

Structural Magnetic properties of polycrystalline Dy_{0.4} Sm_{0.6} FeO₃ (DSFO) compounds synthesized By Sol-gel Dy_{0.4} Sm_{0.6} FeO₃ Sintered at different temperatures

Dr. P. Laveena Manjulatha

Asst Prof of Physics

Department of Physics, MALD Govt Degree College, Jogulamba Gadwal, TG, India-500044.

Abstract:

This paper explores the structural and magnetic properties of polycrystalline DSFO compounds synthesized via sol-gel route and sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C. X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis with Rietveld refinement confirms that, the samples sintered at 800°C and 1000°C exhibit a single phase with out any detectable impurity, where as the samples sintered at 1200°C contains a small amount of Dy₃Fe₅O₁₂ cubic garnet impurity. The M-H hysteresis analysis shows an increase in magnetisation (i.e M_m & M_r and coercive field H_c) with increasing sintering temperature, the enhancement is more significant from 800°C to 1000°C compared to 1200°C. Mössbauer spectra reveals a slight increase in the hyperfine field with rising sintering temperature indicates improved magnetic ordering. The observed smaller isomer shift suggests the presence of Fe³⁺ state. Overall, the samples sintered at 1000°C exhibit relatively superior structural, and magnetic properties than the other samples.

Keywords: Orthoferrite, Sol-gel, XRD, magnetisation, Mossbauer spectra

Introduction:

Multiferroic Magneto-Electric coupling has drawn considerable attention from the researchers due to intriguing underlying physics involved and their promising technological applications. Phenomena such as Electric field induced magnetization switching and vice-versa, temperature driven magnetization reversal, and the interplay between spin and lattice have created interest in the scientific community, highlighting the potential of these materials for advanced functional devices [1,2]. Magneto-Electric coupling enables to manipulate magnetisation through application of electric field and electric polarization can be altered with external magnetic field. This unique bidirectional control makes such materials highly efficient candidates for use in sensors, spintronic systems and memory storage devices with ultra-low power consumption [3- 6].

Nevertheless, identifying material that exhibit pronounced Magneto-Electric coupling remains challenging, as the ferromagnetism typically relies on the presence of electrons in d-orbital, whereas ferroelectricity tends to prefer their presence. Among the materials exhibiting Magneto-Electric coupling, the RFeO₃ family (where, R = Rare earth element) has garnered substantial attention from the researchers for its remarkable Magnetic, magneto-optic and multiferroic characteristics.

RFeO₃ crystallizes in the Orthorhombic perovskite structure with Pbnm space group, where R³⁺ ion occupy eight corners of the unit cell and Fe³⁺ ions octahedrally coordinated with six oxygen ions forming FeO₆ octahedra [7,8]. The magneto-electric behaviour of RFeO₃ family is majorly governed by the super-exchange interactions among Fe³⁺-Fe³⁺, Fe³⁺-R³⁺ and R³⁺-R³⁺ ions. Due to the three types of magnetic interactions and the arrangement of Fe³⁺ spins, RFeO₃ compounds exhibit three distinct magnetic configurations, each of which is characterised with a specific crystallographic easy axis of magnetisation namely $\square 1$, $\square 2$ and $\square 4$. All these configurations are temperature dependant, $\square 4$ typically found at high temperature while any of the three may occur at low temperature [9,10]. In these compounds there exist a characteristic temperature known as Spin-Reorientation Transition temperature (SRT) at which easy axis of magnetisation shifts from one crystallographic axis to another, indicating a change in the magnetic configuration [11-13].

Among RFeO₃ compounds SmFeO₃ has demonstrated outstanding device-relevant properties including rapid magnetic switching and high temperature rotation of easy axis of magnetisation around 480K. Notably, this represents the highest SRT temperature reported within the entire RFeO₃ family. Similarly, DyFeO₃ exhibit SRT around 35K which is the lowest SRT reported among RFeO₃ family. In the context of SRT, doping with Dy at Sm site in SmFeO₃ is expected to induce a variation in spin-reorientation transition temperature, spanning a wide range from approximately 35K to 480K. One such composition Dy_{0.4}Sm_{0.6}FeO₃ has been reported to exhibit SRT around 240-270K. This compound has been selected for further exploration in this study [10-12].

Extensive investigation has been devoted to modify the properties of RFeO₃ compounds through doping at both the R-site and Fe-site, as the structural and multiferroic properties of ABO₃ perovskites can be effectively tailored by substitution at either the A-site or B-site [13-16]. It has been reported that the synthesis methods significantly influence the properties of materials. Various techniques have been employed for the preparation of RFeO₃, including Sol-gel, hydrothermal and solid-state reaction method etc [16-20].

