

## **THERMAL, SPECTRAL AND MAGNETIC PROPERTIES OF 2-HYDROXY-1,4-NAPHTHOQUINONE MONOXIMATES OF Ho(III), Er(III) AND Yb(III)**

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### **Abstract**

Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes of 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime derivatives having  $[ML_3(H_2O)_2]$  are characterized using spectral and thermal decomposition studies. The thermolytic patterns suggested that they are decomposed in three distinct stages; 1<sup>st</sup> stage is related to the loss of two coordinated water molecules while one of the coordinated ligands and remaining two ligands are lost during subsequent 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of degradation. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, the structure of these complexes is reorganized reflecting that the structural associations through intermolecular hydrogen bonding network is essential for thermal stability. The kinetic parameters computed for 2<sup>nd</sup> step using the non-isothermal procedures of Coats–Redfern are applied to the respective differential thermogravimetric plots to ascertain the thermal degradation mechanism in air. The order of thermal decomposition reaction is found to be between 1–2 indicating that more than one intermediate might have simultaneously been formed. It also reveals the intermixing of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stages of decomposition with the predominant 2<sup>nd</sup> stage leading to more gradual degradation. Energy of activation for 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of decomposition for these complexes is comparatively lower than those observed earlier for similar types of complexes. Other spectral data indicate oximino nitrogen and phenolato oxygen as coordination sites of 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone monoximates.

**Keywords:** Coats–Redfern, energy of activation, lanthanides complexes, quinone oximes, thermal degradation

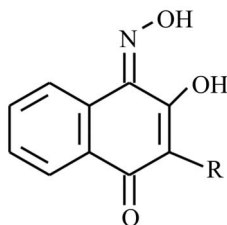
### **Introduction**

Lanthanide complexes, as a class of compounds, have gained significant attention because of their diversified applications such as: NMR shift reagents [1], catalysts in

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selective hydrogenation [2], asymmetric catalyst for enantioselective chemical transformations [3], liquid crystals and surfactants [4], in plastic optical fiber lasers and amplifiers [5], electroluminescent material [6] and molecular recognition and chirality sensing of biological substrates [7].

The coordination aspects of naphthoquinone derivatives towards various transition metals have been extensively explored [8–11] for better understanding of the structural peculiarities. Moreover, these complexes are also investigated for their biological properties. The thermal decomposition patterns of naphthoquinone chelates exhibited an oxidative degradation mechanism through the formation of semiquinone form of the ligand moieties [12, 13]. The solid-state deaquation stages for cobalt(II) and copper(II) complexes of  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  (Fig. 1) involving *trans*- and *cis*-isomers indicated the rearrangement type of mechanism during the loss of water molecules [14, 15]. Although, thermal and spectral behaviors of lanthanide complexes were explored recently [16, 17], there are very few reports on the thermal decomposition as well as structural properties of lanthanide complexes with quinones or their oxime derivatives which include the polymeric complexes of anthraquinone [18] and embelin [19], amino-naphthoquinone [20] and halolawsone monoximes [21].



**Fig. 1** Hydroxy naphthoquinone oxime ligating system.

$R=H$ ;  $L_1=2$ -hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime;  
 $R=CH_3$ ;  $L_2=3$ -methyl-2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime;  
 $R=Cl$ ;  $L_3=3$ -chloro-2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime;  
 $R=Br$ ;  $L_4=3$ -bromo-2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime;  
 $R=I$ ;  $L_5=3$ -iodo-2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-oxime

Recently, we have reported [22, 23] the antimicrobial activities of  $L_1$ – $L_5$  and their complexes with Ho(III) and Er(III) wherein it was observed that the activity of parent ligand is enhanced upon complexation with these metal ions. The present communication describes the thermal and spectral properties of Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes of  $L_1$ – $L_5$  (Fig. 1).

## Experimental

The hydrated Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) chlorides were obtained from Indian Rare Earth's Ltd., India. All the chemicals and solvents used were of analytical grade and the solvents were purified according to standard procedure [24] before use.

### *Synthesis of ligands*

Ligands L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub> (Fig. 1) were synthesized according to the literature reports [22, 23]. They were characterized using elemental analysis, IR, <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR studies wherein it was observed that there exists *amphi*-form of oximino function [23].

