

An Investigation of New Phase Diagram of Ag_2SO_4 - CaSO_4

Ravi V. Joat, Pravin S. Bodke, Shradha S. Binani, S. S. Wasnik

Abstract—A phase diagram of the Ag_2SO_4 - CaSO_4 (Silver sulphate – Calcium Sulphate) binaries system using conductivity, XRD (X-Ray Diffraction Technique) and DTA (Differential Thermal Analysis) data is constructed. The eutectic reaction (liquid \rightarrow α - Ag_2SO_4 + CaSO_4) is observed at 10 mole% CaSO_4 and 645°C. Room temperature solid solubility limit up to 5.27 mole % of Ca^{2+} in Ag_2SO_4 is set using X-ray powder diffraction and scanning electron microscopy results. All compositions beyond this limit are two-phase mixtures below and above the transition temperature ($\approx 416^\circ\text{C}$). The bulk conductivity, obtained following complex impedance spectroscopy, is found decreasing with increase in CaSO_4 content. Amongst other binary compositions, the 80 Ag_2SO_4 -20 CaSO_4 gave improved sinterability/packing density.

Keywords— Ag_2SO_4 - CaSO_4 (Silver sulphate–Calcium Sulphate) binaries system, XRD (X-Ray Diffraction Technique) and DTA(Differential Thermal Analysis).

I. INTRODUCTION

THE sulphate based solid electrolytes have found potential application in electrochemical devices [1], [2]. Particularly, Li_2SO_4 , Na_2SO_4 and Ag_2SO_4 based systems are potential materials from SO_x galvanic gas sensor viewpoint [2]. The first two materials have been studied extensively as compared to the latter one.

Amongst all the sulphates silver sulphate, a non-alkali metal is an exception that exhibits high Ag^+ conductivity. The high ionic conductivity, in spite of large size of Ag^+ (1.26\AA), has been suggested to be due to its high quadrupolar polarizability. The Ag_2SO_4 based solid electrolytes offer additional advantages from SO_x sensor application viewpoint [3]–[5]. Moreover, in these materials a major problem of cationic inter-diffusion between electrolyte and $\text{Ag-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4$ solid reference electrode does not remain valid for creating concentration gradients and so better long-term sensor operation stability [6]–[8].

Silver sulphate is a polymorphous compound. It undergoes a phase transition from the high temperature high conducting hexagonal α -phase (space group $p63/mmc$) to the low

temperature moderately conducting orthorhombic β -phase (space group $Fddd$) at 418°C [9]. The latter phase is isomorphic with the low temperature form of Na_2SO_4 [10]. The electrical conductivity of pure Ag_2SO_4 has been investigated in 1967 by Kvist [11]. In 1990 Liu et al have measured the ionic conductivity of Me_2SO_4 ($\text{Me} = \text{Li}, \text{Na}, \text{and K}$) and MSO_4 ($\text{M} = \text{Sr}, \text{Ca}$ and Ba) doped Ag_2SO_4 and subsequently, tested for their utility in the SO_2 gas sensor [12]. Electrical conductivity studies of mono-, di- and tri-valent cation doped Ag_2SO_4 have indicated that besides the valance of guest cation its size and electronic configuration also play important role in conductivity [13].

The multiphase sulphate based systems have been preferred in SO_2 gas sensor application due to their stable performance as compared to mono-phase. Moreover, the performance of sensor depends considerably on the magnitude of cationic conductivity, the phase and form along with the chemical and thermodynamical stability of solid electrolyte. Most of this information can easily be obtained from the binary-phase diagram and so they are important.

In 1907, Nacken has proposed the equilibrium phase diagrams of Ag_2SO_4 with mono-valent alkali sulphates (Me_2SO_4 where $\text{Me} = \text{Na}$ and K) using the results obtained towards thermal analysis [14]. In a systematic study, Takahashi et al have initially determined the conductivity and later constructed the binary phase diagrams with silver halides ($\text{AgX-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4$, where $\text{X} = \text{Cl and Br}$) with the help of transport number, differential thermal analysis and x-ray powder diffraction techniques [15]. A detailed investigation on Li_2SO_4 - Ag_2SO_4 binary phase diagram has been carried out by Oye [16]. Following an extensive work on Ag_2SO_4 - Me_2SO_4 ($\text{Me} = \text{Na}$ and K) Secco et al., in recent past, have proposed Ag_2SO_4 - Rb_2SO_4 binary phase diagram [17], [18]. According to these phase diagram Ag_2SO_4 forms solid solution in entire compositional range of binary system. Whereas, in Li_2SO_4 - Ag_2SO_4 system very limited two-phase region is available.

