



Improved Photocatalytic Degradation of Methyl Orange Dye in UV Light Irradiation by $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ Nanorods

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Abstract: The $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods (KTNRs) were synthesized by Molten Salt Solution method (MSS) using TiO_2 nanoparticles and potassium chloride as precursors. As synthesized KTNRs was characterized by powder X-ray diffraction to know the crystallinity, scanning electron microscopy confirms the rod type morphology with diameter 10 to 12 nm with length up to 80 nm, functional groups were studied with FT-IR spectroscopy, optical property of KTNRs showed the bandgap energy $E_g = 3.41$ eV by UV-Vis spectrophotometry. The synthesized KTNRs was used as photocatalyst for degradation of the methyl orange dye under UV light illumination. The degradation of methyl orange dye followed the pseudo first order rate law. The kinetics and mechanism of MO dye degradation dye was studied for different photocatalyst dosage 5, 10 and 15 mg of KTNRs, maximum for rate constant is found for 10 mg of photocatalyst.

Keywords: Photocatalyst, Potassium Titanate nanorods, methyl orange degradation.

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INTRODUCTION

The purification of water contaminated by cyanide is refined by titanium dioxide (TiO_2) by photocatalytic method (1) for the first time. After that the research community has investigated many nanocomposite materials with different nanostructured materials were used to find the solutions for environmental pollution problem. These nanocomposites were more attractive for environmental issues because of their properties like non-toxic, photo-stable, low cost, and insoluble in water.

Similarly, the nanocomposites consisting of one-dimensional (1 D) nanostructures like nanowire, nanotubes, nanobelts, and nanorods have also engrossed the extraordinary interests due to their size dependent optical, magnetic, chemical, electronic, mechanical, and thermal properties and

their promising applications in nanodevices (2-8). Even though there are large number of nanomaterials, titanium dioxide-related materials and their one-dimensional nano structured materials because of large specific surfaces and there by improving promising applications in decontamination, purification and decomposition of environmental pollutants photocatalytically (9-12).

Beside the high photocatalytic activity, potassium titanate has the distinctive crystal structure made up of layered titanium oxide layers and inter layer cations, which exhibits the brilliant ion exchange and intercalation ability. The general formula of potassium titanates consists of $K_2Ti_nO_{2n+1}$. Numerous methods have been developed to synthesize one-dimensional potassium titanates' nanostructures (13) with flux method (14-17). Alkali metal titanates such as $K_2Ti_4O_9$ and $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ have great mechanical property by incorporating

metals and plastics (18,19). Many researchers follow the hydrothermal method (20–22) for synthesizing the 1-D $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanostructures. In this work, we have reported the synthesis of $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods by molten salt solution method and their potential application as photocatalyst in degrading the methyl orange dye in UV light irradiation are investigated.

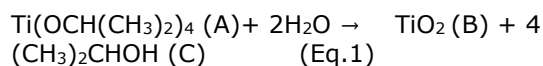
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

Potassium chloride (99%) was purchased from SD Fne Chemicals, titanium (IV) isopropoxide (97%) and methyl orange were procured from Sigma Aldrich. The chemicals procured are of analytical grade and used without any further purification. Milli Q, deionized (DI) water is used throughout the experiment for preparing the solutions.

Synthesis of TiO_2 nanoparticles

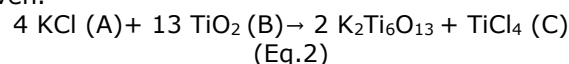
Initially, titanium(IV) isopropoxide of 2 mL volume was added to 25 mL of DI water and continuously stirred using magnetic stirrer at 400 rpm for 30 minutes at room temperature; the resultant solution was further transferred to a silica crucible and heated at 150 °C using electric bunsen burner leading to the formation of TiO_2 nanoparticles as titanium(IV) isopropoxide reacts with water, leaving other components to evaporate. The resultant powder was dried at 120 °C for 2 h and then fine ground for 5 minutes in an agate mortar (23).



