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It is certified that the work contained in the thesis titled **"SYNTHESIS, CHARACTERIZATIONS AND PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF OXIDE ION CONDUCTING ELECTROLYTE MATERIALS FOR SOLID OXIDE FUEL CELL APPLICATIONS"** by **"PRAGATI SINGH"** (Roll No. **16171007**), in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** at **Indian Institute of Technology (B.H.U), Varanasi** is a record of her own work carried out under my supervision and guidance, and this work has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.

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30/12/2021

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I, ***PRAGATI SINGH*** (Roll No. 16171007), certify that the work embodied in this thesis is my own bonafide work and carried out by me under the supervision of ***PROF. PRABHAKAR SINGH*** from ***JULY, 2016*** to ***DECEMBER, 2021*** at the ***DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS***, Indian Institute of Technology, Varanasi. The matter embodied in this thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree/diploma. I declare that I have faithfully acknowledged and given credits to the research workers wherever their works have been cited in my work in this thesis. I further declare that I have not willfully copied from any other's work, paragraphs, text, data, results, *etc.*, reported in journals, books, magazines, reports dissertations, thesis, *etc.*, or available at websites and have not included them in this thesis and have not cited as my own work.

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Acknowledgements

It gives me immense pleasure to get an opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude towards my respected supervisor, ***Prof. Prabhakar Singh,*** *for his enthusiastic encouragement, guidance, support and valuable suggestions throughout my research work. His indomitable zeal and diligence towards work motivated me to bring some discipline in my own work so that I could systematically focus energy towards fulfilling my goal. I will always remain thankful to him.*

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my research progress evaluation committee (RPEC) members, Prof. Rajendra Prashad, Prof. Vinay Kumar Singh for the invaluable inspiration and numerous insightful suggestions during the entire course of this research. I offer my special thanks to Prof. Sandip Chatterjee, Head of the Department of Physics for extending experimental facilities during the entire course of this research work.

I wish to express deep regards to all the teachers of the Department Prof. B. N. Dwivedi, Prof. O. N. Singh, Prof. D. Giri, Prof. R. Prasad, Dr. P. C. Pandey, Dr. Anita Mohan, Dr. Shail Upadhyay, Dr. S. K. Mishra, Dr. A. K. Srivastava, Dr. S. K. Singh, Dr. Avanish Singh Parmar, Dr. Saurabh Tripathi, Dr. Awaneesh Singh, Dr. R. K. Singh, Dr. Swapnil Patil, Dr. Shradha Mishra, Dr. Prasun Dutta, Dr. Rajeev Singh, Dr. Somnath Nag, Dr. Gauhar Abbas, Dr. Bidya Binay Karak, Dr. P. K. Aluri for their kind support at all moment during the progress of my research.

With a deep sense of gratitude, I express my sincere thanks to CIFC, IIT (BHU), Varanasi for help in carrying characterization of the synthesized samples. I am also grateful to all office staff of the Department and authorities of IIT (BHU), for their kind help during the period of my stay to complete the thesis work.

A special word of thanks goes to Dr. Raghvendra Pandey at the University of Delhi for his invaluable suggestions and scientific view in resolving lots of difficulties I faced during my research work.

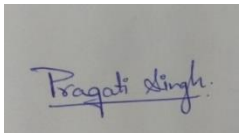
I would also like to express my extreme gratefulness towards my senior research members Dr. N. K. Singh, Dr. R. K. Singh, Dr. B. P. Singh, Dr. Pravin Kumar, Dr. Priyanka A. Jha, Dr. Pardeep Jha, Dr. Priyam Singh, Dr. Ashutosh Sahi, Dr Pawan Dubey, Dr. Onkar Nath Verma, Dr. Saurabh Singh, Dr. Vani Pawar and labmates, Mr. Ashish Kumar Yadav, Mr. Manish Kumar, Mr. Ajay Shankar Bangwal, Ms. Vandna Tomar, Ms. Manisha Chauhan, Ms. Swarnima Singh, Mr. Prem Chandra Bharti, Ms. Uma Sharma, Ms. Manisha Sharma, Ms. Gargi Yadav, Mr. Jaynarayan Mishra, Ms. Kamana Mishra, and all research colleagues of Department of Physics, IIT(BHU), for sharing their knowledge and creating enjoyable lab atmosphere both on and off the slopes. Special thanks are due to all the my departmental research colleagues for the help and their awesome company for giving me moral support, pleasant company and confidence to complete my work with a 'smile'.

