

INVESTIGATION OF MULTIDOPED CERIA AS CATHODE MATERIAL FOR LOW TEMPERATURE SOLID OXIDE FUEL CELLS

by

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Submitted

in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

to the



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

NOVEMBER 2013

Dedicated to my husband Dr. Sreekumar & son Sreejit

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Investigation of multidoped ceria as cathode material for low temperature solid oxide fuel cells**, being submitted by **Ms. Rajalekshmi Chockalingam** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi is a record of bona fide research work carried out by her. She has worked under our guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements, which to my knowledge, has reached the requisite standard for the submission of this thesis. The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted in part or full to any University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Acknowledgements

Education in IITD is a dream for every Indian student. Prof. Suddhasatwa Basu, who realized my potential for research, gave me an opportunity to work in his lab. He has been everything I could ask for as an advisor. His guidance, encouragement, and enthusiasm for research has truly helped me make this far and built me confident and determined to take any task and accomplish it. I'd like to thank him, for being a good critique at the same time an admirer too. All credits for this thesis go to Prof. Basu. Sir, you will remain as one of the important persons who inspired and touched my life. I express my sincere, heartfelt gratitude and thanks to you for your sincere guidance, encouragement and support in completing this thesis.

I am profoundly thankful to Prof. Ashok Kumar Ganguli for allowing me to use all the sophisticated characterization facilities without which it could not be possible to complete my thesis work. Sir you were always so kind and patient to listen to me and gave me a hand whenever I was in trouble. I have seen you always very enthusiastic and loaded with full of energy and I would like to thank you from my heart for being my second advisor.

Thanks are due to my committee: Prof. Shantanu Roy, Prof. Anupam Shukla, Prof. S. Aravindan for their valuable suggestions and requisite guidance on technical issues particularly during comprehensive and synopsis seminars. I would also like to thank sincerely Prof. S. Aravindan, for allowing me to use the mechanical engineering lab facilities that really helped me a lot. I sincerely acknowledge Prof. A. K. Gupta, for his insight, valuable suggestions and support. I am also grateful to all other faculty members of Department of Chemical Engineering for their help and cooperation whenever needed. I would like to thank Prof. Anupam Shukla and Prof. K. K. Panth for sharing their lab

facilities. I greatly appreciate and thank Mr. Subodh Kumar, Scientist, LASTECH, DRDO, New Delhi for providing thermal characterization facilities. I also gratefully acknowledge Dr. Padam Kaur and Mr. Sethi, National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi for helping me in processing samples. Thanks are due to Mr. Vishesh Kumar, for establishing a research environment in Design Lab. My sincere thanks are due for Mr. Rishab Sharma and Mr. Amit Gupta, for their encouragement, immense patience and assistance. I wish to thank IIT Delhi for graduate funding and CSIR for partial financial support through Project during my research period.

My sincere appreciation and thanks to Prof. Vasantha Amarakoon and Prof. Doreen Edwards Alfred University, NY, USA who gave me a chance to start my education back after a long break.

It was a great pleasure to work in Fuel Cell Lab and my sincere thanks to my colleagues: VGP, G. Kaur, Jyoti, Pankaj, Shivani , Hari, Amandeep , Garima, Shaneet, Dr. Dyuti, Dr. Rahul, Dr. Mirajul and Nitu for their love, support and you all made me feel like another home and I really enjoyed working with you guys. I would like to thank Mr. Sunder Singh who was all in all in assisting us and be a part of our FC lab family. Special thanks are due for Dr. Debika Basu for being so kind, trust worthy and always ready to help me. I also remember my beloved family members for all their blessings and encouragement throughout my life. This research would not have been possible without the support of my soul mate Dr. Sreekumar Chockalingam, I sincerely thank him for all the help. Finally, I thank my wonderful son, Sreejit for his immense patience, waiting for me to complete my work, encouragements, support and love you shared me.

