Study of the Hydrogenation and Re-heating of Co-doped In$_2$O$_3$ based Diluted Magnetic Semiconductors

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Abstract. In this work, the Co$^{2+}$ ions doping effect on the magnetic behaviour of In$_2$O$_3$ nanoparticles (NPs) has been discussed. The In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O sample was prepared by solid state reaction method. According to XRD, the single crystalline phase was identified as the cubic bixbyite crystal structure and doping effect of prepared NPs. The magnetic study at room temperature (RT) revealed that the prepared Co doped In$_2$O$_3$ sample had achieved overlapped paramagnetic (PM) properties defeating the diamagnetic (DM) properties of In$_2$O$_3$. Furthermore, it was found that the ferromagnetic (FM) is clearly induced by post-annealing in hydrogen atmosphere at 50 and 300 K. This study also depicts that the sample is finally returned to the PM state after re-heating.

Keywords: Diluted magnetic semiconductors, transition metals, In$_2$O$_3$.

1 Introduction

Oxide-based diluted magnetic semiconductors (O-DMSs) have attracted much attention due to prospective in spintronics and magneto-optoelectronic applications. Actually, the oxide semiconductors exhibit various advantages such as wide band gap suitable for applications with short wavelength light, transparency and dyeability with pigments, high n-type carrier concentration, capability to be grown at low temperature even on plastic substrate, ecological safety, durability and low cost [1-9]. In addition, large electronegativity of oxygen is expected to produce strong p–d exchange coupling between band carriers and localized spins. The magnetic properties of doped oxide-based semiconductors were seen to be very sensitive to the fabrication process and the processing conditions. Various theoretical and experimental studies have been proposed on the ferromagnetic, paramagnetic, antiferromagnetic, and spin glass properties of transition metal (TM)-doped TiO$_2$ [9,10], ZnO [11-16], SnO$_2$ [17-19], as well as In$_2$O$_3$ [20-31].

In$_2$O$_3$ is a transparent semiconductor with a wide band gap (3.75 eV) and a cubic bixbyite crystal structure that contains 80 atoms per unit cell [29]. There are numerous reports on room temperature ferromagnetism (RTFM) in In$_2$O$_3$ systems doped with TMs [20-24]. Though, the origin of ferromagnetism (FM) is still controversial and numerous exchange mechanisms have been offered to interpret the origin of magnetism. These mechanisms include Ruderman–Kittel–Kasuya–Yosida (RKKY) interactions, bound magnetic polaron models (BMPs), as well as carrier-mediated and charge transfer FMs [30-35]. At present, only few investigations reported on of Co-doped In$_2$O$_3$ nanoparticles. Therefore, it is of prodigious attention to investigate the possibility of ferromagnetic properties in nanoparticle form of Co-doping as it can further understanding of future spintronics devices. In the present work, the samples are prepared by doping Co (6%) into In$_2$O$_3$ and the effect of hydrogenation and then re-heating on magnetic properties of the samples.

2 Experimental Details

Stoichiometric amounts of Indium (II) oxide (purity 99.99%; Aldrich) and cobalt (III) oxide (purity 99.999%; Alfa Aesar) powders were used to make In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O through solid state reaction method. [32]. The sample was then exposed for hydrogenation for ~5 hrs at 550 °C in a cylindrical quartz tube in a reduction furnace. X-ray diffraction (XRD) analyses of the samples were taken at 300K through
PHILIPS X’PERT X-ray diffractometer equipped with CuKα radiation. The scans were recorded from 20 to 90° with a step size of 0.02°. The crystal structures were refined using the Rietveld profile refinements program FULLPROF [33]. Field dependent magnetization measurements were ascertained at 300 K and 50 K using vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM).

![Figure 1a. Indexed XRD patterns of In$_2$O$_3$, as-prepared (In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$)$_2$O$_3$, hydrogenated (In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$)$_2$O$_3$:H](image)

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 XRD Data

Fig. 1a shows the XRD patterns of pure In$_2$O$_3$, (In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$)$_2$O$_3$ and the hydrogenated (In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$)$_2$O$_3$:H. It is observed that all Bragg peaks are indexed in the cubic bixbyite or C-type rare earth, structure with a lattice parameter a =10.11 Å (space group Ia3, no. 206, PCPDF# 06-0416) without any impurity phase. Rietveld profile refinements of XRD patterns of (In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$)$_2$O$_3$ were analyzed by using the FULLPROF Program (Fig. 1b) [33]. The refinement results ratify that Co$^{2+}$ ions substitute the In$^{3+}$ site and the hydrogenation or long re-heating of the hydrogenated sample did not cause any structural change. A slight cell volume contraction is observed on Co doping (V= 1035.4 Å$^3$ for pure In$_2$O$_3$ and V= 1029.5 Å$^3$ for 6% Co doped sample), due to a minor difference in ionic radii of the dopant and the host ions (Co$^{2+}$ :0.745Å and In$^{3+}$ :0.80 Å) [31,32]. Interestingly, upon re-heating of the hydrogenated samples (for 7 or more h) the oxygen contents re-acquire their as-prepared values.
3.2 Magnetization Data

