Comparative Study of Erbium Doped KDP Single Crystals Grown by Different Techniques

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ABSTRACT. Erbium doped potassium dihydrogen Orthophosphate (KDP) single crystals were grown by different techniques - SR method, Seed Rotation and Slow Evaporation with the vision to improve the properties of the crystal. The objective of this study is to show how the dopant Erbium influences the growth, morphology and characteristics of KDP crystal. The crystal size grown by SR method on unidirectional {101} pyramidal face was around 150 mm in length and 16 mm in diameter. The Chemical composition of the grown crystals is confirmed by EDAX Analysis. The grown crystals are subjected to PXRD analysis using XrdwinPD 4-dectris computer based diffractometer with a characteristic Cu Kα (1.540598) radiations from 10° to 60° at a scan rate of 10°/min, confirm the crystalline nature and shifts in peak positions due to doping is observed. Using Scherer’s equation crystallite size has been calculated and the crystallite size is around 44 nm. Solubility of crystals grown by slow evaporation technique is determined using water as a solvent. The solubility curve shows that that Erbium doped KDP crystals has higher solubility than the pure KDP. The SHG efficiency is determined by Kurtz powder technique. It is found that relative SHG conversion efficiency of crystal grown by SR method is greater compared to other techniques. Optical transmission spectra are recorded for the crystals in the wavelength region 200 to 1100nm using Perkin-Elmer Lambda 35 UV-Vis spectrophotometer. It is found that percentage transmission of crystals grown by SR method is more as compared to other techniques. The electronic band transitions is studied from the plot of (αhv)² versus photon energy (hv) and the band gap energy has been calculated. The addition of Erbium improves the quality and transparency of crystals, which shows the suitability of the ingot for optical applications.

Introduction. With the advanced research approach on efficient nonlinear optical material (NLO) is intensively studied for various optical device applications. Potassium dihydrogen orthophosphate (KDP) is a best known NLO material and has been used for second harmonic generation for high pulse energy, laser frequency conversion, low repetition (<100 Hz) rate lasers, electro-optical modulation and Q-switching applications [1-3]. As a result, significant efforts have been made to find novel and efficient NLO materials.

The study of the crystallization behavior of KDP and the factors influencing its structural properties is still of great interest. The most important factor which influences the growth rate, the surface morphology of crystal is impurities [4, 5]. An impurity can suppress, enhance or stop the growth of crystal completely. Modern technical tasks like high power laser systems have a great demand for very large size crystals. The use of special additives is an effective way to accelerate the growth rate. The beneficial effect of additives on the growth process and properties of crystals has been applied in recent years [6-8].

The most efficient additives are reagents with metal ions that have the same properties as that of bulk solutions which can change the properties of solution such as viscosity, surface tension, etc. without deteriorating the optical qualities of crystals. Hence Erbium is selected as additive in the KDP solution and doped KDP crystals were grown from the aqueous solution with seed rotation, SR method and slow evaporation technique and the grown crystals are subjected to different characterizations like
powder X-ray diffraction, optical transmission, EDAX and second harmonic generation efficiency studies.

Experimental

Crystal Growth. Good quality crystals of pure and Erbium doped KDP were grown by slow evaporation technique as shown in Fig 1(c). A volume of 200ml of water was taken in a beaker and known quantity of the material was added till it attains saturation for temperatures. Sankaranarayanan-Ramasamy (SR) method was employed to grow the bulk size of Erbium doped KDP single crystals. The apparatus consists of glass container of size 30x30x30 cm³ and ampoule of inner diameter 10mm using two ring heaters. A suitable seed crystal grown by slow evaporation technique having a size of 4x4x3 mm³ with <101> direction was selected for unidirectional crystal growth. The ampoule was kept in the glass water bath to maintain constant ambient temperature. Super Saturated solution was poured carefully into the ampoule without disturbing the seed crystal. The ring heaters are positioned one at the top and another at the bottom of the growth ampoule. The growth was initiated with a suitable temperature provided by the ring heater at the top region of the saturated solution under equilibrium condition. The temperature difference between the top and bottom ring heaters of the growth ampoule was carefully maintained to control the nucleation. In the present work, the temperature around the top and bottom of the ampoule was maintained at 32°C and 27°C respectively. Under this condition highly transparent crystal growth was seen after 10 days. After three months of the growth duration, a good quality crystal was harvested with size 140 mm in length and 16 mm in diameter as shown in Fig.1(a). Finally, the ampoule was detached from the growth system and the grown crystal was carefully removed from the ampoule using diamond glass cutter.

