



## Conformally Polyaniline Coated Multiwalled Carbon Nanotubes: Synthesis and Characterization

### KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT** Conducting polymer composites are globally explored owing to their potential use in various applications such as organic light emitting diode, solar cells, corrosion protection and electromagnetic interference shielding. In this series, herein, we developed a strategy for conformal coating of polyaniline on multiwalled carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) for their potential use in strategic areas.  $\beta$ -Naphthalenesulphonic acid ( $\beta$ -NSA) was used as surfactant and dopant which offers the conformal coating on MWCNTs. Polyaniline (PANI)- MWCNTs composites have been prepared by chemical oxidative polymerization route whose conductivity lies in the range 17.21–81.7 S/cm. The TEM analysis of composites reveals the presence of thick and uniform coating of PANI over surface of MWCNT. The SEM of PCNT25 also revealed the nonporous nature of coatings, which can be used for selective incorporation of other nanoparticles. Morphology of PC indicates the incorporation of MWCNT in PANI matrix. Such engineered conformally polymer coated MWCNTs could be a promising candidate for next generation building block material in various applications.

### A. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, lots of research has been devoted on the designing of polymeric composites for their potential use in various applications in many devices like optoelectronic devices[1], electronic charge dissipation[2] super capacitors & superconductors[3, 4], OLEDs[5], plastic solar cells[6]electromagnetic interference shielding[7-9]. Conducting polymers, such as polypyrrole, polyaniline, etc., consisted of conjugated electronic structures have received considerable attention in the field of material science due to a lot of promising technological applications[10-14]. Coatings on the surface of metals by polymeric materials have been widely used in industries for the protection of these materials against corrosion [15, 16]. The polymeric materials owing to their light weight, low cost, easy shaping, tunable conductivity can find applications in high tech devices[17]. Polymer composites with exotic carbon such as carbon particles, carbon fibers (CF), graphene, graphite, carbon nanotube (CNTs [18, 19]), carbon fiber [20]etc have been widely used for EMI shielding [12, 21, 22]. Therefore, the lightweight polymer composites have gained much popularity and search of suitable lightweight materials with all functionality is the main focus areas among global research groups[23-26]. ICPs due their extended  $\pi$ -conjugated system have conductivity in semiconductor regime. Applications of ICPs and their composites (or blends) owing to the higher electrical conductivity of these polymers in doped states have been extensively studied by many researchers [27-29]. These materials unite high conductivity, low density & thereby light weight, corrosion resistance with exclusive shielding mechanism of absorption differing from the reflection one for metals and carbons[30] which is ideal for military applications.

Amongst all ICPs polyaniline (PANI) is recognized as an intractable polymer due to its environment stability and unique protonic conduction mechanism[31, 32]. Many re-

search groups have presented the improved processability of PANI using different surfactant/dopant and mechanical properties by modifying the morphology (spherical/tubular) of the PANI. The protonation of PANI with organic sulphonic acids and macro molecules have been reported for the preparation of electrically conducting polymers with improved processability[33-35].

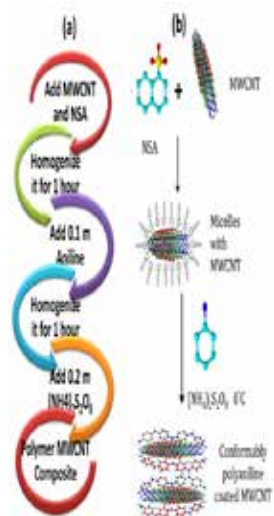
It is well established that MWCNTs independently as well as in composite form are potentially used in hi-tech applications [18, 36, 37]. Because of their unique structural properties, high aspect ratio and good mechanical strength carbon nanotubes have been investigated for many potential applications [38-40]. Particularly, their fascinating electrical and mechanical properties offer a new arena for the development of advanced engineering materials [41, 42]. The small diameter, high aspect ratio (with values typically higher than 1000:1 and reaching as high as 2,500,000:1), high conductivity, and mechanical strength of CNT, make them an excellent option for creating conductive composites for high-performance composites at low filling [19, 23]. The mechanical properties of CNT have drawn intense interest in their potential for use as reinforcements in composite materials. As a result of these properties, CNT reinforcements are expected to produce significantly stronger and tougher composites than traditional reinforcing materials.