The Sol-gel synthesis route is widely recognised as a versatile and effective synthesis technique, offering advantages such as improved chemical homogeneity, precise stoichiometric control and high purity compared to other approaches [1]. In this method critical synthesis parameters such as chelating agent, calcinations and sintering temperatures significantly impact the structural and functional properties of the compound. Recent studies have emphasized the critical role of selecting suitable chelating agent and optimizing sintering temperature in synthesizing YFeO₃ nanomaterials [21,22]. It has been reported that 800°C sintering temperature yields better results in case of SmFeO₃ [23], while 1000°C is more effective for ErFeO₃ [24], similar findings have been made for DyFeO₃ and LaFeO₃ [25,26].

The present study focuses on exploring how sintering temperature affects the structural and magnetic properties of Dy_{0.4}Sm_{0.6}FeO₃, hereafter referred to as DSFO.

Experimental Method

Polycrystalline $\text{Dy}_{0.4}\text{Sm}_{0.6}\text{FeO}_3$ (DSFO) samples were synthesized via the Sol-gel route and subsequently sintered at 800°C , 1000°C and 1200°C . Stoichiometric amounts of $\text{Dy}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Sm}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{Fe}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ were dissolved in deionised water with stirring to achieve a homogenous solution. Specific amount of citric acid was added as a chelating agent, and the pH of the solution was adjusted to 6-7 by adding adequate amount of ammonium hydroxide. The solution was stirred consistently and heated at 80°C until a dense and viscous gel formed, after which ethylene glycol is added. The gel was then subjected to continuous heating at 150°C yielding a black powder through auto-combustion. This powder was calcinated at 600°C for 4 hours, further ground and pressed into 10mm diameter circular pellets. These pellets were sintered in air atmosphere at 800°C , 1000°C and 1200°C for 4 hours to study the effects of sintering temperature on the material properties. X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements were carried out using a Brucker D8 Advanced diffractometer with Cu-K α radiation. Room temperature magnetization measurements were performed using a commercial Vibrating Sample Magnetometer (VSM). Room temperature Mössbauer spectroscopy was conducted in transmission geometry using $^{57}\text{Co}(\text{Rh})$ radioactive source with standard PC based Mössbauer spectrometer.

Results and Discussion:

Structural characterisation of prepared samples was performed with using Rietveld refinement of XRD with FullProf software, assuming an orthorhombic crystal structure with Pbnm space group. X-ray diffraction analysis is a versatile tool for extracting the detailed structural information and also the structural phase purity of the prepared samples intertwined the magnetic phase transitions, and the crystallinity can significantly influence the saturation magnetization and the coercivity of the samples.