- (A) titanium (IV) isopropoxide
(B) titanium dioxide
(C) Iso propyl alcohol

Synthesis of $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods

The potassium titanate nanorods are synthesized by using molten salt solution method. 0.05 g of titanium dioxide nanoparticles and 7.5 g of potassium chloride were thoroughly mixed and ground consistently in an agate mortar for 0.5 h. Then an alumina crucible is obtained and the mixture is transferred to it and annealed at 850 °C for 3 h in the furnace. At this higher temperature, the reaction mixture would be in molten state. The alumina crucible is allowed to cool naturally to reach room temperature and in this cooling step crystallinity of the $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ would take place in the presence of molten potassium chloride. The synthesized product was collected, washed many times to remove the unreacted potassium chloride with DI, and dried at 80 °C overnight in hot air oven.



- (A) Potassium chloride
(B) Titanium dioxide
(C) Titanium(IV) chloride

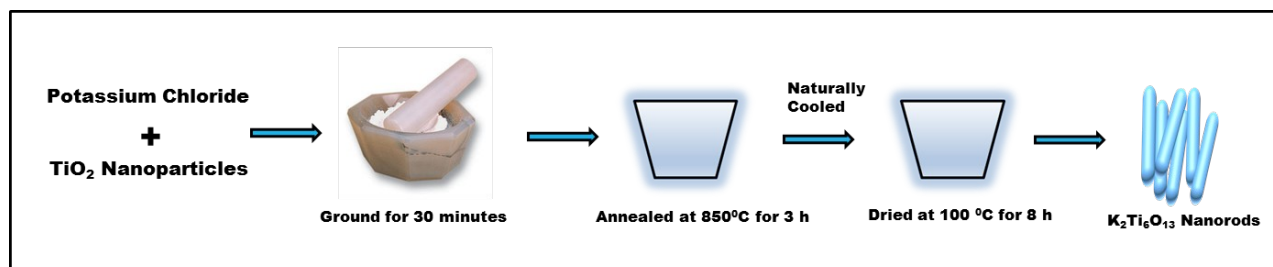


Figure 1: Schematic representation of Synthesis of $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods.

Characterization Techniques

The synthesized $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods were characterized by various advanced analytical spectroscopic methods such as the powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) study were performed using Rigaku Ultima IV diffractometer using Cu K α radiation with $\lambda=0.15406$ nm in the range 10° - 70° for phase confirmation. In transmittance mode UV-Visible absorption spectrophotometry was performed by a Perkin Elmer Lambda 750 in the range of 200-800 nm. The Optical Bandgap E_g was measured by plotting $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ versus photon energy E_v . Morphology of the synthesized $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods were confirmed by Scanning Electron Microscopy Vega 3 Tescan. Functional group study

was performed by Fourier Transform Infrared spectroscopy with a Perkin Elmer Spectrum Two.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Powder XRD analysis

The powder X-ray diffraction patterns of as synthesized $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods was as shown in Figure 2. The XRD patterns were completely matched with the standard literature JCPDS card number 74-0275 with no additional impurities. The diffraction patterns indexed as pure monoclinic system with C2/m phase (24) of $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ with $a=15.58$ Å, $b=3.820$ Å, $c=9.112$ Å, and $\beta=99.764^\circ$. The intense diffraction peak corresponding to hkl values (200) was for 2θ ,

11.34 degrees. The crystallite size of the as synthesized product was calculated using Scherrer's equation: The size of the nanoparticles was calculated by using Scherrer's formula $D=0.9\lambda/\beta\cos\theta$ where D is the crystalline size, λ is

wavelength of X-rays, β is full width half maximum of the diffraction peak and θ is the Bragg's diffraction angle of the diffraction peaks. The average particle size was found to be and average crystallite found to be 52nm.