In this study, we attempt to design the uniform conformal coating of PANI on MWCNT surface by chemical synthesis. The obtained results of composite are focused on the conductivity, surface morphology and gross structural/microstructural analysis of MWCNT/PANI two phase systems. Moreover, the thermal stability of the composite system has been explored through thermogravimetric analysis. However, to the best of our knowledge, this type of con-

formal uniform polymer coating on MWCNT has not been thoroughly explored yet.

## B. EXPERIMENTAL

The conformally PANI coated MWCNT (PCs) have been prepared by in-situ emulsion polymerization using  $\beta$ -NSA as anionic surfactant molecule which also acts as a dopant. Due to its amphiphilic and surfactant nature,  $\beta$ -NSA molecule (with hydrophilic  $\text{SO}_3\text{H}$  head and hydrophobic tail) easily forms micelles in aqueous solution. First MWCNTs were dispersed in  $\beta$ -NSA aqueous solution before polymerization. As a result, micelles containing MWCNT particles form in the reaction, these micelles have core-shell structure as shown in Figure 1 b. 0.1 M aniline monomer was added to above emulsion and homogenized for another 1-h. During this, aniline reacts with  $\beta$ -NSA to form aniline/ $\beta$ -NSA micelles which act as a soft template. Afterward the homogenized mixture was transferred to reactor, pre-cooled to  $0^\circ\text{C}$ . Polymerization was initiated by drop wise addition of ammonium peroxydisulfate (APS) and allowed continuous stirring at  $0^\circ\text{C}$  under. During this process the formed anilinium cations might be absorbed on the plane of these core-shell micelles. Furthermore, free aniline present in the solution might diffuse into the micelles to form aniline-filled micelles. Therefore, these micelles (with or without MWCNTs) act as soft templates for the formation of the tube like structure. The attached  $-\text{SO}_3\text{H}$  groups impart additional dopant property to  $\beta$ -NSA. As the polymerization advances, the micelles containing RF particles would become bigger spheres and take the shape of tubes/rods by elongation. Therefore, subsequent oxidation of aniline results radical cations which combine with another unit to form neutral dimer. Further oxidation of Dimer leads to the formation of a trimer, tetramer and finally the formation of polymer composites. Figure 1 discussed self-assembly process resulting in tube like structure of PANI and PCs composite [33, 34] and suggests that MWCNT particles should be situated inside the polymer tubes. Schematic representation of incorporation of MWCNT into PANI matrix is given in this scheme which suggests that MWCNT embedded in PANI tubes leads to the formation of PANI composites which has better electrical and magnetic properties. The presence of rGO containing iron oxide nano particles in polymer matrix has been confirmed by the XRD of the composites. The presence of MWCNT matrix has been confirmed by TEM.

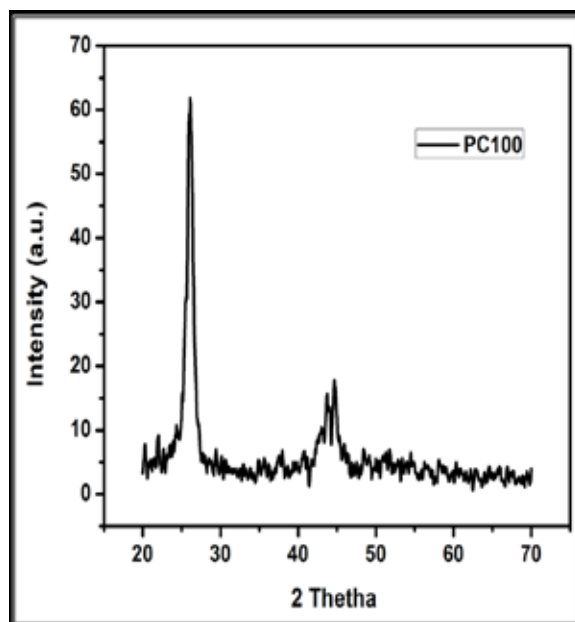


**Figure 1.** (a) Flow chart of the synthesis procedure of PANI composite and (b) Schematic representation of the PANI/MWCNT (PCs) composite