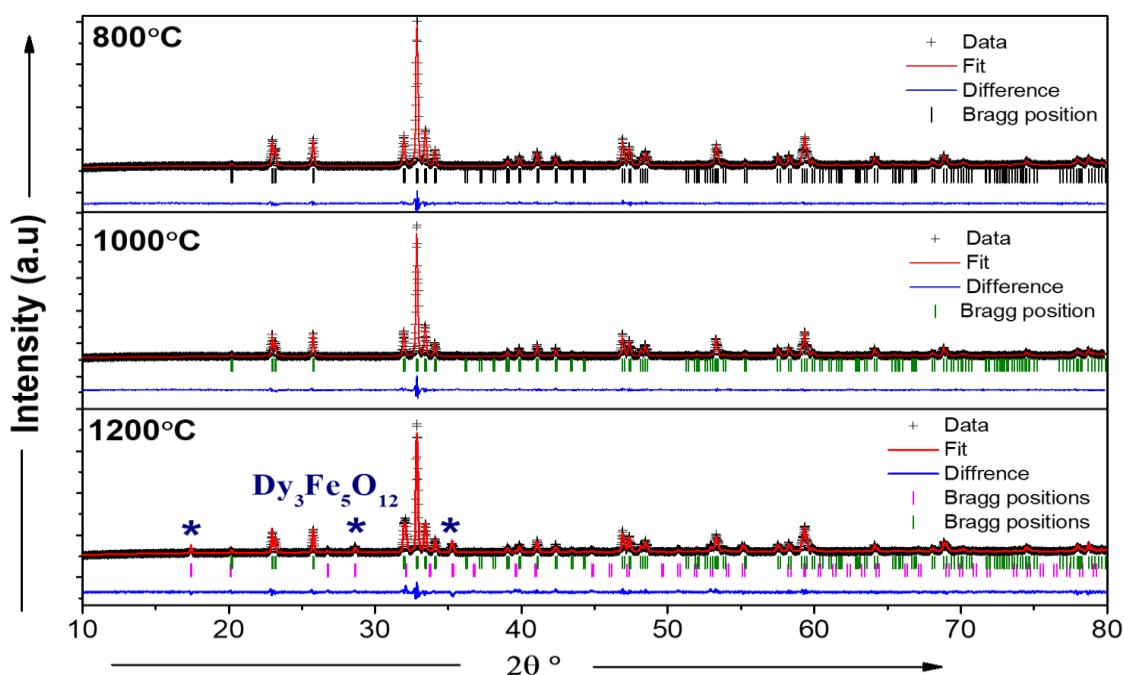


Fig.1. Rietveld refined X-ray diffraction pattern of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C , 1000°C and 1200°C

XRD patterns of the DSFO samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C presented in Fig. 1. All the samples exhibit orthorhombic perovskite structure in consistent with literature [1]. However, a minor secondary phase Dy₃Fe₅O₁₂ garnet impurity was observed in samples intered at 1200°C. This garnet phase formation attributed to partial transformation of orthorhombic perovskite into a cubic garnet structure under high temperature conditions as reported earlier [1,11]. The variation in unit cell volume, with sintering temperature shown in Fig. 2a. Aslight linear increment observed in lattice parameters and unit cell volume with increasing sintering temperature due to thermal expansion with increased sintering temperature. However, a reduction in unit cell volume noticed for the samples intered at 1200°C may be associated with the formation of garnet impurity phase. A similar trend was observed in the intensity and FWHM of Bragg peaks. The variation in intensity of most intense peak (112) along with its corresponding peak width (FWHM, $\Delta 2\theta = 2\theta_2 - 2\theta_1$) as a function of sintering temperature is graphically illustrated in Fig. 2b. The increase in the peak intensity accompanied by a decrease in FWHM from 800°C to 1000°C indicates reduced lattice strain and enhanced crystallinity. However, the subsequent decrease in intensity and broadening of FWHM at 1200°C suggests a deterioration in phase purity and crystallinity likely associated with formation of Dy₃Fe₅O₁₂ secondary phase at elevated sintering temperature.