The cooperation, moral support and constant motivation which I have always received from my friends cannot be expressed in words and I feel lucky to be blessed with such wonderful friends. Some of them who deserve special thanks are Mr.

Sudheer Kumar Mishra, Mr. Rajneesh Dwivedi, Ms. Kanchan Yadav, Ms. Pratibha Verma, and Ms. Aparajita Paul.

The biggest source of inspiration and courage was my entire family, whose boundless love, constant emotional support and blessings have provided me encouragement at every step of life. I infinitely cherish my parents for dreaming my dreams, always being there and bearing the burden of me staying away from them. The journey would not have been possible without the most special person I know, my husband, whom I am so grateful towards for his extraordinary ability to support, reason and lead my way in the right trajectory.

Finally, I bow with reverence and gratitude to thank the Almighty who has enriched me with such an excellent opportunity and infused the power in my mind to fulfil the work assigned to me.



Date: 30\12\2021

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SOFC	Solid Oxide Fuel Cell
PEMEC	Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell
AFC	Alkaline Fuel Cell
PAFC	Phosphoric Acid Fuel Cell
MCFC	Molten Carbonate Fuel Cell
HT-SOFC	High Teemperature Solid Oxide Fuel Cell
IT-SOFC	Intermediate Temperature Solid Oxide Fuel Cell
LT-SOFC	Low Temperature Solid Oxide Fuel Cell
NBT	Sodium Bismuth Titanate
YGO	Tri-yttrium Gallate
YBGO	Barium doped YGO
YCGO	Calcium doped YGO
YSGO	Strontium doped YGO
VB	Valance Band
CB	Conduction Band
eV	Electron Volt
meV	Milli-electron Volt
E_g	Band Gap
E_a	Activation Energy
$h\upsilon$	Photon Energy
k_B	Boltzmann's constant
FWHM	Full Width at Half Maximum
G	Gram
K	Kelvin

M.P.	Melting Point
T	Temperature
ICDD	International Center for Diffraction Data
JCPDS	Joint Committee on Powder Diffraction Standards
VSEPR	Valence Shell Electron Repulsion Theory
M	Modulus
Z, Z′, Z″	Complex, real and imaginary impedance
Σ	Conductivity
T	Relaxation time
Ω	Angular frequency ($2\pi f$)
θ	Diffraction angle
CV	Cyclic Voltammetry
PL	Photoluminescence Spectroscopy
ΔG	Gibbs Free Energy
ΔS	Entropy
ΔH	Enthalpy
RT	Room Temperature
Å	Angstrom
mg	Milligram
N	Avogadro's Number
nm	Nanometer
cm	Centimetre
µm	Micro-meter
Pt	Platinum
mV	MilliVolt
Ag	Silver
TEC	Thermal Expansion Coefficient

SSR	Solid State Route
SEM	Scanning Electron Microscope
TEM	Transmission Electron Microscopy
XPS	X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy
UV-Vis	Ultraviolet-Visible
DSC	Differential Scanning Calorimetric
CPE	Constant Phase Element
XRD	X-ray Diffraction
TGA	Thermogravometric Analysis
BVE	Bond Valance Sum
BVELs	Bond Valance Energy Landscape