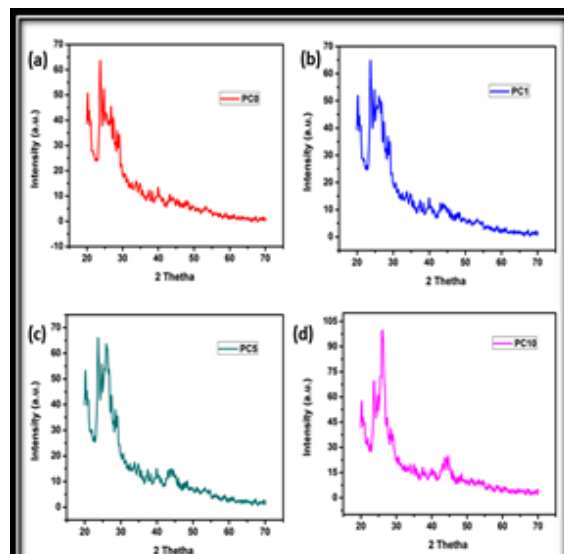
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### XRD Analysis

Figure 2 and 3 show the XRD patterns of pure MWCNT, PANI and PANI-MWCNT nanocomposites. The pure MWCNT (PC100) shows a sharp peak centered on  $2\theta$  value of  $26^\circ$  which corresponds to the (002) planes of MWCNT. The peaks around  $43^\circ$  are due to the (110) and (100) graphitic planes plus small amount of catalyst particle encapsulated inside the walls of the MWCNTs[43]. The characteristic peaks of the doped PANI (PCNT0) are observed around  $2\theta$  values of  $15^\circ$ ,  $20^\circ$ ,  $25^\circ$ ,  $30^\circ$  corresponding to (0 1 1), (0 2 0), (2 0 0) and (0 2 2) reflections of emeraldine salt form. The composites show the characteristic peaks of both PANI and MWCNT without any additional bands indicating absence of covalent interactions between the phases[7]. As the MWCNT content increases, the relative intensity of characteristic bands of PANI decreases whereas bands of MWCNT become more prominent. The slight shifting in the peak positions may be ascribed to charge transfer interactions between PANI and MWCNTs leading to variations in chain packing and configurations.



**Figure 2.** XRD pattern of pure MWCNT (PC100).



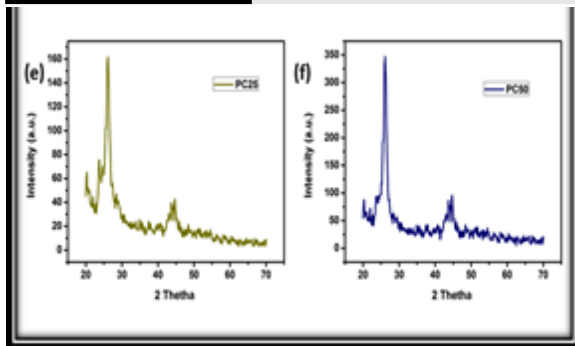


Figure 3. XRD pattern of PANI/MWCNT composite containing different wt% of MWCNT in PANI matrix.

### THERMOGRAVIMETRIC ANALYSIS

Figure 4 shows the thermo-gravimetric curves (TG) of pure MWCNT, PANI and their composites. The materials were heated from 25 to 900°C under a constant heating rate of 10°C/min and in the inert atmosphere of nitrogen gas (60 ml/min). The MWCNT has excellent thermal stability up to 900°C and weight loss was only 1.5%. The TGA curve of PCs indicated, first weight loss at 110°C may be attributed to the loss of water and other volatiles species. The weight loss in the second step at about 280°C involves the loss of phosphate ions as well as onset of degradation of polyaniline backbone. The increasing MWCNT content slightly affects the decomposition temperature (DT) which increases from 280°C (PANI) to 295°C (PC). The third weight loss step between 300 to 800°C can be ascribed to the complete degradation of dopant as well as polymeric backbone. The composites show little weight loss between the 800-900°C and the residue remaining in this region gives an approximate estimate of filler content. Therefore, the final weight of MWCNT incorporated in polymer was found to 21%. The results indicate that actually incorporated MWCNT fraction is less than the ratio of aniline: MWCNT taken in the initial reaction mass. The TGA data clarify that these composites are thermally stability up to 295°C, which envisages them as a good candidate for melt blending with conventional thermoplastics like polyethylene, polypropylene, polystyrene etc.