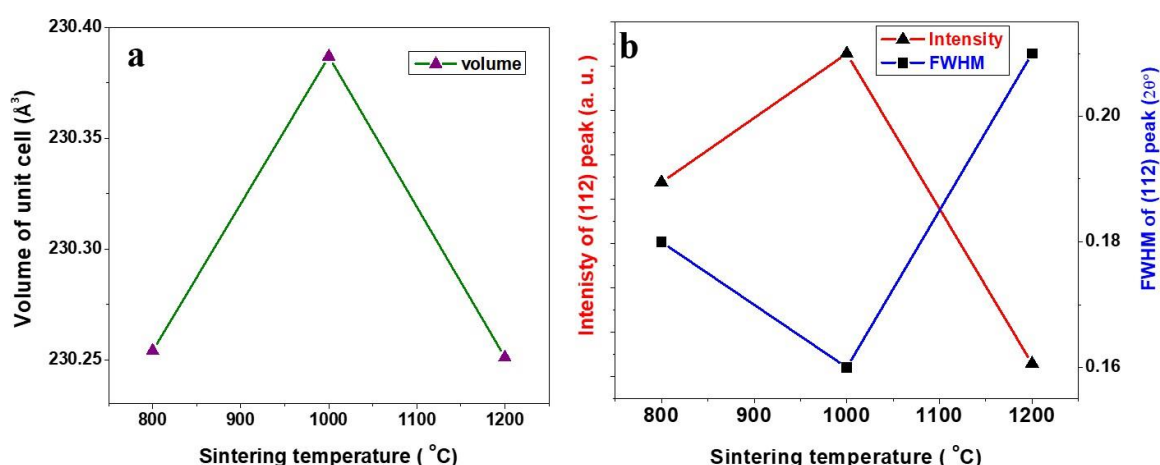


Fig. 2. a). The variation in unit cell volume, b). intensity of (112) most intense peak and corresponding peak FWHM, as a function of sintering temperature of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C. Similar trend was noticed in the measurements of bond lengths and bond angles [1]. As light increment in Fe-O bond lengths was observed from 800°C to 1000°C followed by minor reduction at 1200°C. These results suggest that elevated thermal energy not only influences the Fe-O coordination environment. From the experimental observations, it is evident that, increasing the sintering temperature from 800°C to 1000°C enhances the crystallinity and reduces the lattice strain in DSFO. However, further increase to 1200°C induces phase transformation and emergence of impurity phases. Therefore, 1000°C is identified as an optimal sintering temperature for achieving superior structural quality in DSFO sample. The magnetic behaviour of RFeO₃ compounds is primarily governed by the Fe³⁺ spin arrangement and underlying magnetic symmetry. The arrangement of FeO₆ octahedra in which Fe³⁺ ion is coordinated by six O²⁻ ions and each oxygen ion is shared between two neighbouring octahedra, facilitating Fe³⁺-O²⁻-Fe³⁺ super-exchange interactions. According to the Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya (DM) anti-symmetric exchange mechanism, the spins of adjacent Fe³⁺ ions are slightly canted.

rather than perfectly antiparallel, leading to acanted antiferromagnetic ordering with a weak ferromagnetic component [10,16]. The variation of magnetization with the applied magnetic field of DSFO samples sintered at different temperatures was investigated and these were illustrated in Fig. 3. The absence of saturation magnetisation in these M-H loops indicates that, all the samples exhibit antiferromagnetic behavior with weak ferromagnetic component [10,13].

The corresponding magnetisation parameters, including Remanent magnetisation (M_r), maximum magnetisation (M_m - magnetisation measured at an applied field of 20000 Oe) and coercive magnetic field (H_c) values were summarised in table 2.

Table 2. Room temperature of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C

Sintering temperature	M – H at 300 K		
	M_r (emu / g)	H_c (Oe)	M_m (emu/g)
800°C	0.31	3343	1.32
1000°C	0.57	3562	2.51
1200°C	0.62	3274	2.79

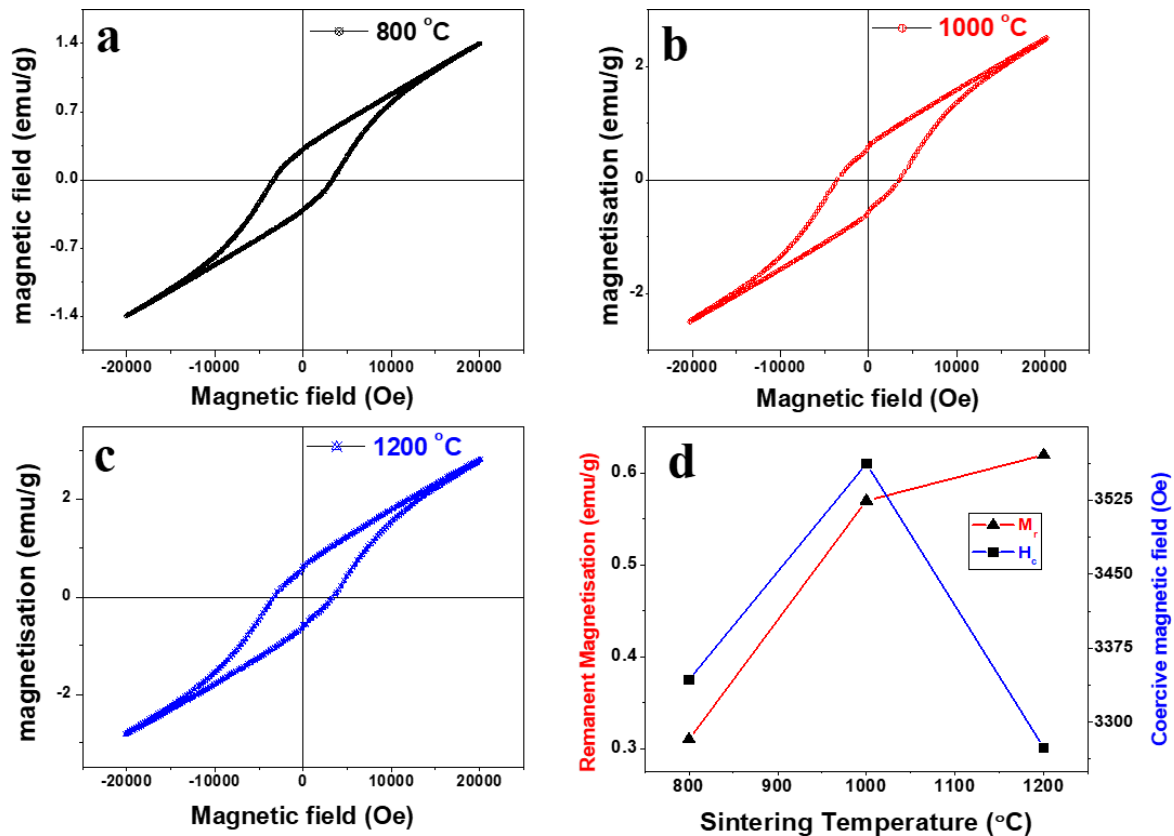


Fig. 3. Room temperature M-H hysteresis loops of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C Fig. (a),