It is evident from the literature that so far a systematic investigation on the Ag_2SO_4 - MSO_4 ($\text{M} = \text{Sr}, \text{Ca}, \text{Ba}$) binary systems, which may be potential from SO_x gas sensor viewpoint, is lacking. All these factors have prompted us to investigate Ag_2SO_4 - CaSO_4 binary system, using electrical conductivity, differential scanning calorimetry, differential thermal analysis and x-ray powder diffraction techniques, constructing phase diagram to understand the phase and form of solid electrolyte belonging to this system in the vicinity of sensor operating temperature.

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II. EXPERIMENTAL

The initial ingredients Ag_2SO_4 and anhydrous CaSO_4 with purity greater than 99.9% were procured from E Merck. The above chemicals in $(100-x) \text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 - (x) \text{CaSO}_4$ (where x , -0.1, 2.5, 5.27, 7.57, 10, 20, ... 100) mole percent were mixed in an agate mortar under acetone for 2 hours. Well ground compositions were then transferred to translucent quartz ampoules and heated to the temperature 20°C above their respective melting point. The melt was allowed to cool, at the rate of $1.50^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$, to room temperature. On the other hand, the compositions with more than 60-mole % of CaSO_4 were prepared by fusing the well ground mixture at 800°C in silica ampoules so as to avoid thermal decomposition of silver sulphate. The ingots obtained by breaking the ampoules were finally pulverized to get fine powder. The entire procedure was carried out in a dark room so as to avoid photodecomposition of silver sulphate.

All samples were characterized using X-ray powder diffraction (XRD) (Philips PW 1700 diffractometer attached with PW 1710 controlling unit) using $\text{CuK}\alpha$ radiation at room temperature. Whereas, XRD patterns were recorded at 300 and 450°C for a few selected samples viz. 20, 40 and 60 mole % CaSO_4 added to Ag_2SO_4 . In order to set the room temperature solid solubility limit, diffraction patterns were recorded for 5.27 mol% CaSO_4 added to Ag_2SO_4 samples prepared by two different techniques viz. (i) initial ingredients Ag_2SO_4 and CaSO_4 in appropriate mole ratio were thoroughly mixed mechanically under acetone for 2 hours and (ii) melting the same thoroughly mixed composition followed by slow cooling the melt to room temperature. The information towards the solid-solid phase transition temperature, the melting point and the heat of transition were obtained by differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) and differential thermal analysis using Mettler TA 4000 DSC 25 and Mettler TA DTA, respectively (under inert atmosphere) at a cooling rate of $10^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$. The microstructures were examined with the help of scanning electron microscope (SEM) (Cambridge 250 mark - III stereoscan electron microscope).

The bulk conductivity of all samples, at various temperatures, was obtained following complex impedance spectroscopy as described elsewhere [19], [20].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. X-Ray Powder Diffraction (XRD)

A comparison of experimental d (\AA) and relative intensity I/I_0 of pure, $94.73\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}5.27\text{CaSO}_4$, $93\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}7\text{CaSO}_4$ and $90\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}10\text{CaSO}_4$ with those of the JCPDS (joint committee for powder diffraction standards) data of Ag_2SO_4 and CaSO_4 is given in Table I. It is seen that experimental characteristic d lines of mechanically mixed samples match closely with those of the JCPDS data for Ag_2SO_4 and CaSO_4 . On the other hand, all the experimental d values of $94.73\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}5.27\text{CaSO}_4$ sample prepared by melting are found to be in close agreement with those of JCPDS data for Ag_2SO_4 . No line(s) corresponding to CaSO_4 are seen in this composition. Similar results were found in the cases of CaSO_4 lower than 5.27

mole% added to Ag_2SO_4 . A close look at the Table I reveals appearance of a few weak characteristic lines corresponding to CaSO_4 in case of $93\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}7\text{CaSO}_4$. Furthermore, the number of characteristic lines due to CaSO_4 and their relative intensity are found to be increasing with increase in its concentration in Ag_2SO_4 .

In the X-ray powder diffraction results of two-phase mixture, the relative intensity (I/I_0) values of each phase depend, more or less, on their concentration [21]. The absence of characteristic line(s) corresponding to CaSO_4 for $x = 5.27$ indicates the formation of a solid solution. Beyond this, all compositions are two-phase ($\beta\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \beta\text{-CaSO}_4$) mixtures. The absence of any unidentified peak(s) rules out the possibility of formation of an intermediate phase in the entire binary system.