### *Synthesis of metal chelates*

A general procedure adopted for the synthesis of Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes was as follows:

To a hot solution of 3 mmol of oxime derivatives (L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub>) in 25 mL of ethanol, an aqueous solution of 1 mmol of hexahydrates of Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) chlorides was added with constant stirring. The pH of the resulting solution was maintained around 6–7 using aqueous NH<sub>3</sub>. After refluxing for 3 h and cooled overnight, the solid mass was filtered, washed with methanol and dried under vacuum over P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>. These complexes are abbreviated as Ho(III) complexes (Ho<sub>1</sub>–Ho<sub>5</sub>); Er(III) complexes (Er<sub>1</sub>–Er<sub>5</sub>) and Yb(III) complexes (Yb<sub>1</sub>–Yb<sub>5</sub>) with L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub>, respectively.

### *Physical measurements*

Elemental analyses were carried out using a Hosli-Holland C, H Analyzer. The magnetic susceptibility was measured [25] at room temperature on a Faraday type magnetic balance with a permanent magnetic field of 7000 G and the molecular susceptibilities were corrected for the diamagnetism of the component atoms by the use of Pascal's constants [26]. The instrument was calibrated with Hg[Co(SCN)<sub>4</sub>]. The infrared spectra were recorded in nujol mulls on a Perkin Elmer FTIR spectrophotometer (Model 1600) in the range 4000–400 cm<sup>-1</sup>. UV-visible spectral measurements (200–800 nm) were carried out on Shimadzu UV-300 spectrophotometer while thermogravimetric profiles were obtained on Perkin Elmer Delta (TGA-7) analyzer in air with a heating rate of 10°C min<sup>-1</sup>. The X-band powder ESR spectrum at RT was recorded on Bruker ER 200D-SRC spectrometer with 100 kHz field modulation unit which was calibrated using DPPH as standard.

## **Results and discussion**

All the poly-chelates are amorphous in nature, turmeric yellow – orange red in colour and insoluble in most of the organic solvents but are soluble in DMSO, DMF probably indicating presence of intermolecular hydrogen bonding contacts with neighboring molecules. Compositional studies (Table 1) suggested [ML<sub>3</sub>(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>2</sub>] stoichiometry with non-electrolyte nature.

### *Thermal studies*

The non-isothermal degradation profiles of ligands L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub> and their Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes are examined for the decomposition characteristics. The su-

**Table 1** Analytical data and magnetic moments of Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes of L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub>

Complex	Yield/%	Elemental analysis <sup>#</sup>				$\mu_{\text{eff}}$ /B.M.
		C/%	H/%	N/%	M/%	
Ho <sub>1</sub>	66.68	46.79 (47.07)	3.00 (2.90)	5.36 (5.49)	21.38 (21.55)	10.08
Ho <sub>2</sub>	67.47	48.77 (49.08)	3.12 (3.49)	5.13 (5.20)	20.36 (20.42)	10.30
Ho <sub>3</sub>	68.54	41.01 (41.48)	2.52 (2.20)	4.81 (4.84)	18.79 (18.98)	10.23
Ho <sub>4</sub>	69.37	36.02 (35.96)	2.25 (1.99)	3.98 (4.19)	16.23 (16.46)	10.27
Ho <sub>5</sub>	67.45	31.79 (31.52)	2.01 (1.68)	3.90 (3.68)	14.20 (14.43)	10.12
Er <sub>1</sub>	71.56	47.06 (46.93)	2.76 (2.89)	5.29 (5.47)	21.55 (21.78)	9.11
Er <sub>2</sub>	70.86	48.78 (48.94)	3.54 (3.48)	5.24 (5.19)	20.75 (20.65)	9.40
Er <sub>3</sub>	71.89	40.93 (41.36)	2.36 (2.19)	4.65 (4.82)	19.05 (19.20)	9.28
Er <sub>4</sub>	73.25	36.83 (37.09)	2.23 (1.97)	4.17 (4.33)	17.48 (17.21)	9.34
Er <sub>5</sub>	68.16	31.13 (31.46)	1.91 (1.67)	3.42 (3.67)	14.39 (14.60)	9.20
Yb <sub>1</sub>	74.12	46.12 (46.58)	2.57 (2.87)	5.18 (5.43)	22.54 (22.37)	4.13
Yb <sub>2</sub>	73.89	48.41 (48.60)	3.49 (3.46)	5.02 (5.15)	21.25 (21.22)	4.40
Yb <sub>3</sub>	70.52	40.82 (41.09)	2.36 (2.18)	4.59 (4.79)	19.50 (19.73)	4.29
Yb <sub>4</sub>	72.03	36.83 (37.09)	2.07 (1.97)	4.23 (4.16)	16.90 (17.13)	4.36
Yb <sub>5</sub>	66.14	31.24 (31.30)	1.91 (1.67)	3.50 (3.65)	15.39 (15.03)	4.21