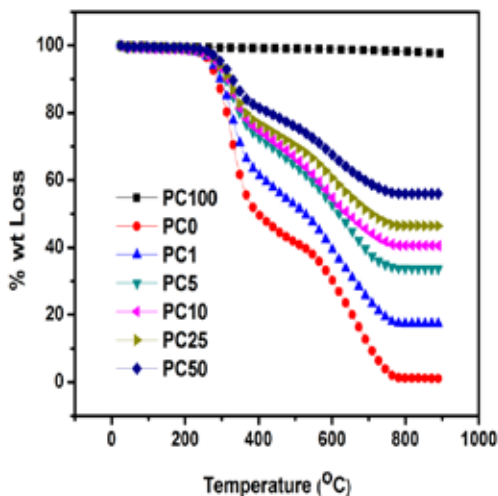


Figure 4. Thermal gravimetric analysis of PANI and its composite PC0, PC5, PC10, PC25 and PC50 having 0, 5, 10, 25 and 50 wt% MWCNT respectively.

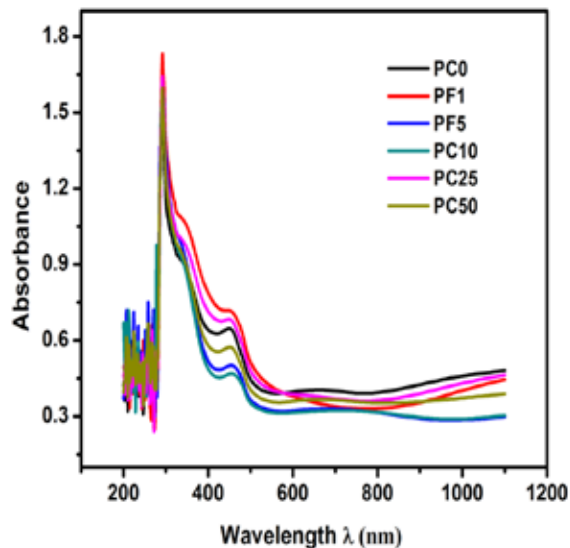


Figure 5. UV-Visible spectra PANI and its composite PC0, PC5, PC10, PC25 and PC50 having 0, 5, 10, 25 and 50 wt% MWCNT respectively.

### ELECTRICAL CONDUCTIVITY

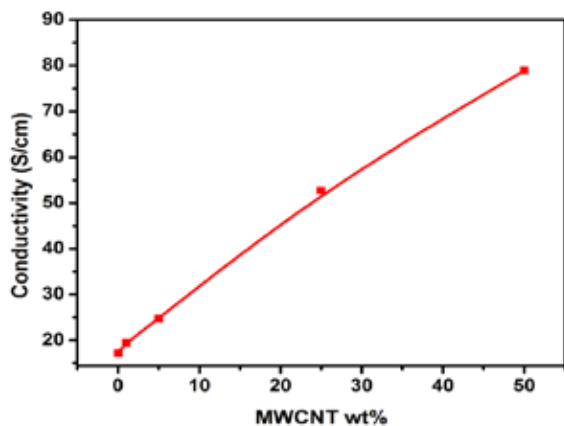
The room temperature current–voltage (*I*–*V*) characteristics were measured and resistance values were obtained from the slope of these plots. The electrical conductivities of the pellets can be calculated by considering the sample dimensions as:

$$R = \rho L/A \quad (1)$$

where “*L*” is the length of the pellet, “*R*” is resistance and “*A*” is cross-sectional area of the pellets normal to direction of current flow.

The conductivity (Figure 6) was found to exhibit continuous increase with the increase in the MWCNT content. The high conductivities of these composites are due to micrometer long MWCNTs as core and PANI coating as shell (see Fig. 8 SEM images). Measurement of electrical conductivity of terphenyl and quaterphenyl films revealed that organic nanocrystallites play interface nano trapping levels effectively interacting with phonon subsystems. These states may be principal for the achievement of conductivities varying in the large range of parameters. Introduction of MWCNT to PANI enhances the electrical properties by facilitating the charge transfer processes between the two components. Due to their highly conducting nature as well as high aspect ratio, the nanotubes can act as interconnecting bridge between the various conducting grains of the polyaniline, which are coated over individual MWCNTs. This increases the coherence or coupling between the chains and leads to enhancement of interchain transport. Further, the PANI–NSA coating is likely to facilitate the intertube charge transport by reducing the interfacial contact and tunneling resistances. This may be explained on the basis of cushioning effect of softer polyaniline coating over tubes which deforms easily during the pellet formation improving the surface contacts of coated tubes. This synergistic effect of two complementing phases (i.e. PANI and MWCNT) leads to conductivity of 81.7 S cm<sup>-1</sup> in case of PCNT50, which is even better than bulk conductivity of either phase alone, i.e. control MWCNT (PC100, 102.4 S cm<sup>-1</sup>) or pure PANI (PC0, 17.21 S cm<sup>-1</sup>). The lower