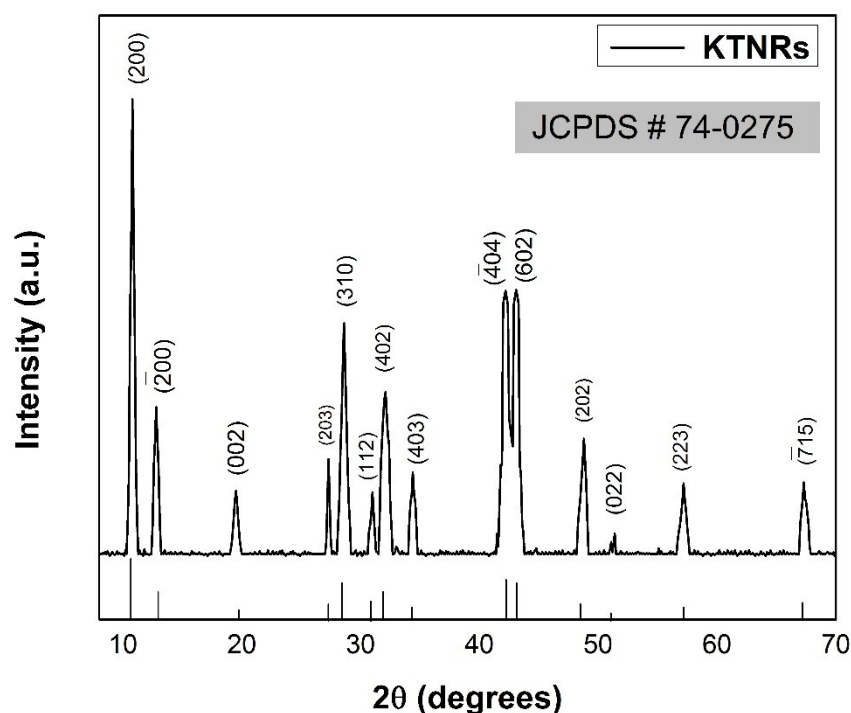


Figure 2: XRD patterns of potassium titanate nanorods.

Scanning Electron Microscopic analysis

The Scanning electron microscopic (SEM) images were used to analyze the morphology of the as-synthesized potassium titanate nanorods. Figure 4

a) and b) show the synthesized potassium titanate nanorods at 1.0 μm and 10 μm , respectively. Morphology of the samples were found to be rod-shaped.

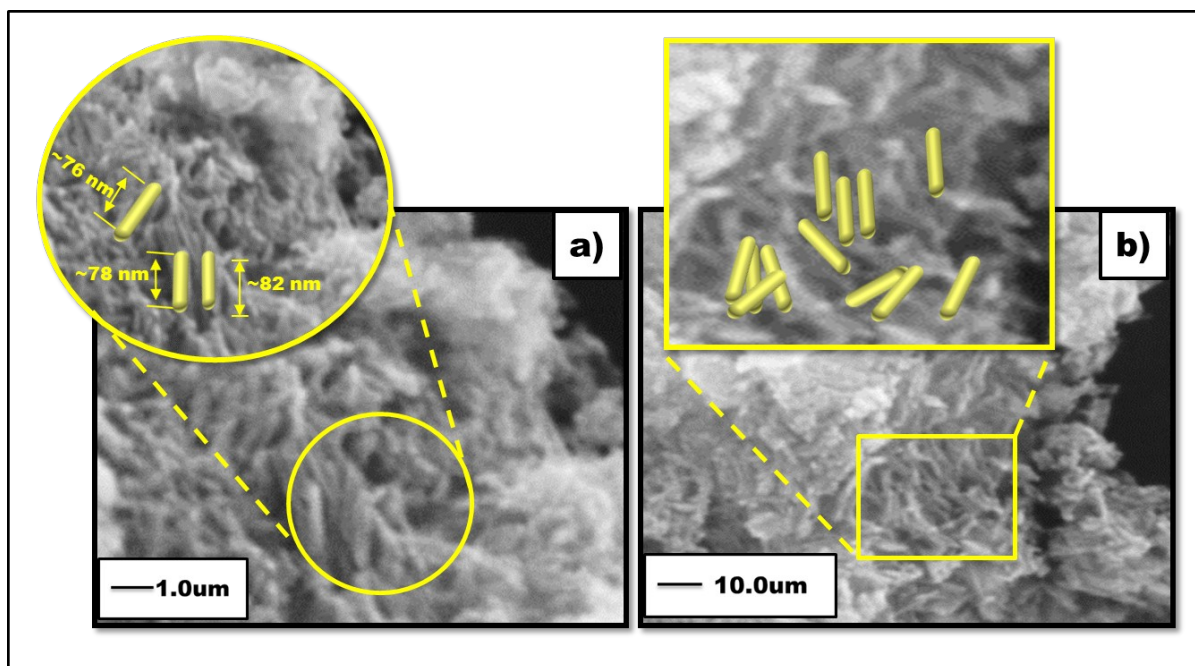


Figure 3: SEM images of K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods at magnifications **a)** 1.0 μm **b)** 10 μm.