1000°C Fig.(b) and 1200°C Fig. (C). The variation of M_r and H_c values as a function of sintering temperature represented in Fig. (d). It is noticed that, an increasing sintering temperature results in noticeable enhancement in both the M_r and M_m , with the more significant changes observed from 800°C to 1000°C compared to changes between 1000°C to 1200°C (see Fig. 3(d)). The magnetization is strongly influenced by the local ionic distribution within the FeO_6 octahedra and their super-exchange interactions.

The observed increase in lattice parameters and Bragg peak intensities from the XRD analysis indicates the improved crystallinity and reduced octahedral distortion in FeO_6 , correlates the enhanced magnetic properties. However, the observed non-linear trend in the variation of M_r and M_m from 1000°C to 1200°C is attributed to impurity phase. Further more, the variations in Fe-O bond lengths corroborates the changes observed in magnetisation.

A noticeable increase in coercive field was observed as the sintering temperature rise from 800°C to 1000°C (See Fig. 3(d)). Coercivity is primarily influenced by lattice strain (defects) and domain wall interactions. The enhanced domain wall interactions make it harder to reverse the magnetisation, thereby increasing the coercivity of the sample. In present study, the observed narrowing of Bragg peak widths in the XRD patterns indicates a reduction in lattice strain and improved crystallinity, which in turn promotes stronger domain wall interactions- accounting for increased coercive field from 800°C to 1000°C. However, subsequent reduction observed in coercive field for the sample sintered at 1200°C is attributed to impurity phases and decline in crystallinity, which likely diminish domain wall interactions.

The M-H analysis reveals that, increasing the sintering temperature from 800°C to 1000°C leads to a notable enhancement in magnetic properties of DSFO samples, however decline in these parameters is observed for 1200°C, suggesting the sample sintered at 1000°C exhibit higher values of M_r , M_m and H_c compared to other samples.

Mössbauer spectroscopy offers critical insights into the electronic environment of iron atoms in the sample, particularly about their oxidation states and coordination geometry. Variations in peak width and intensity of Mössbauer peaks are closely associated with the changes in the structural and magnetic ordering, which are influenced by external factors such as sintering temperature and elemental doping. Isomer shift in Mössbauer spectroscopy is related to the electron density at the nucleus and provides direct information about the oxidation state and bonding environment of the iron atoms. Hyperfine field reveals the details about the magnetic orderings within the sample. Additionally, broadening of Mössbauer peaks is signature of the lattice strain and phonon interactions at elevated temperatures [27]. The room temperature Mössbauer spectra of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C are presented in Fig. 4.

The spectra were analysed using the NORMOS-SITE software, assuming a single sextet configuration consistent with the polycrystalline nature of the samples [15,27]. The intensity ratio of the magnetically ordered components is fixed at 3:2:1: 1:2:3. The extracted Mössbauer parameters are summarised in table 3.

The relatively low isomer shift values observed across all DSFO samples confirm the presence of Fe^{3+} state. A slight increase noticed in the hyperfine field with rising sintering temperature, with more

pronounced from 800°C to 1000°C than 1000°C to 1200°C, indicating the enhanced magnetic ordering, in agreement with the magnetisation parameters obtained from M-H hysteresis loops. A minor decrease in spectral line width from 800°C to 1000°C suggests reduce in lattice strain and distortion within the FeO₆ octahedra. Conversely, the peak broadening at 1200°C is attributed to reduced crystallinity and the presence of impurity phase, the same is corroborate with the XRD data. The Mössbauer study demonstrates that the sample sintered at 1000°C exhibits superior magnetic characteristics and structural quality compared to other samples.

