

## **Contents**

List of Figures	: (vi)
List of Tables	: (xiii)
Nomenclature	: (xxi)
<b>1      Introduction</b>	<b>: 1</b>
1.1    Objectives	: 4
1.2    Scope of the work	: 5
<b>2      Review of literature</b>	<b>: 6</b>
2.1    Role of contact materials in electrical industry	: 6
2.2    Classification of contact materials	: 10
2.2.1    Classification on the basis of composition	: 10
2.2.2    Classification on the basis of current rating	: 13
2.2.3    Classification on the basis of specific performance	: 14
2.3    Manufacturing processes for silver-base contacts	: 18
2.3.1    Powder production	: 18
2.3.1.1    Silver powder production	: 18
2.3.1.2    Production of dispersoid constituent	: 19
2.3.1.3    Alloy powder production	: 20
2.3.2    Powder synthesis	: 20
2.3.2.1    Mixing or blending	: 20
2.3.2.2    Milling	: 21

2.3.2.3	Mechanical Alloying	: 22
2.3.2.4	Coprecipitation method	: 25
2.3.2.5	Freeze - drying route	: 28
2.3.2.6	Electroless coating method	: 29
2.3.2.7	Other miscellaneous processes	: 32
2.3.3	Consolidation processes	: 33
2.3.3.1	Internal oxidation processes	: 33
2.3.3.1.1	Internal oxidation of silver-base alloy	: 34
2.3.3.1.2	Internal oxidation of alloy powder (IOAP) process	: 37
2.3.3.2	Powder metallurgy (PM) processes	: 38
2.4	Property, testing and evaluation of contacts	: 43
2.4.1	Physical properties	: 43
2.4.2	Electrical contact properties including life testing	: 46
2.5	Design and testing aspects of different contact testing set - ups	: 55
2.6	Effect of minor alloying additions on performance of electrical contacts	: 60
2.6.1	Alloying additions in Ag-CdO systems	: 63
2.6.2	Alloying additions in Ag-SnO <sub>2</sub> systems	: 70
3.	<b>Experimental procedures</b>	: 72
3.1	Raw materials and system selection	: 72
3.2	Powder processing	: 77
3.2.1	Conventional PM route (blending)	: 77

3.2.2	Spray -coprecipitation process	: 78
3.2.3	Electroless-coating process	: 80
3.2.4	Freeze-drying route	: 80
3.2.5	Mechanical Alloying method	: 83
3.3	Powder characterization	: 83
3.3.1	Chemical analysis	: 83
3.3.2	Na and K estimation by AAS	: 86
3.3.3	X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis	: 86
3.3.4	Apparent density and tap density of powders	: 86
3.3.5	Particle size analysis	: 87
3.3.6	Powder morphology by SEM	: 87
3.3.7	ESCA analysis for electroless coated powders	: 88
3.3.8	DTA / TGA studies	: 88
3.4	Compaction and sintering of powders	: 89
3.5	Hot-pressing of sintered compacts	: 90
3.6	Structure and property evaluation	: 93
3.6.1	Density measurement	: 93
3.6.2	Microhardness estimation	: 93
3.6.3	Electrical conductivity measurement	: 94
3.6.4	Optical microscopy	: 94
3.6.5	Image analysis of final compacts	: 95
3.7	Effect of lithium addition to Ag-ZnO system	: 95

3.8	Life-testing of contacts	: 96
3.8.1	Design and fabrication of life-testing set-up for AC contacts	: 96
3.8.2	Design and fabrication of life-testing set-up for DC contacts	: 103
3.8.3	Life-testing of AC contacts	: 108
3.8.4	Life-testing of DC contacts	: 115
4.	<b>Results and discussion</b>	: 116
4.1	Powder characterization	: 116
4.1.1	Chemical analysis of powders	: 116
4.1.2	Na and K estimation	: 117
4.1.3	XRD analysis	: 117
4.1.4	Particle size analysis	: 127
4.1.5	Apparent and tap density of powders	: 130
4.1.6	Specific surface area of powders	: 144
4.1.7	Optical microscopy of MA powders	: 145
4.1.8	SEM morphology of powders	: 148
4.1.9	ESCA analysis of electroless-coated powders	: 159
4.1.10	DTA / TGA of powders	: 162
4.2	Compaction, sintering and hot-pressing of powders	: 164
4.2.1	Effect of compaction pressure on green and sintered density	: 164
4.2.2	Effect of sintering temperature on sintered density	: 167
4.2.3	Effect of sintering time on sintered density	: 169
4.2.4	Green density, sintered density and hot-pressed density of compacts	: 169

4.2.5	Microhardness of as-sintered and final hot-pressed compacts	: 173
4.2.6	Electrical conductivity of sintered and hot-pressed compacts	: 178
4.2.7	Effect of amount of oxide phase on electrical conductivity	: 179
4.3	Structural analysis of final compacts	: 180
4.3.1	Microstructural analysis	: 180
4.3.2	Quantitative structural evaluation by Image analysis	: 198
4.4	Effect of Li addition on properties of Ag-ZnO system	: 207
4.5	Electrical performance evaluation of contacts	: 212
4.5.1	Performance evaluation of Ag 7.1 ZnO and Ag10 CdO contacts	: 212
4.5.2	Performance evaluation of Ag 8.6 ZnO contacts	: 214
4.5.3	Performance evaluation of Ag 10.8 ZnO contacts	: 217
4.5.4	Performance evaluation of Ag 10.8 ZnO (MA) contacts	: 221
4.5.5	Performance evaluation of Ag 10.8 ZnO (MA) and Ag 15 CdO (MA) contacts in DC mode	: 224
5.	Conclusions	: 235
<b>Appendices</b>		
A1	Commercially important silver-base contact materials	: 239
A2	Toxicity data of cadmium and cadmium oxide	: 240
A3	Assembly language programme for AC testing of contacts	: 241
A4	Standards in electrical contact testing	: 243
A5	Publications from present research work	: 245
<b>References</b>		
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		
<b>Summary</b>		