<sup>#</sup>Values in the parenthesis represent the calculated %

perimposed plots of the rate of change in the mass of ligands L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub> in the temperature range 0–350°C are depicted in Fig. 2. These ligands are thermally stable (~175°C), close to their melting temperatures and on further heating a mass loss is observed corresponding to an exothermic peak. It represents the first stage of decomposition probably involving oximino function while the gradual degradation at second stage reveals the loss of remaining part of the ligand molecule. Such a behavior is found to be usually associated with quinone-oxime derivatives probably supporting the disturbance in the quinonoidal structure [27] of parent compounds.

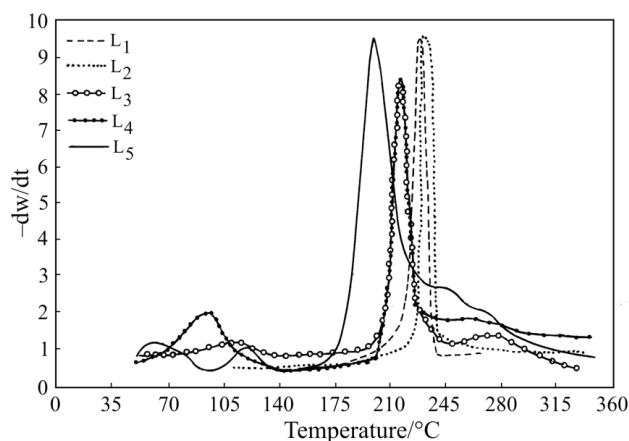


Fig. 2 DTG curves for ligands  $L_1$ – $L_5$

Figure 3 represents the thermal plots of  $\text{Ho}_3$ ,  $\text{Er}_3$  and  $\text{Yb}_3$  in the temperature range 70–800°C. The inspection of thermolytic pattern of these complexes indicates that they decompose in a gradual manner, in contrast to the sharp decomposition of the corresponding ligand molecule [28, 29]. It also suggests that their degradation occurs in three distinct stages. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage of decomposition (100–180°C) indicates the loss of two coordinated water molecules. These patterns probably reflect the stronger associations of complex molecules through intermolecular hydrogen bonding contacts between coordinated water molecules and bonded ligands [8, 11]. Such a bonding can result in the formation of polymeric species leading to the decomposition of these chelates at higher temperature [20].

After the initial loss during 1<sup>st</sup> stage, very sharp break in the temperature range 190–380°C has occurred with the rapid change in the mass for the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage [30],

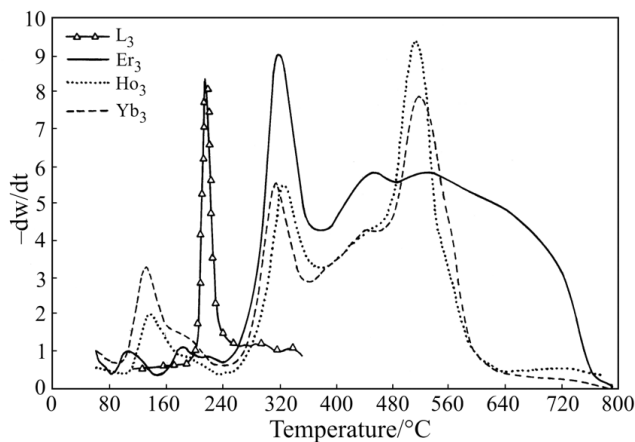
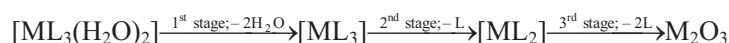


