materials	74
4.2.2	Synthesis of anisotropic and isotropic AgNP dispersions	74
4.2.3	Assessment of antibacterial activity	75
4.2.4	Characterization	76
4.3	Results and Discussion	76
4.3.1	Characterization of as-synthesised AgNPs for shape and size	76
4.3.2	Antimicrobial activity of as-synthesized AgNPs of different shapes	81
4.3.3	AM activity of as-synthesized AgNPs and effect of type and concentration of surfactants on dispersibility	83
4.3.4	Assessment of AM activity of AgNP dispersions with addition of surfactants	93

Chapter 5: Application and functionality of AgNPs on textile substrates

5.1	Introduction	101
5.2	Experimental	102
5.2.1	Materials	102
5.2.2	Mild Scouring	102

5.2.3	Scouring with sodium hydroxide	103
5.2.4	Peroxide bleaching	103
5.2.5	Application of AgNP dispersion on fabric	103
5.2.6	Assessment of antibacterial activity	104
5.2.7	Durability Test	105
5.2.8	Characterization	105
5.3	Results and Discussion	106
5.3.1	Cotton fabric	106
5.3.1a	Appearance of AgNPs treated fabric	106
5.3.1b	Morphology of AgNPs treated cotton substrate	107
5.3.1c	Effect of fixation temperature on durability of AM activity of cotton treated with AgNPs	110
5.3.2	A. vera fibre and A. vera/cotton union fabric	121
5.3.2a	Morphology of A. vera fibres and its union fabrics	122
5.3.2b	Antimicrobial activity of A. vera fibres and A.vera/cotton union fabric	126
b(i)	Qualitative assessment	126
b(ii)	Quantitative assessment	128
5.3.3	Nylon fabric	131
5.3.3a	Appearance of AgNPs treated fabric	131
5.3.3b	Morphology of AgNPs treated nylon substrate	132
5.3.3c	AM activity of nylon treated with AgNPs	135
5.3.4	Wool fabric	137
5.3.4a	Appearance of AgNPs treated fabric	137

5.3.4b	Morphology of AgNPs treated wool substrate	138
5.3.4c	AM activity of wool treated with AgNPs	141
Chapter 6: Major Conclusion		145
References		153
Brief Bio-data of the author		161