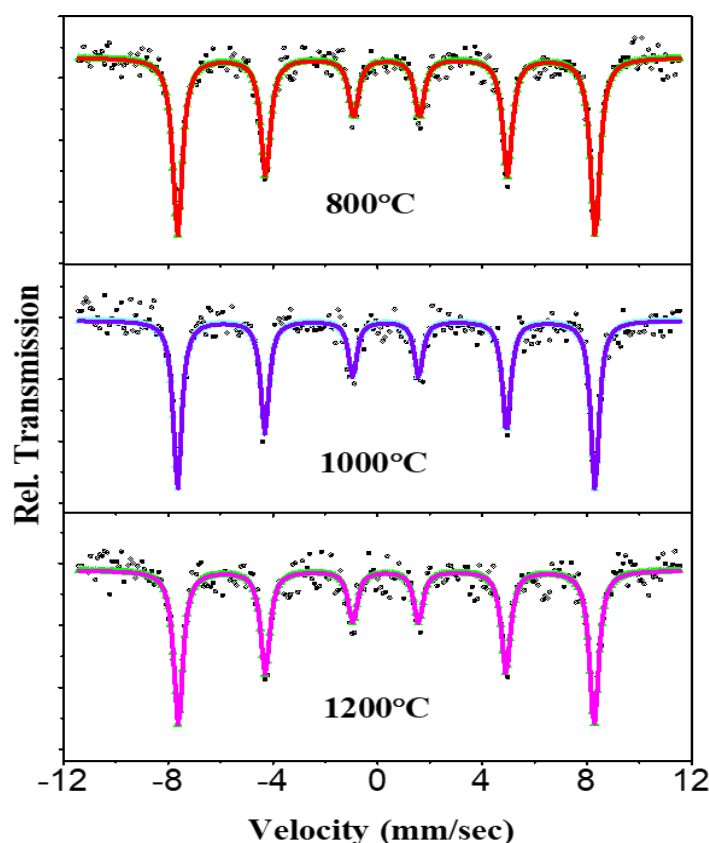


Fig.4. Room temperature Mössbauer spectrum of DSFO ortho ferrite samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C.

Table 3. Room temperature Mössbauer parameters of DSFO orthoferrite samples sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C

Parameters	800°C	1000°C	1200°C
Isomer shift (mm/s)	0.34 (0.002)	0.32 (0.003)	0.32 (0.001)
Quadrupole splitting (mm/s)	0.01 (0.010)	0.02 (0.010)	0.02 (0.030)
Hyperfine field (Tesla)	49.20 (0.020)	49.40 (0.030)	49.42 (0.020)
Line width	0.44 (0.030)	0.38 (0.020)	0.42 (0.010)

Conclusions:

The structural and magnetic properties of polycrystalline DSFO synthesized via the sol-gel method and sintered at 800°C, 1000°C and 1200°C have been systematically investigated. X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis confirms that samples sintered at 800°C and 1000°C exhibit a single-phase orthorhombic, whereas the samples sintered at 1200°C contain a small amount of Dy₃Fe₅O₁₂ cubic impurity. As the linear increase in lattice parameters, unit cell volume and Fe-O bond lengths with the increasing sintering temperature observed, whereas slight reduction was noted at 1200°C due to impurity. The increase in the intensity of (112) peak along with decrease in its FWHM with rising sintering temperature, suggests improved structural quality and reduced lattice strain leading to lower distortion in the FeO₆ octahedra. Crystalline size calculation further reveals improved crystallinity increases from 800°C to 1000°C, however, a slight decline is observed at 1200°C likely due to impurity phase. The magnetization data (M-H) demonstrates a clear increase in magnetisation with rising sintering temperature. The enhancement in magnetisation (M_r and M_m) is more significant from 800°C to 1000°C compared to 1200°C. However, a slight reduction in coercive field observed in 1200°C sample probably due to presence of impurity phases and decrease in crystallinity, which may weaken the domain wall interactions and thus reduce coercivity. Mössbauer spectra shows a gradual increase in the hyperfine field with rising sintering temperature, indicating enhanced magnetic ordering. The observed lower isomer shift across all samples suggests the presence of Fe³⁺ state.

As the narrowing of spectral line width from 800°C to 1000°C indicates reduced lattice strain and lower octahedral distortion. However, the peak broadening at 1200°C is attributed to reduced crystallinity and the presence of impurity phase. Overall observations collectively demonstrate that the sintering DSFO sample at 1000°C yields optimal structural and magnetic properties compared to the samples sintered at 800°C and 1200°C.

Acknowledgements

Author is thankful to UGC DAE CSR, Indore, for providing the XRD, Mössbauer measurements.

Conflict of Interest:

The author has no conflict of interest regarding the research.

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