Fig. 3 DTG curves for  $\text{Ho(III)}$ ,  $\text{Er(III)}$  and  $\text{Yb(III)}$  complexes of  $L_3$

which corresponds to the loss of one of the coordinated ligand molecules [12, 14]. It also indicates that the loss of coordinated water molecules during 1<sup>st</sup> stage has directly affected the structural arrangement of the complex resulting in the beginning of the onset of structural decomposition with rapid loss in volatile fragment. Moreover, the lower decomposition temperature for this stage compared to other complexes [12, 14, 28] indicates that the polymeric network is destroyed due to loss of coordinated water molecules. Finally, the total breakdown of the complex occurs during the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage (380–670°C) wherein the remaining two coordinated ligand molecules are lost with the formation of stable oxide. It is quite likely that after the loss of one of the coordinated ligand molecule, the structural arrangement of the complex is totally disturbed leading to a gradual decomposition over a very large temperature range. Simultaneously recorded DTA curves also reveal the differences in the thermal degradation of three bound ligand molecules with two endothermic peaks in the ranges 250–300 and 350–400°C. It implies that some interchanges are occurring in the structure of the complex after the loss of one of the strongly coordinated ligand molecule [31]. The overall thermal pattern for these complexes may be summarized as below:



Er(III) complexes are thermally more stable than Ho(III) complexes and both seem to have greater stability compared to Yb(III) compounds. Such a correlation has already been established for lanthanide complexes of lawsone and juglone derivatives [32]. Complexes of L<sub>2</sub>, however, have comparatively lower decomposition temperature. Similarly, chelates L<sub>4</sub> and L<sub>5</sub> exhibit broader thermal pattern indicating the effect of bulk on the thermal properties as well as the stability of intermediate species formed after 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of decomposition. Later on, it follows a slow and steady mass loss resembling the pattern usually observed for heavier lanthanide complex [20, 21].

It is evident from the thermogravimetric profiles that the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of decomposition is the predominant one for all the chelates. Significantly, such a behavior is also observed for the majority of lanthanide complexes with quinone derivatives [20]. Hence, this step was selected for the evaluation of kinetic parameters using Coats–Redfern [33] non-isothermal integral equations. The DTG peak relating to this stage is separated out and corrected for area using Anderson methodology [34]. The energy of activation ( $E_a$ ) for all the chelates were computed from their DTG curves. The equations used are as follows:

a) The Coats–Redfern equation 1 (CRI) [33]

$$\log \left\{ \frac{1-(1-\alpha)^{1-n}}{(1-n)T^2} \right\} = \log \left\{ \frac{(AR)}{(aE)} \left[ 1 - \frac{(2RT)}{E} \right] \right\} - \frac{E}{2.303RT} \quad (1)$$

b) The Coats–Redfern equation 2 (CRII)

$$\log \left[ -\ln(1-\alpha)/T^2 \right] = \log \left\{ \frac{(AR)}{(aE)} \left[ 1 - \frac{(2RT)}{E} \right] \right\} - \frac{E}{2.303RT} \quad (2)$$

where  $\alpha = (w-w_f)/(w_0-w_f)$ ;  $w_0$ ,  $w_f$  and  $w$  are the initial mass, final mass and mass at temperature  $T$  (equivalent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of decomposition).

The equation CRII is valid for reactions with reaction order  $n=1$  and CRI is applicable for order of reaction other than unity.

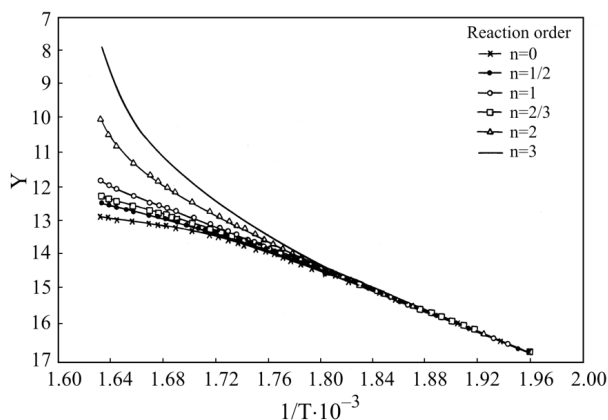


Fig. 4 Coats-Redfern plots of Er<sub>3</sub> at various orders of thermal reaction (2<sup>nd</sup> stage)

