

# Oxidation of Toluene over LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> Perovskite catalysts. A comparative study

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## Abstract:

Vapour phase catalytic oxidation of toluene over perovskites Viz., LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> has been studied. The characterization of the catalyst was carried out using technique Viz. I.R., Surface area, Packing density. Surface acidity, Surface basicity. The surface area measurements in the temperature range 350°C to 600°C. The maximum surface area & maximum activity was observed at 450°C.

The heterogeneous catalytic vapour phase oxidation of toluene give benzaldehyde, benzoic acid, maleic acid and CO<sub>2</sub> as products over LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> as catalyst. The LaCoO<sub>3</sub> supported on Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> has been found to be the most active and selective catalyst giving 84.0% selectivity for benzaldehyde at 450°C with surface area 78.9 m<sup>2</sup>/g. The overall Kinetic analysis indicate that the oxidation of Toluene to benzaldehyde is first order. The order of catalytic reactivity is LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> > LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The selectivity and activity of catalyst is correlated to surface area values.

**Keywords:** Oxidation, Toluene, Catalysis, Supported, Surface area, Benzaldehyde.

## Introduction:

Perovskites type oxides are known to be catalyst for a number of reactions such as total partial Oxidation, Hydrocracking, hydrogenation, hydrogenolysis and reduction etc. Amongst the more important reactions in which these compounds have been used as catalyst are oxidation of CO<sup>[1-4]</sup>, CH<sub>4</sub><sup>[5]</sup>, NH<sub>3</sub><sup>[6]</sup>, Methanol<sup>[7]</sup>, Olefins<sup>[8]</sup>, Paraffin<sup>[9-11]</sup>, Aromatic compounds<sup>[12-16]</sup>, Hydrogenation<sup>[17]</sup> and oxygenate<sup>[18]</sup>. The oxidation of light Paraffin's as methane, propane and n-butane has been frequently taken as a test reaction for perovskites oxides. Effort has largely been directed towards synthesis of an unsupported and supported Perovskites, Oxides of moderates or high specific surface area, their bulk and surface properties and their role in heterogeneous catalysis. The vapour phase oxidation of toluene is of industrial importance. The partial oxidation of toluene over mix oxide has been studied but work with Perovskites is scanty. It was thought interesting to screen the catalytic activity of LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and compare their reactivity.

## Materials and Methods:

The LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst was prepared by the oxalate decomposition method<sup>[19]</sup>.

Preparation method:

LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> were prepared. A general method for preparing 20% LaCoO<sub>3</sub> on Alumina is follows-Aqueous solution of La(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O(7.2gm), Co(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O(4.73gm), Concentrate oxalic acid and Alumina (20gm) were mixed in a beaker and then transferred to china dish. The contents were heated at 1000°C in a muffle furnace to get the desired catalyst. The catalyst LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> was prepared by amorphous precursors citrate decomposition method<sup>[20]</sup>.

An aqueous solution of La(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O(2.4gm), Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.9H<sub>2</sub>O(2.3gm), citric acid(1.2gm) and alumina(20gm) were mixed in a beaker and then transferred to china dish. The content were heated at 650 °C in a muffle furnace to get the desired catalyst.

The surface area of catalyst was determined using ethylene glycol monoethylether (EGME) adsorption method<sup>[21,22]</sup> at different temperature. The surface acidity & surface basicity of perovskites catalyst were determined by n-butylamine titration<sup>[23]</sup> and phenol adsorption method<sup>[24]</sup> respectively. The experimental setup and the methods for the analysis of the products such as benzaldehyde, benzoic acid, maleic acid and carbon dioxide were the same as described elsewhere<sup>[25-28]</sup>. The I.R. spectra of the perovskites was recorded in KBr using Perkin-Elmer 883 spectrophotometer.

**Table 1- Characteristics of LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> Perovskite catalysts.**

Catalyst	Decomposition Temperature (°C)	Packing density (g/cc)	Acid strength n-butylamine titre, meq/g		Base strength n-butylamine titre, meq/g	I.R. frequency cm <sup>-1</sup>
			PKa=6.8 (Neutral red.)	PKa=4.8 (Methyl red.)	Bromo thymol blue PK <sub>1</sub> =7.2	
LaCoO <sub>3</sub> /Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	1000 °C	0.99	0.096	0.216	1.9	
LaFeO <sub>3</sub> /Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	650 °C	1.22	0.072	0.216	2.02	1400, 560

Table 2- Activity and Selectivity data.