EDAX analysis

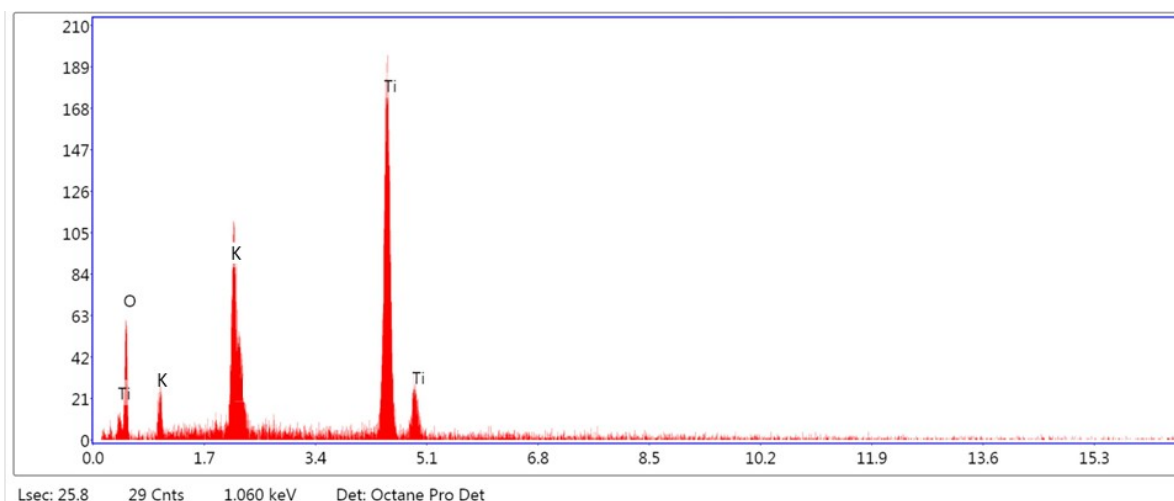


Figure 4: EDX elemental analysis spectra of K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods.

In order to determine the composition of the as synthesized products examined by Energy Dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDAX). Figure 4 shows the elemental analysis data.

Table 1: Elemental data of K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods.

Element	Weight %	Atomic %
O	24.28	42.73
K	9.53	13.81
Ti	66.19	43.46

The as-synthesized product from molten salt synthesis method are pure and free from

impurities and the ratio was found to be 1:3 for potassium to titanium atomic ratio.

UV-Visible spectrophotometry

The UV-Vis absorption spectra and Bandgap energy plot was shown in Figure 5 (a) & (b) Bandgap energy E_g plot. Absorption spectra for potassium titanate nanorods was $\lambda_{max} = 325$ nm (25). Because there is a transformation in the structure from spherical particle type to rod type. This creates a unique electronic property. Bandgap energy E_g is 3.41 eV for as-synthesized potassium titanate nanorods were calculated from the plot, $(ah\nu)^2$ v/s photon energy eV, which is very close to literature value (26).