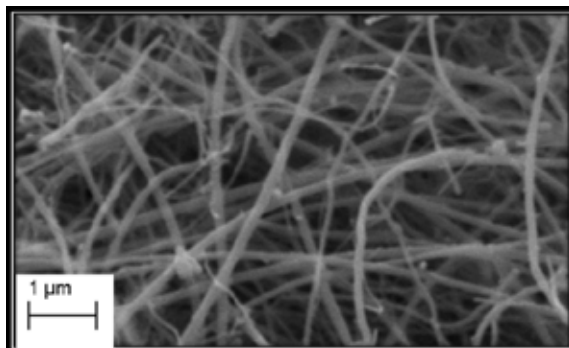
conductivity of bulk MWCNT pellet may be due to the fact that pressed pellets of uncoated MWCNTs contain highly entangled tubes (SEM Fig. 9) which even after pelletization represents poorly packed system. Therefore, the reduced intertubular charge transport was responsible for observed low bulk conductivities. The uniform coating of PANI reduces the disorder/voids in composites and improves intertubular charge transport leading to enhanced electrical properties.



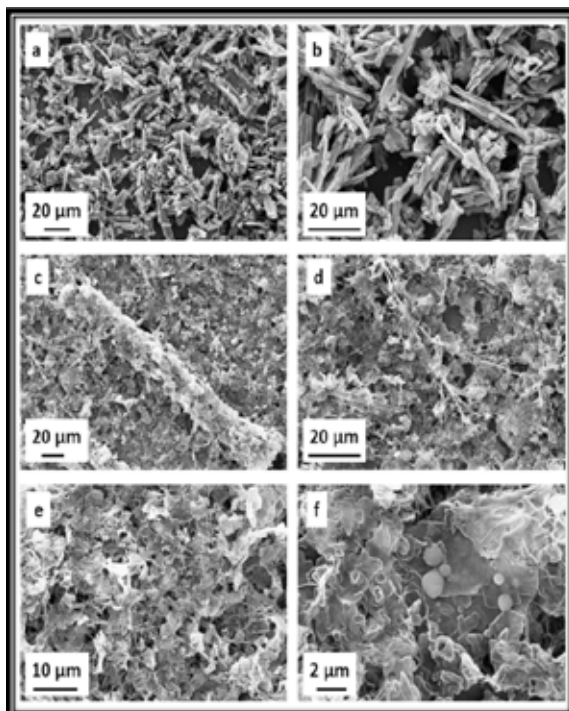
**Figure 6.** Variation of room temperature electrical conductivity of PANI-MWCNT nanocomposites with different loading levels of MWCNT