Notably, the high temperature XRD results revealed bi-phase mixtures of $\beta\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \beta\text{-CaSO}_4$ and $\alpha\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \beta\text{-CaSO}_4$ in the range from room temperature to 416°C and from 416 to 600°C , respectively. The lattice cell volume of Ag_2SO_4 , within solid solubility limit, obtained from X-ray diffraction data is projected in Table II. As seen the cell volume decrease with increase in CaSO_4 concentration indicating lattice contraction (Ca^{2+} is smaller than Ag^+). These results endorse the formation of solid solution.

B. Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)

The microstructure of 10, 20 and 30 mol% CaSO_4 added to Ag_2SO_4 clearly indicate the formation of two-phase mixture and in $80\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 - 20\text{CaSO}_4$ it shows denser packing as compared to other compositions.

C. Thermal Analysis (DSC/DTA)

A typical DTA thermogram of $80\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-}20\text{CaSO}_4$ is depicted in Fig. 1. The solid-solid phase transition temperature and the melting point are obtained from the onset of endothermic peak. It is worth mentioning here that the values of T_c obtained following DSC and DTA analyses for all samples were found in agreement within the accuracy of $\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$. Moreover, they were reproducible. A close look at the insert of Fig. 1 reveals a continuous decrease in the heat corresponding to solid-solid phase transition with an increase in CaSO_4 concentration in Ag_2SO_4 . This is due to the decrease in net content of latter in the samples indicating formation of two-phase mixtures.

A phase diagram of $\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4\text{-CaSO}_4$ binary system, constructed using above XRD and DTA/DSC data is shown in Fig. 2. The solid circles represent the thermal discontinuities obtained from DTA/DSC. Thermodynamic features present in this binary system are summarized as follows, (a) the solid-solid phase transformation ($\alpha\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 \rightarrow \beta\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4$) and melting point for Ag_2SO_4 are at 416 and 658°C , respectively, (b) the solid-solid phase transformation and melting point for CaSO_4 are at 1190 and 1450°C , respectively, (c) eutectic reaction (liquid $\rightarrow \alpha\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \text{CaSO}_4$) at 10 mole% CaSO_4 and 645°C (d) approximately 5 mole% CaSO_4 is soluble in $\beta\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4$ (e) two phase mixture of ($\beta\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \beta\text{-CaSO}_4$) exists between room temperature and 416°C , (f) two phase mixture

The maximum in conductivity at 7.57 mole%, corresponding to $\approx 7\%$ vacancies, is in good agreement with the reporting [23]. Since Ca^{2+} (0.99 Å) is smaller than Ag^+ (1.26 Å), the partial replacement of latter by former leads to an appreciable lattice contraction (Table II) in room temperature phase of Ag_2SO_4 . Hence, Ca^{2+} addition gives an additional vacancy with deeper potential well that offers large activation energy for Ag^+ migration. Therefore, as CaSO_4 content increases, conductivity decreases in low temperature phase.

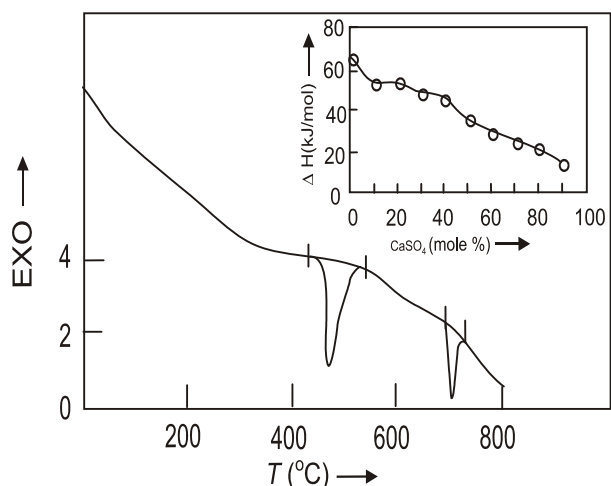


Fig. 1 DTA thermogram of 80 Ag_2SO_4 -20 CaSO_4 and insert variation of phase transition enthalpy with the addition of CaSO_4 in Ag_2SO_4