Catalyst	Surface area m <sup>2</sup> /g	Reaction Temp. °C	Conversion % to				Total Conversion	% selectivity to BzH
			Bz H	Bz A	M A	CO <sub>2</sub>		
LaCoO <sub>3</sub> /Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	70.4	350	10.4	3.2	1.9	2.0	17.5	59.4
	74.0	400	13.4	1.0	2.2	2.9	19.5	68.7
	78.9	450	17.9	1.2	1.1	1.1	21.3	84.0
	71.0	550	12.0	3.0	2.4	2.0	19.4	61.8
	61.0	600	9.6	3.1	2.0	2.4	17.1	56.1
LaFeO <sub>3</sub> /Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	40.1	350	7.6	2.0	1.7	1.9	13.2	57.5
	45.1	400	8.0	2.1	1.9	2.0	14.0	57.1
	53.0	450	13.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	16.2	80.2
	49.0	550	9.2	2.9	2.1	1.8	16.0	57.5
	47.4	600	8.1	3.1	2.4	2.1	15.7	51.5

The oxidation was studied at space velocities (2998) temperature 350°C, 400°C, 450°C, 550°C and 600°C at air toluene ratio (121) respectively.

## Results and Discussion

The catalyst was characterized using techniques Viz; I.R., Surface area, packing density, surface acidity and surface basicity. The result of these studies has been incorporated in table 1 and 2. The surface area measurements in the temperature range 350°C to 600°C (Table II) shows that surface area of the catalyst increases with increase in temperature up to 450°C but on further increase in temperature the surface area decreases. The specific surface area for different catalyst was found to follow the order LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> > LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The surface acidity and basicity measurements show that LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> have both acidic and basic sites. The LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> is more basic than LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. The order of packing density for catalyst is LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> > LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> were subjected to toluene oxidation. The oxidation of toluene gave benzaldehyde (BzH), benzoic acid (BzA), maleic acid (MA) and CO<sub>2</sub> as the products.

The formation of benzaldehyde as a function of temperature and aerial activity of LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> at 350°C, 400°C, 450°C, 550°C and 600°C are presented in Table 2. The rate of formation of BzH in the beginning is higher on both catalysts. An initial increase in temperature from 350 °C to 450 °C shows an increase in the percentage conversion of BzH from 59.4% to 84.0% on LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (Specific surface area of LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> increases from 70.4 m<sup>2</sup>/g to 78.9 m<sup>2</sup>/g). On LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> from 57.5% to 80.2% (Specific surface area of LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> increases from 40.1 m<sup>2</sup>/g to 53.0 m<sup>2</sup>/g).

Further increase in temperature from 450 °C to 600 °C decreases the percent conversion of benzaldehyde (Table 2). Thus in the present investigation the catalyst have been found to be active as well as selective at 450 °C for the partial oxidation of toluene. The increase in activity up to 450 °C can be ascribed to increasing removal of trace surface contaminant such as adsorbed gases, hydroxy species of adsorbed water [28-29] and to the generation of stoichiometric or structural defects such as anion vacancies or disorders and exposed metal ions, which serves as catalytic sites [30]. The decrease in activity observed above 450 °C may be due to a decrease in surface disorder due to the relatively high mobility of O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> ions in the lanthanide sesquioxides [31] and resulting in the formation of low surface area at 600 °C.

From the result it has been seen that the catalyst is highly select in the oxidation of toluene. The selectivity and activity of catalyst is correlated to surface area values. The most selective and active catalyst is LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst because it has more surface area value than LaFeO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst.

The difference in catalytic activity of these Perovskites heated at different temperature can also be related to the different degrees of heterogeneity of the surface of these oxide [32,33]. This is caused by terraces, steps, Kinks, Vacancies etc., having atoms with different degrees of unsaturated and with unusual oxidation states which may play an important role in catalysis.

Voorhoeve et al [34] have suggested that the catalytic activity of LaCoO<sub>3</sub> for CO Oxidation increases with increasing Co<sup>2+</sup> content in the sample. Bhide et al. [35] have shown that in the temperature range employed in the present study LaCoO<sub>3</sub> contains Co<sup>2+</sup> and Co<sup>4+</sup> besides low and high spin Co<sup>3+</sup> and their relative concentrations depend on the temperature.

Based on Haber et al [36]: It can be suggested that toluene activated by the abstraction of hydrogen atom is attacked by a nucleophilic O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> ion. It can further be suggested that benzaldehyde appears when O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> ion approaches the -CH<sub>2</sub> group from the direction perpendicular to the benzene ring. This is precisely the direction from which nucleophilic addition of a surface O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> ion of an oxide catalyst could be expected if the toluene molecule were adsorbed side on at an site of the surface through its π electron system. It can thus be concluded that oxidation of toluene to benzaldehyde at the surface of a catalyst is a nucleophilic oxidation.

## Conclusion:

The most selective and active catalyst is LaCoO<sub>3</sub>/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> catalyst at 450 °C for the partial oxidation of toluene. The selectivity and activity of catalyst is correlated to surface area value.

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