Stirring the solution reduces the natural convection-induced temperature oscillations by homogenizing the bulk solution. Hence, the importance of optimum rates of rotation in crystal growth processes has gained recognition in the past decade [9]. The two most widely used stirring mechanisms are the rotation of the seed and/or the rotation of the crystallizer. In the present work, KDP crystals doped with Erbium were grown from aqueous solution by continuously rotating the growing crystal at 40 rpm. This apparatus consists of a seed rotation controller coupled with a stepper motor which is controlled by using a microcontroller based drive. This controller rotates the seed holder in the crystallizer. The seed crystals mounted on the center of the platform made up of acrylic material and is fixed into the crystallizer. The seed mount platform mix the solution very well and makes the solution more stable, which resulted in better crystal quality. The aqueous solutions at the saturation temperature 40°C was filtered in a closed system to remove extraneous solid and colloidal particles. Then the solution was overheated at 50°C for one day, to make the solution stable against spontaneous nucleation under a high supersaturation [10]. After overheating, the temperature of the solution was reduced slightly above the saturation point and seed crystals were mounted on the platform. From the saturation point, the temperature was decreased at 0.1°C per day at the beginning of the growth. As the growth of the crystal progressed, the temperature rate was decreased. After reaching the room temperature, crystals was harvested. The grown crystals are shown in Fig.1(b).
Results and discussion

Determination of Solubility. The Solubility studies were carried out in a constant temperature water bath (CTB). The Solution was stirred continuously for 6 hours to achieve stabilization using an immersible magnetic stirrer. Solubility was determined by gravimetric analysis for different temperatures (25-50°C). The Solubility curve of pure KDP & Erbium doped KDP crystals grown by slow evaporation technique is shown in Fig. 2. It is observed from the solubility curve that the solubility of KDP doped Erbium decreases with increase in the molar weight of KDP and has positive temperature co-efficient.
EDAX Analysis

In order to confirm the presence of the Erbium, the grown crystals was subjected to EDAX analysis. The EDAX spectra for KDP doped Erbium grown by Slow evaporation, Seed Rotation technique and SR method was recorded and analyzed. The spectrum shows the peaks of potassium, phosphate, oxygen, chlorine and Erbium suggesting that the Erbium dopant has entered into the crystal lattice of KDP. The recorded spectrum for the grown crystals are shown in Fig.3, 4 & 5. The Observed weight percentage of elements in the doped KDP crystal are given in the Table 1,2 & 3.

**Powder X-ray diffraction studies.** Powder X-ray diffraction studies was performed on grown crystals to identify the phase formation and degree of crystal perfection. X-ray powder patterns of grown crystals was recorded using XrdwinPD 4-dectris computer based diffractometer with a characteristic Cu Kα (1.540598) radiations from 10° to 60° at a scan rate of 10°/min. The Xrd pattern of the grown crystals are shown in Fig 6. The occurrence of sharp peaks at specific bragg's angle shows the crystallinity of the grown crystals. It is clear from the pattern that the entry of the dopant in the modified composition of KDP crystal lead to a change in the intensity of peaks when compared to the peaks of pure KDP crystals. Average crystallite size (D) was estimated using the following relation (1)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
<th>Atom %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>3.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>37.19</td>
<td>44.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cl</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>53.04</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er</td>
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<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Shows the estimated Weight % of KDP doped Erbium Crystal (Seed Rotation method).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
<th>Atom %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>P</td>
<td>38.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>53.83</td>
<td>48.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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where $\lambda$ is wavelength of the X-ray radiation, $\beta$ is full width at half maximum (FWHM) of diffraction peak (in rad), and $\theta$ is scattering angle.

Further, the dislocation density ($\delta$) and micro strain ($\varepsilon$) was estimated by the relation (2, 3, & 4).

\[
\delta = \frac{1}{D^2} \quad \text{(2)}
\]

\[
\varepsilon = \frac{\beta \cos \theta}{4} \quad \text{(3)}
\]

\[
SF = \frac{2\pi^2}{\sqrt{3} \tan \theta} \quad \text{(4)}
\]

The obtained structural parameters were given in Table 3. Williamson and Hall (W-H) plots was used to estimate the micro strain in KDP doped Erbium crystal grown by different methods using the relation (5).

\[
\beta \cos \theta = \frac{k\lambda}{D} + 4\varepsilon \sin \theta \quad \text{(5)}
\]

where $\varepsilon$ is strain associated with the crystal.