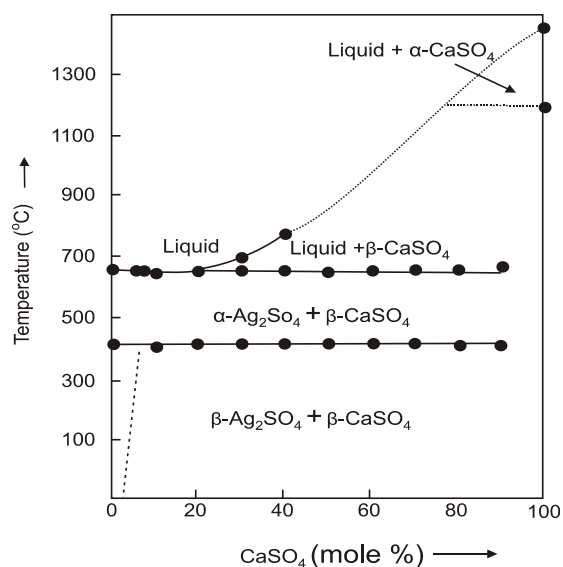


Fig. 2 The phase diagram for Ag_2SO_4 - CaSO_4 binary system. The solid circles represent thermal discontinuity as determined from differential thermal analysis. The indicated bi-phase regions are confirmed by x-ray diffraction. The broken line near Ag_2SO_4 end indicates the uncertainty of the solid solution range in this phase. The dotted line is expected liquidous curve.

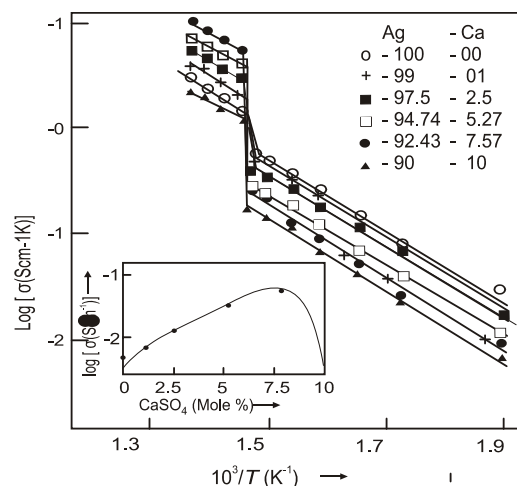


Fig. 3 $\log(\sigma T)$ versus $1000/T$ for $(1-x)\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 - (x)\text{CaSO}_4$ where $x = 0 - 10$. Insert indicates the variation of conductivity with CaSO_4 concentration.

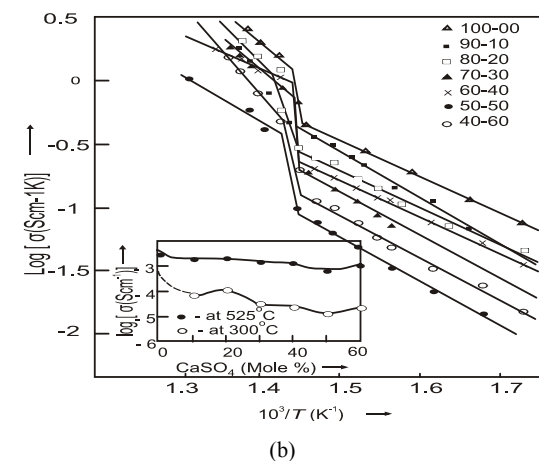
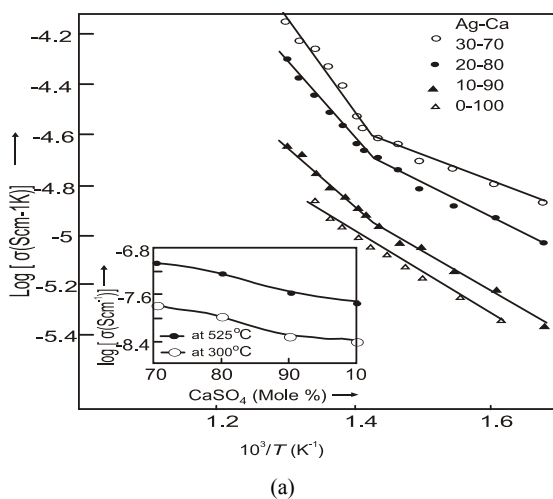


Fig. 4 (a) $\log(\sigma T)$ versus $1000/T$ for $(1-x)\text{Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 - (x)\text{CaSO}_4$ binary system with (a) $x = 10-60$ and (b) $x = 70-100$. Insert indicates variation of conductivity with CaSO_4 concentration.

IV. CONCLUSION

The CaSO_4 is sparingly soluble in both the hexagonal and the orthorhombic phases of Ag_2SO_4 and form bi-phase mixtures in entire binary system. The eutectic reaction (liquid $\rightarrow \alpha\text{-Ag}_2\text{SO}_4 + \text{CaSO}_4$) is observed at 10 mole% CaSO_4 and 645°C . The value of conductivity although decreased but 20 mole % CaSO_4 added to AgSO_4 is useful for Sox gas sensor application due to (i) its bi-phase nature at operating temperature, (ii) low activation enthalpy for ion migration, (iii) improved sinterability and (iv) good mechanical strength.

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