PREFACE

Global energy demand is continually rising as a result of ongoing industrial development and population increase. The demand for energy, particularly from liquid fuels, has generated a bottleneck since the early 2000s, resulting in the current energy crisis. The combustion of fossil fuels provides the majority of the energy needed to the world. As a result, the globe is dealing with a variety of issues, including climate change, oil spills, air pollution, acid rain, and so on. Alternatively, wind, solar and hydro-power systems are rapidly growing and gaining popularity all over the world. However, because these renewable energy sources are generally dependent on the weather, their extensive expansion is limited. Wind turbines need wind to turn on their blades, and solar collectors need sunlight to gather heat and generate power. The current cost of renewable energy technology is also far in excess of traditional fossil fuel generation. Furthermore, they are less efficient and non-portable. To address these constraints, ongoing attempts are being made to produce superior, highly efficient, and long-term energy conversion systems. Fuel cell is one of the promising technologies that is expected to meet the majority of these requirements.

A fuel cell is an electrochemical device that converts chemical energy contained in fuels (such as hydrogen, methane, butane, etc.) into electrical energy by exploiting the natural tendency of oxygen and hydrogen to react. High efficiency and fuel adaptability are not the only major advantages of fuel cells, but they are also attractive as they are clean, reliable and almost non-polluting. Furthermore, since there are no moving parts, they are vibration-free. Fuel cells are classified on the basis of the electrolyte they employ. Among them, it has been favoured to choose solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC) because of its durability, portability, and high

efficiency. Furthermore, SOFCs are less sensitive to fuel contaminants. SOFC consists of anode, cathode, electrolyte, interconnect and seal. The electrolyte, which is sandwiched between the cathode and anode, is critical to the SOFC's operation. It must have appropriate oxygen-ion conductivity, minimal electrical conductivity, stability in both oxidizing and reducing conditions, and the ability to remain dense and impermeable while the cell is operating. Among all the investigated electrolyte materials, yttria-stabilized zirconia (YSZ) is the most extensively used electrolyte. However, the use of YSZ is restricted due to the electrical conductivity's limiting magnitude and its high operating temperature of over 800 °C. It becomes increasingly important to reduce the operating temperature of the fuel cells down in order to prolong the life span of a cell, the stability of a SOFC, widen the selection of electrodes, interconnect and manifold materials and also to reduce the overall cost of material processing & cell fabrication.

Our present work is focused on the development of the electrolyte materials for intermediate temperature SOFCs (IT-SOFC), with an operating temperature of 500-700 ℃. Among the various available electrolytes, high oxygen diffusivity has been observed for perovskite-based materials. Perovskite structured sodium bismuth titanate ($Na_{0.5}Bi_{0.5}TiO_3$) exhibits high ionic conductivity and transference number. The volatile nature of Bi^{3+} makes NBT a fast ionic conductor. The presence of highly volatile sodium and bismuth makes NBT susceptible to the processing conditions. It exhibits different types of dominant conducting species and nature with slight variation in the concentration and synthesis techniques. Our investigation is focused on the sintering temperature, stoichiometry variation and alteration in the synthesis route of sodium bismuth titanate. Variation from small range hopping to long-range hopping has been suggested with the change in the sintering temperature. Furthermore, a variation from

superlinear behaviour to sublinear behaviour with the change in the Na/Bi ratio has been observed.

Non-stoichiometry in the NBT is considered to be one of the significant issues. To overcome this, we synthesized the sample via liquid phase sintering, i.e. Polyol mediated synthesis. It has been observed that the sample synthesized via Polyol mediated synthesis exhibits better conductivity. Also, the systematic study of Mg substituted $Na_{0.50}Bi0._{49}TiO_{3-\delta}$ was the focus of the study. The prepared samples were characterized using XRD, SEM, TGA, Raman, and Impedance spectroscopy.

Besides the NBT, Tri-yttrium gallate was also synthesized and systematically investigated for its application as an electrolyte material for IT-SOFC. The structural, morphological, optical and elemental analyses of these systems have been carried out using the XRD, FESEM, UV-Visible and XPS techniques. The impedance analysis technique has been used to investigate the electrical behaviour and conduction mechanism.