Equation (5) represents a straight line between $4\sin \theta$ (X-axis) and $\beta \cos \theta$ (Y-axis). The slope of line gives the strain ($\varepsilon$) and intercept ($k\lambda/D$) of this line on Y-axis gives grain size (D). Fig. 7. shows the W-H plots of grown crystals and the estimated strain values was shown in Table 4.
UV-Visible Transmission. Crystal plates of pure KDP and KDP doped Erbium crystals were cut and polished without any coating for optical measurements. The thickness of the crystals were around 1 mm. Optical transmission spectra were recorded for the crystals in the wavelength region 200 - 1100 nm using Perkin-Elmer Lambda 35 UV-Vis spectrometer. The recorded UV-Vis spectrum is shown in the Figure 8. Good optical transmittance and lower cut off wavelength are very essential properties for nonlinear optical (NLO) crystals [11]. It is observed from the figure that the Pure KDP shows 45% of transmittance, KDP doped Erbium (Slow Evaporation method) shows 65% transmittance, KDP doped Erbium (Seed Rotation method) shows 70% of transmittance and KDP doped Erbium (SR method) shows 85% of transmittance. The large transmission in the entire visible region enables it to be a good material for electro-optic and NLO applications. The above results indicate that the addition of Erbium to pure KDP increased the transmittance. There is a non linear trend in transmittance between 400 to 800 nm wavelength shows that the light is only transmitted and not absorbed in this visible region. The plot of $(\alpha h v)^2$ versus photon energy $h v$ is plotted as shown in Figure 9. In order to find the value of $E_g$ we make use of the relation (7):

$$\alpha = 2.303 \log \left( \frac{T}{d} \right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)
where $\alpha$ is absorption coefficient, $d$ is the thickness of the sample and $T$ is the transmittance, $h\nu$ is the photon energy.

Plot the graph of $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ versus $h\nu$. The values of $E_g$ have been found by taking the intercept of the curve, at which it increases linearly. The wide optical band gap of KDP is 4.7eV, KDP doped Erbium crystals is found to be 5.0eV, and 5.1eV for the grown crystals respectively suggests its suitability for optoelectronics applications.

![Graph of $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ versus $h\nu$.](image)

**Fig. 8.** UV-Visible Spectrum of grown crystals.  **Fig. 9.** $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ versus $h\nu$ of the grown crystals.

**SHG Studies.** The Second harmonic generation efficiency was determined by Kurtz powder technique [14]. Laser beam coming from the source has very high energy. Its intensity is reduced by using glass plates and Neutral density (ND) filter which reduces the intensity and it allows only 1064 nm wavelength to incident on the sample taken in a microcapillary tube. Output from the sample is passed through the monochromator which is intensified by photomultiplier tube and finally the signal is observed and read on the Oscilloscope. A Q-switched Nd:YAG laser beam of wavelength 1064nm and 8ns pulse width with an input rate of 10Hz was used to test the NLO property of the sample. The second harmonic signal of 532nm green light was collected by a photomultiplier tube. The optical signal incident on the PMT was converted into voltage output at the cathode ray oscilloscope.

The grown crystals were crushed into fine powder and tightly packed in a micro capillary tube. It was mounted in the path of Nd-YAG laser beam of energy 5mJ/pulse. The KDP crystal was used as a reference material. The transmitted beam voltage for pure KDP crystal was 4mV, for the Erbium doped KDP (Slow Evaporation method) crystal was 4.79mV, Erbium doped KDP (Seed Rotation method) crystal was 4.83mV, Erbium doped KDP (SR method) crystal was 5.43mV respectively. It is found that the SHG efficiency of the Erbium doped KDP (SR method) crystal is 1.35 times greater than KDP, Erbium doped KDP (Seed Rotation method) crystal is 1.2 times greater than KDP, and Erbium doped KDP (Slow Evaporation method) crystal is 1.19 times greater than KDP. The measured values are given in Table 5. Output intensity of SHG gives relative values of NLO efficiency of the material. The relative SHG efficiency of the grown crystals is higher than that of KDP sample which indicates the suitability of crystals for application in nonlinear optical devices and optoelectronic devices. The increased SHG efficiency is due to higher polarizability of the material than that of KDP.
Summary. A new additive rare earth Erbium was added to KDP and crystals were grown by slow evaporation method, microcontroller based seed rotation technique and Sankaranarayanan-Ramasamy (SR) method. Powder XRD and EDAX analysis confirm the fact that the Erbium has gone into the lattice sites of the KDP crystals. The presence of additional peaks in the XRD spectrum of doped KDP crystals shows the presence of additional phases due to doping. The UV-Vis-NIR transmission spectra show a wide transparency window without any absorption. KDP doped Erbium crystals generate optical second harmonic frequency of an Nd:YAG laser. The Kurtz powder technique indicates that the SHG efficiency Erbium doped KDP (SR method) crystal is 1.35 times greater than KDP, Erbium doped KDP (Seed Rotation method) crystal is 1.2 times greater than KDP, and Erbium doped KDP (Slow Evaporation method) crystal is 1.19 times greater than KDP, which indicates the suitability of crystals for application in nonlinear optical devices and optoelectronic devices. As the crystal has wide transparency in the UV and visible regions and with good SHG efficiency, implies that this crystal can be used as a potential material for optical applications.

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References


Cite the paper