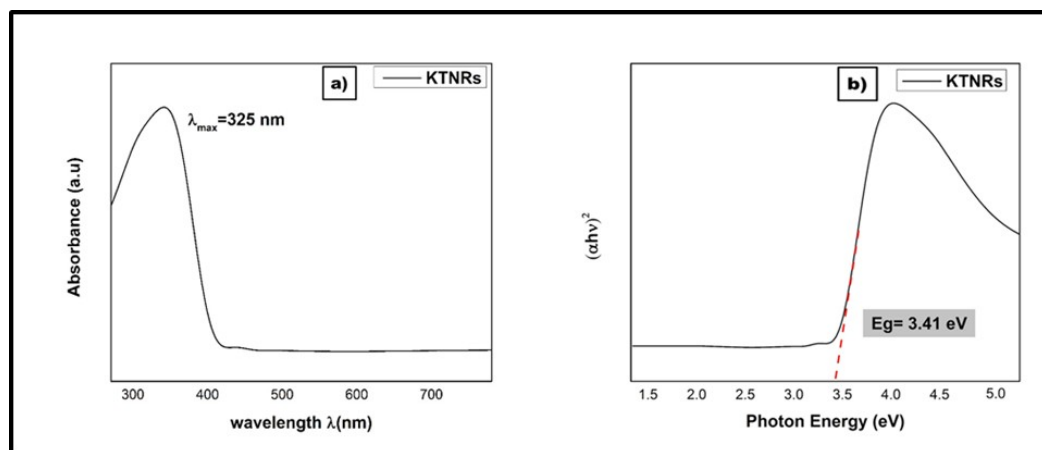


Figure 5 a) UV-Visible absorption plot absorbance (a.u.) v/s wavelength λ (nm) of KTNRs **b).** Bandgap energy E_g of KTNRs plot, $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ v/s photon energy eV.

FT IR analysis

FTIR for potassium titanate nanorods was as shown in Figure 6. The two prominent absorptions were observed at 3358.3 cm^{-1} and 1640.8 cm^{-1} which are designated to O-H bending vibrations

and H-O-H bending vibrations of the adsorbed water molecules. Ti-O bending vibrations were observed at 550 cm^{-1} . At 723.7 cm^{-1} is assigned to the vibration of Ti-O-Ti bond in the lattice (27).

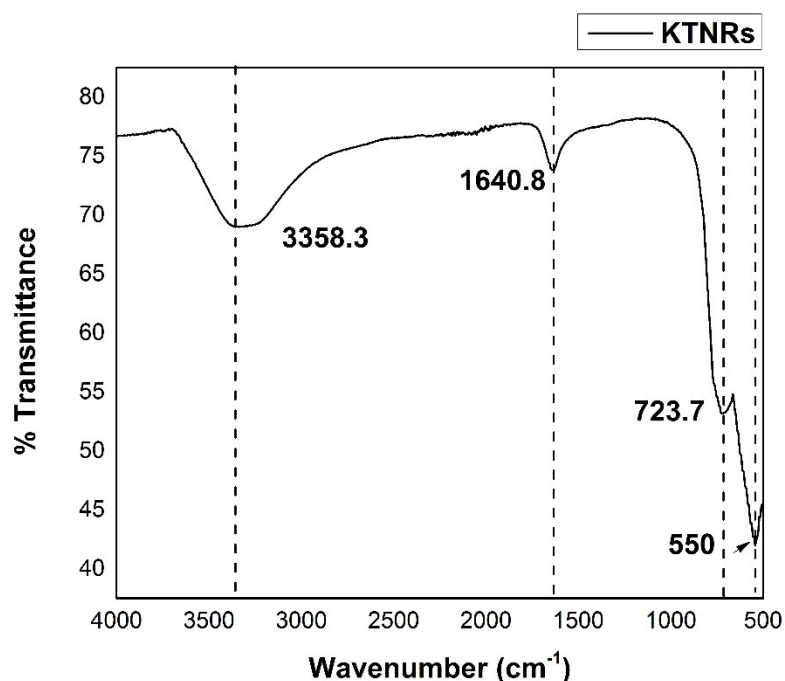


Figure 6: FTIR spectra of KTNRs.

Photocatalytic degradation of methyl orange dye

Under UV light illumination, the degradation of MO (4-[[[4-dimethylamino)phenyl]-azo]benzenesulfonic acid sodium salt) by the photocatalyst was analyzed by using an absorption-based on UV-Vis spectroscopic technique. Photocatalytic tests were carried out in a beaker made up of quartz (150 mL) under stirring at room temperature, being filled with an

aqueous suspension (100 mL) containing 10 ppm of MO dye and catalyst (0.10 g/L). A 300 W high pressure mercury lamp was positioned at 10 cm away from the quartz beaker, suspension was bubbled continuously with air.