(Rajalekshmi Chockalingam)

Abstract

State of the art yttria stabilized zirconia (YSZ), high temperature solid oxide fuel cells (SOFC) suffer due to high cost and low reliability. Reducing the operating temperature of SOFC from 800 °C to 550 °C would lower the cell degradation rate and fabrication cost through the use of cheaper metallic interconnections and flexible glass sealants. However, a major issue in reducing the operating temperature below 800 °C is the poor catalytic activity of existing cathode materials for electrochemical reduction of oxygen. Although, the perovskite based cathode materials exhibit high electronic conductivity and catalytic activity for oxygen reduction, the coefficient of thermal expansion of these materials do not match with that of GDC electrolytes. To address this problem, multivalent acceptor doped CeO₂ has been suggested as alternative cathode materials for low temperature SOFC.

The objectives of this thesis are to synthesis phase pure multi-doped ceria for low operating temperature SOFC cathode compositions; praseodymium cerium gadolinium oxide, Pr_xCe_{0.95-x}Gd_{0.05}O_{2-δ} (0.15 ≤ x ≤ 0.40) and terbium cerium gadolinium oxide, Tb_xCe_{0.95-x}Gd_{0.05}O_{2-δ} (0.15 ≤ x ≤ 0.40) through solid state and liquid state routes and investigate the structural, thermal, electrical and electrochemical properties. To evaluate the electrical performance of cathodes, two electrolytes Ce_{0.80}Gd_{0.20}O_{2-δ} (LiNa)CO₃ and Ce_{0.80}Gd_{0.20}O_{2-δ} have been synthesized through co-precipitation method. The total conductivity of the samples has been evaluated by using AC impedance spectroscopy. The ionic and electronic contribution to the total conductivity has been estimated by measuring the ionic transference number.

The values of coefficient of thermal expansion of the composition Pr_{0.2}Ce_{0.75-x}Gd_{0.05}O_{2-δ} (12.5 x 10⁻⁶ K⁻¹) and Tb_{0.4}Ce_{0.55-x}Gd_{0.05}O_{2-δ} (10.6 x 10⁻⁶ K⁻¹) was found to be

comparable to that of GDC electrolyte ($11.5 \times 10^{-6} \text{ K}^{-1}$) at 550°C . $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ exhibited an ionic conductivity of 0.008 Scm^{-1} and electronic conductivity of 0.015 Scm^{-1} , whereas for nano- $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ showed an ionic conductivity of 0.012 Scm^{-1} and electronic conductivity of 0.030 Scm^{-1} at 550°C . The increased electronic conductivity observed in nano- $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ compared to $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ is correlated to band gap reduction. $\text{Tb}_{0.4}\text{Ce}_{0.55}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ exhibited an ionic conductivity of 0.004 Scm^{-1} and electronic conductivity of 0.010 Scm^{-1} , while nano- $\text{Tb}_{0.4}\text{Ce}_{0.55}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ showed an ionic conductivity of 0.003 Scm^{-1} and electronic conductivity of 0.005 Scm^{-1} at 550°C . The lower electronic conductivity of nano- $\text{Tb}_{0.4}\text{Ce}_{0.55}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ compared to nano- $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ may be due to trapping of electrons.

The single cell with configuration, $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ - $\text{Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ // $\text{Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ // $\text{NiO-Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ delivered a maximum power density of 74 mWcm^{-2} at 550°C , whereas single cells with nano- $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ cathode with similar configuration delivered a maximum power density of 100 mWcm^{-2} at 550°C . The single cell with configuration, $\text{Tb}_{0.4}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ - $\text{Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ // $\text{Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ // $\text{NiO-Ce}_{0.80}\text{Gd}_{0.20}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ delivered a maximum power density of 76 mWcm^{-2} at 650°C and nano- $\text{Tb}_{0.4}\text{Ce}_{0.75}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ cathode delivered a maximum power density of 96 mWcm^{-2} at 650°C . The poor performance of TCGO cathode compared to PCGO cathode may be due to irregularities in microstructures due to processing associated problems. In view of the observed properties, the composition, nano- $\text{Pr}_{0.2}\text{Ce}_{0.75-x}\text{Gd}_{0.05}\text{O}_{2-\delta}$ is suggested as a potential cathode material for low temperature SOFC. The other applications of this material are oxygen sensors, bio sensors and energy storage devices.

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