#### Surface Morphology And Microstructural Analysis-

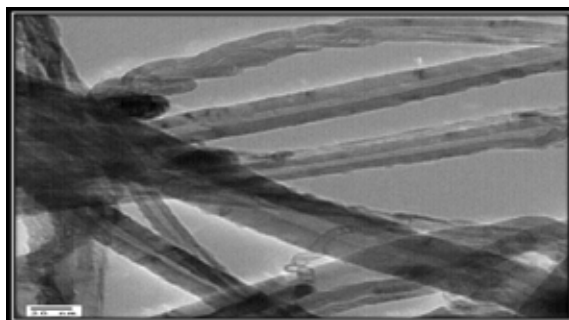
Figure 7 shows the SEM micrograph of MWCNTs. The scanning electron micrographs of particles, PANI and PCs are shown in Figure 8 shows the SEM images of MWCNT, PANI and PANI-MWCNT nanocomposites. These micrographs show that PCNT0 (Figure 8a, b) exists as highly agglomerated globular particles whereas as grown MWCNTs (PCNT100) are entangled tubules (Figure 8) with diameter in the range of 10–60 nm and their lengths ranging in several microns. The small size of the nanotubes having high specific surface area provides large number of sorption sites to aniline monomer which can polymerize to form coating over the nanotubes. At very low concentration of MWCNTs, PANI coated tubes exist as globular agglomerates (Figure 8b). This may be attributed to the large proportion of bulk/solution polymerized PANI (existing in agglomerated form) as compared to aniline polymerized over MWCNT surface. However, with the increase in MWCNT content, there is systematic change in morphology from highly aggregated globules (Figure 9b) towards uniformly coated tubules (Figure 8e). Therefore, at certain critical concentration of MWCNT (in our case achieved in PCNT25) the polymerization takes place exclusively on surface of MWCNT with minimal bulk polymerization and agglomeration effects. TEM of pure MWCNT clearly shows that tubes are multiwalled with outer diameter in the range of 10–60 nm and their lengths ranging in several microns as observed in previous studies[44]. The TEM of the PANI composite (Figure 8 c-f) shows the presence of thick and uniform coating of PANI over surface of MWCNT. The SEM of PCNT25 also revealed the nanoporous nature of coatings, which can be used for selective incorporation of other nanoparticles MWCNT showed tubular morphology and PANI also showed tubular morphology. Morphology of PC indicates the incorporation of MWCNT in PANI matrix. SEM image of PSC revealed that the entrapment of MWCNT in the tubular space of PANI matrix during insitu polymerisation of polyaniline.



**Figure 7.** SEM micrographs of pristine multi-walled carbon nanotube synthesised by CVD technique.



**Figure 8.** SEM micrographs powder sample of (a) and (b) showing PANI tubes, (c), (d), (e) & (f) PANI MWCNT composites.



**Figure 9.** TEM image of MWCNT composite.

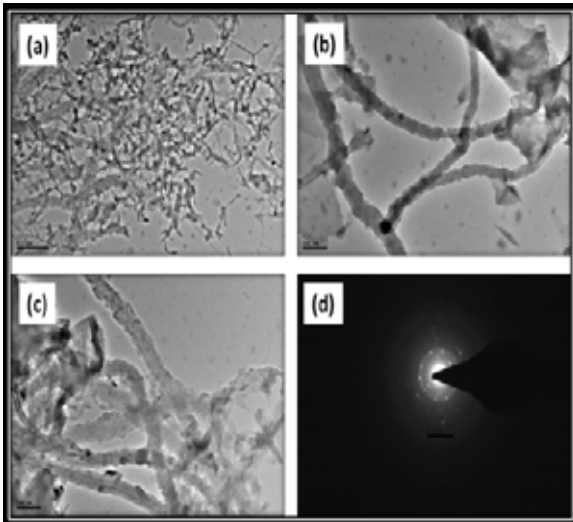


Figure 10. TEM image of PANI-MWCNT composite.

## CONCLUSIONS

Highly conducting PANI-MWCNT composites were prepared by in situ polymerization. The XRD show systematic shifting in the positions of characteristic bands and peaks of PANI. This suggests significant interactions between the MWCNT and PANI. The SEM and TEM pictures show

thick and uniform coating of PANI over surface of individual MWCNTs. Based on observed morphological features, we have suggested the probable formation mechanism of these composites. At very low concentration of MWCNTs, PANI coated tubes exist as globular agglomerates (PCNT5). However, at certain critical concentration of MWCNT (in PCNT25) the polymerization takes place exclusively on surface of MWCNT. The high electrical conductivity of 19.7 S cm<sup>-1</sup> in PCNT25 (even better than bulk conductivity of control MWCNT pellet 19.1 S cm<sup>-1</sup>) has been ascribed to the synergistic effect of two complementing phases (PANI and MWCNT). The TGA studies indicate that increasing amount of MWCNTs does not have any effect on the thermal decomposition temperature. The shielding measurements revealed that reflection loss increases slightly from -8.0 to -12.0 dB whereas absorption loss exhibits rapid enhancement from -18.5 to -28.0 dB with the increased CNT loading. The absorption dominated total shielding effectiveness in range of -27.5 to -39.2 dB indicates that these materials could be utilized effectively for the shielding purposes in the Ku-band (12.4-18.0 GHz). These PANI coated MWCNTs with large aspect ratio are also proposed as hybrid conductive fillers in various thermoplastic matrices for making structurally strong microwave shields

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