Prior to irradiation, the solution mixture was ultrasonicated for 15 min, then stirred for 0.5 h in dark condition to achieve the adsorption/desorption equilibrium. The

concentration of MO after equilibrium was analyzed by recording the absorption band maximum (λ_{\max} 464 nm) in the absorption spectra and taken as the initial concentration (C_0). During the photocatalysis, the suspension was extracted at an interval of 30 min, concentration (C), (C/C_0) of MO during the photo degradation were proportional to the normalized maximum absorbance and derived from the changes in the dye's absorption profile at a given time interval. For comparison, $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods were characterized under the same conditions.

The degradation efficiency (n) was measured by using following formula $n=(1-C)/C_0$ where, C_0 is

the initial concentration before irradiation with light and C is the concentration of dye after irradiation. The degradation efficiency of MO was analyzed using UV-Vis spectrometer. Peaks were observed to be at 464 nm and were assigned as the absorption of the π -system (28), which was indicative of the degradation of methyl orange dye shown in Figure 7 a) and Percentage of degradation in 7 b). In Figure 7 c) Degradation of MO can be seen with time. Initially the absorbance was 0.9412 and gradually decreased with time and irradiation of UV-Vis light to 0.0252 at 240 min. The rate constant was found to be $0.000314 \text{ min}^{-1}$ for 10 mg of photocatalytic dosage.