In light of the foregoing, we intend to examine a few classes of innovative electrolyte systems that can operate at intermediate temperatures (500-800 °C) while being substantially less expensive. For this purpose, sodium bismuth titanate and triyttrium gallate has been selected as the electrolyte materials. The structural, microstructural, optical, thermo-dynamical and electrical properties of these materials have been investigated, and the correlation among them is established. This bound volume submitted for the Doctoral degree in IIT BHU comprises seven chapters followed by future work and a list of publications. A brief description is given below:

Chapter 1 deals with the introduction of fuel cells, followed by a brief literature survey. This chapter illustrates the motivation of work, background, and fundamentals of solid oxide fuel cells and the present scenario of electrolyte materials. Moreover, this chapter deals with the various possible conduction mechanism in the investigated systems. The primary goals of the present work are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2 discusses a detail of the employed experimental instruments and analysis techniques. Solid-state reaction route and polyol mediated synthesis route were adopted to synthesize the samples. This section includes a full description of the instruments used, such as XRD, FESEM, TEM, XPS, DSC, UV-Visible, and Impedance Spectroscopy measurements, as well as significant analysis techniques including Rietveld Refinement and Impedance analysis. The basic physics behind the measurements are also discussed in brief.

Chapter 3 aims to describe the structural properties and ion dynamics of sodium bismuth titanate sample synthesized via solid-state reaction route and sintered at temperature 1000 ℃ to 1150 ℃. Phase formation of NBT was studied by thermal and powder X-ray diffraction techniques. In order to understand the ion dynamics with the sintering temperature, impedance spectra were analyzed. The dc conductivity, hopping frequency and exponent values were extracted from the conductivity spectra analysis. The impedance and modulus spectroscopy along with exponent behaviour suggested short-range hopping for the sample sintered at 1000 ℃ and followed Ghosh scaling instead of Summerfield scaling. While long-range hopping was observed for the samples sintered at 1150 ℃ and it followed both the Summerfield scaling and Ghosh scaling. Moreover, the sample is observed to degrade in reducing atmosphere.

Chapter 4 presents the systematic study on the physical properties of substitutional variation in $Na_{0.5+x}Bi_{0.5-x}TiO_{3-\delta}$ (x = -0.02, -0.01, 0.00, 0.01, 0.02). It has been observed that Bi

rich compositions exhibit superlinear frequency-dependent behaviour, and Na rich compositions show sub-linear behaviour. To study the degradation mechanism, $Na_{0.5+x}Bi_{0.5-x}TiO_3$ (x = -0.01, 0.00, 0.01) samples were kept in reducing environment for 48 h. Further, in order to understand the conduction mechanism and the qualitative/quantitative estimation of charge carriers before and after reducing conditions, various models were used.

In **Chapter 5**, bismuth deficient sodium bismuth titanate, i.e. $Na_{0.50}Bi_{0.49}Ti_1O_{3-\delta}$, was synthesized using the Polyol mediate synthesis route. This route of preparation helps to produce fine particles, better surface area and good conductivity at relatively lower processing temperatures as compared to the solid-state reaction route. Mg substituted $Na_{0.5}Bi_{0.49}Ti_1O_{3-\delta}$ samples were found to exhibit higher conductivity as compared to the Bi-deficient samples. A correlation among the phase formation, conduction behaviour and ion diffusion mechanism has also been established for the Mg^{2+} substituted Bi-deficit NBT derived compositions.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the Triyttrium gallate (Y_3GaO_6) based electrolyte systems. Crystal structure, migration path, morphology, thermal properties, conductivity and impedance analysis of all the samples have been discussed employing various characterization techniques. This chapter consists of two sections. In section A, the synthesis of alkaline earth metal substituted Y_3GaO_6 has been studied by the solid-state route and the effect of 2% substitution of Ba, Ca, and Sr on the Y site has been investigated. Section B describes the influence of the higher dopant concentration of Ca on the Y site of Y_3GaO_6. 2% of calcium substituted Y_3GaO_6 has been found to exhibit the highest conductivity.

Chapter 7 concludes the outcomes of the research works of this thesis and also lists the possibilities of future investigations.