The M-H curves for undoped In₂O₃ sample indicate a strong diamagnetic behavior (Fig. 2). Fig. 3a shows the M-H curves for the as-prepared In₀.₉₄Co₀.₀₆O recorded at 300 K. The sample shows a paramagnetic behavior when it is doped with Co (In₀.₉₄Co₀.₀₆O) as shown in Fig. 3a.

Hydrogen in In₂O₃ is acting as a shallow donor impurity; it is thus probable to deliver additional conduction electrons. It is observed that the same sample after hydrogenation shows ferromagnetic behavior (Fig. 3b). This exposes that the carrier density improved upon H contamination which might mediate the exchange coupling of the Co spins through electron doping of the matrix which shows a clear visibility of ferromagnetism in agreeing with the other studies [34]. The saturation magnetization (Ms ~ 3.6 emu/g) and the coercivity (~0.0210 T) are significant at 300K (Fig. 3b, Table-2). The enhancing of magnetic properties of the sample with hydrogenation or incorporation of H is already experimentally observed in doped In₂O₃ [1, 8]. In order to estimate the magnitudes of the saturation magnetization, the coercivity and the remanence, the high field (up to 2 T) magnetization measurements were performed for the hydrogenated sample In₀.₉₄Co₀.₀₆O:H at 50 K and 300 K (Figure 4). This shows that magnetization data decreases by small amount that can be attributed from shallow donor hydrogenic model [36] which suggests that on lower temperature (~50 K) hydrogen is in more weakly bound state than 300K.

The coercivity enhances from 0.021 T (at 300 K) to ~0.058 T (at 50 K) of hydrogenated samples 1 and 2 (Figure 4). Both samples are then heated for approximately two hrs in air at 550 °C (heated 1 sample) and appreciable depression in magnetic moment is observed (Fig. 3c ). The M-H curve for the heated 1 sample (Fig 3 (d)) shows that the sample is finally returned to the PM state upon further reheating of nearly seven hours. The probable reason can be described as air annealing may absorb oxygen and decrease the oxygen vacancy concentration. This finding specifies that the oxygen vacancies play a key role in inducing FM.

4 Conclusion

The study reveals that pure In₂O₃ is diamagnetic and turns to paramagnetic upon Co doping. The samples were post-annealed in hydrogen atmosphere at 50 and 300 K. Experimental findings confirm that on hydrogenation, the samples have achieved overlapped paramagnetic with ferromagnetic properties defeating the diamagnetic properties of In₂O₃. This study also depicts that the sample is finally returned to the paramagnetic state after re-heating.

![Figure 2. The M-H curves for In₂O₃ showing a diamagnetic state.](image)
Figure 3. M-H curves recorded at 300 K for (a). As-prepared \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O} \) (b). Hydrogenated \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O}:\text{H} \) (c). Heated 1 sample (2 hrs) \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O} \) and (d). Heated 2 sample (7 hrs) \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O} \).

Figure 4. Comparison of M-H curves for hydrogenated samples \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O}:\text{H} \) and heated \( \text{In}_{0.94}\text{Co}_{0.06}\text{O}:\text{H} \) at 300 K and 50 K.
Table 1: The magnetic moment, coercivity and retentivity for In$_2$O$_3$ and In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O sample before and after hydrogenation and after the heat treatment.

| Sample                | Saturation Moment (emu/g) | Coercivity (Tesla) | Remanence (emu/g) |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                       | [300 K]                   | [50 K]            | [300 K]           | [50 K]            | [300 K] | [50 K] |
| In$_2$O$_3$ Dia       | Dia                       | -                 | -                 | -                 |
| In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O Dia | -               | -                 | -                 | -                 |
| In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O:H | 3.6                  | 3.52             | 0.021             | 0.058             | 0.285   | 0.623  |
| In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O (ht.2hrs) | 0.180           | 0.153             | 0.025             | 0.017             | 0.031   | 0.023  |
| In$_{0.94}$Co$_{0.06}$O (ht.7hrs) | -                   | -                 | -                 | -                 | -                 | -     |

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