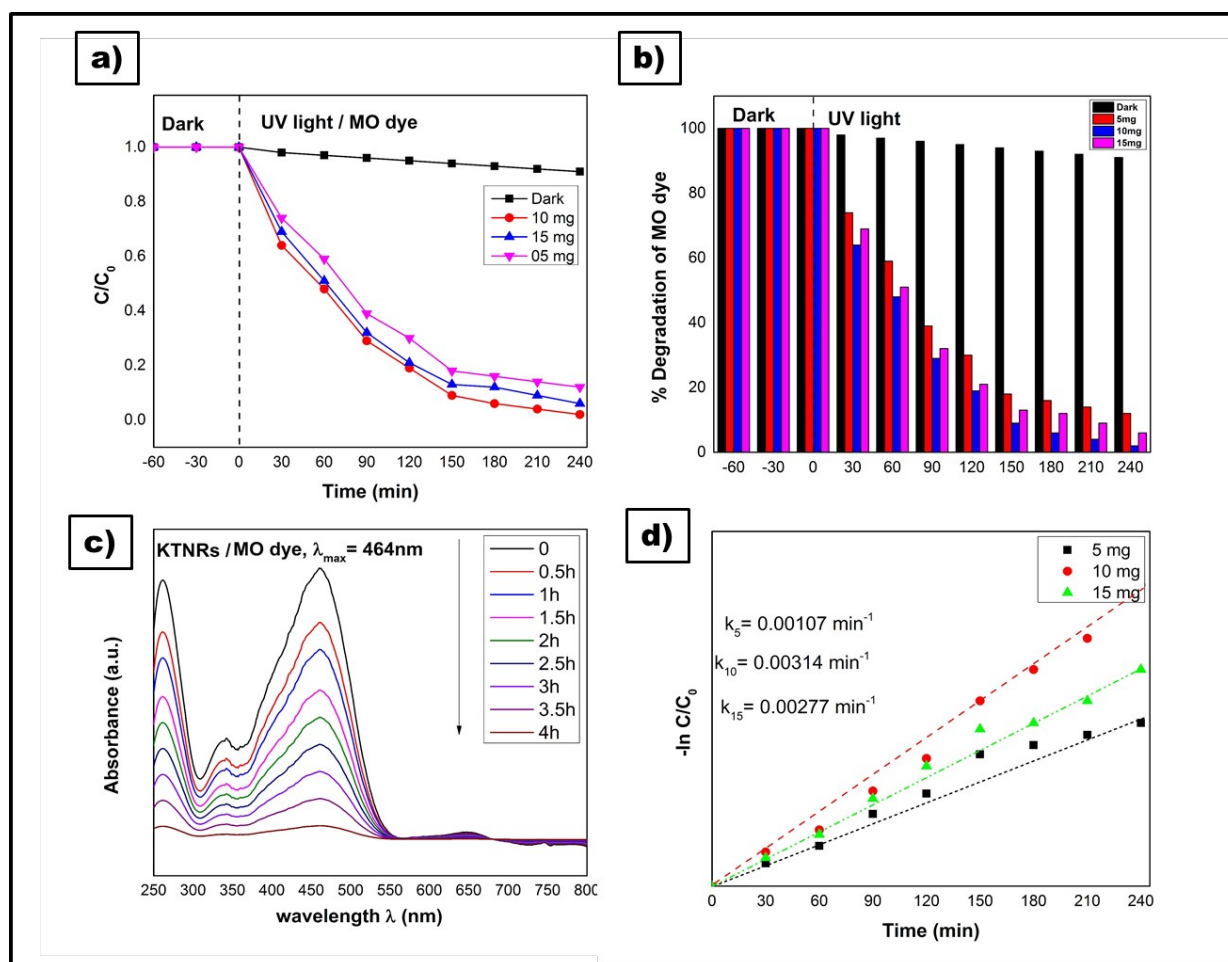


Figure 7: Photocatalytic degradation of $K_2Ti_6O_{13}$ nanorods of different photocatalyst loading **a)** Concentration C/C_0 v/s Irradiation Time (min) **b)** Percentage degradation v/s Irradiation Time (min) **c)** Absorbance (a. u.) v/s wavelength λ (nm) of 10 mg KTNRs **d)** rate constant plot: $-\ln C/C_0$ v/s Time (min)

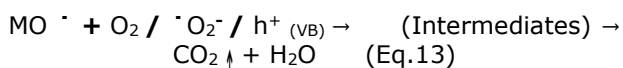
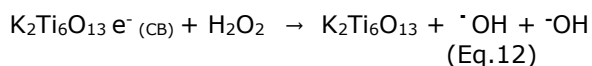
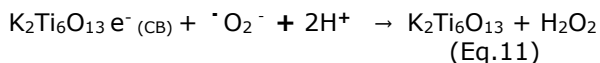
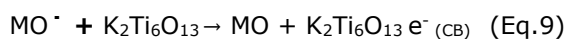
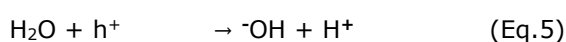
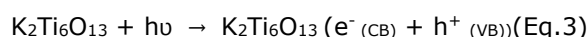
The same photocatalytic degradation reaction is repeated keeping all the conditions same but changing the weight of photocatalyst. The effect of photocatalytic dosage was varied from 5 mg and 15 mg. The rate constant was found more for 10 mg photocatalyst than 5 mg and 15 mg due to the availability of number of active sites on the surface

of the sample increases with increasing the amount of photocatalyst. In this way, the number of superoxide and hydroxyl radicals also increases. However, the rate of reaction decreases due to the covering the active sites of the suspension for photocatalyst. There by the light radiation will not fall on the active sites to proceed the reaction.

Table 2: Photocatalytic dosage and rate constant of the reaction for KTNRs.

For photocatalytic degradation of MO dye by KTNRs with 10 ppm concentration	Photocatalytic dosage		Rate constant, min ⁻¹	
	5 mg		0.000107	
	10 mg		0.000314	
	15 mg		0.000277	

The K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods has a structure as that of semiconductors, on irradiating to UV light generates the electron hole pairs after attaining the equilibrium/desorption in dark condition. The photo generated electron hole pairs follows the reaction and gradually degrade the MO dye to CO₂ and H₂O. The plausible reaction mechanism (29,30) as follows:



The degraded products are environmentally friendly. Hence the K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods can be used as promising photocatalysts for the degradation of methyl orange dye.

CONCLUSIONS

The potassium titanate nanorods were efficiently synthesized by molten salt solution method. The as synthesized K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods were in pure monoclinic phase with rod-like structure with average 10⁻¹² nm diameter and length up to 80 nm. The K₂Ti₆O₁₃ nanorods showed higher photocatalytic activity of azo dye methyl orange under UV light irradiation. Hence it exhibited as a prominent photocatalyst. Three different dosage such as 5, 10 and 15 mg was examined for photocatalytic activity, rate constant was maximum for 10 mg, even though as the size decreases the active site increases, but the rate of

reaction decreases due to the blocking of the active sites of the suspension for photocatalyst.

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