The order parameter  $n$  is determined by above equations. The plots of left hand side (LHS) functions vs.  $1/T$  are drawn for different values of  $n$  in the range 0–3 except for  $n=1$ ; CRII was used for  $n=1$ . Figure 4 depicts the superimposed plots of LHS function of CRI or CRII vs.  $1/T$  for Er<sub>3</sub> complex. For  $n=0, 2$  and  $3$  (CRI), a linear relationship is not observed, whereas for  $n=1$  (CRII), the nature of plot of  $\log [-\ln(1-\alpha)]$  vs.  $1/T$  is fairly straight. This indicates that decomposition of all the chelates takes place according to first-order degradation kinetics.

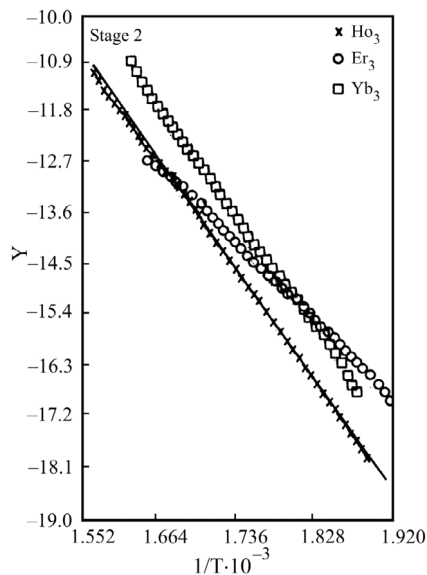


Fig. 5 Plots of  $\log [\ln(1-\alpha)^{-1}/T^2]$  vs.  $1/T$  for the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage decomposition process for Ho<sub>3</sub>, Er<sub>3</sub> and Yb<sub>3</sub> complexes

The superimposed plots of  $\log [\ln(1-\alpha)^{-1}/T^2]$  vs.  $1/T$  (CR plots) for  $\text{Ho}_3$ ,  $\text{Er}_3$  and  $\text{Yb}_3$  complexes corresponding to 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of decomposition are depicted in Fig. 5. The temperature ranges and functional degradation ( $\alpha$ ) within which analyses are conducted and energy of activation are presented in Table 2.

The first order thermal decomposition kinetics of chelates has overall energy of activation ( $E_a$ ) in the range of 70–246  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$  (Table 2) for all the chelates of  $\text{L}_1$ – $\text{L}_5$ . It can be seen from the data that these energies of activation are significantly lower than those reported earlier for lanthanide complexes of quinone derivatives [20, 21]. This probably reflects that the structure loses its rigidity after the loss of coordinated water molecules thus weakening the molecular association suggesting that the thermal stability is reduced. However, after the second stage of decomposition, the molecule attains some thermal stability through the structural reorganization. Similarly, it is possible that molecule may lose its polymeric nature established by coordinated water molecules and bound ligands [18–21]. These parameters also suggest that the order of thermal decomposition reaction is in between 1–2 indicating that more than one intermediate might have simultaneously been formed and subsequently undergoing a smooth decomposition leading to linear mass loss in the final stage. Moreover, values of  $\alpha$  (mass loss at beginning and end of the stage) as well as their corresponding temperature ranges reveal that for most of the complexes, this stage of decomposition occurs in a clear and distinctive manner. However, variation in these values, particularly for  $\text{Er}_4$  and  $\text{Yb}_1$  is suggestive of associative decomposition mechanisms involving former and latter stages of degradation. It means that some of the complexes do not necessarily decompose in a stepwise manner; rather they exhibit a continuous and gradual degradation pattern. The intermixing of all the three stages for these complexes is also indicative of strong polymeric association thus establishing an extensive network of complex molecules. The thermolytic profiles as evidenced from Table 2 also implies that there is a strong effect of substituents on the pyrolysis of these chelates resulting in higher energy of activation for complexes of  $\text{L}_1$  and  $\text{L}_3$ .

#### *Infrared studies*

The IR spectra of ligands and their lanthanide complexes were recorded in nujol mulls and are depicted in Table 3. The ligands exhibit medium broad bands in the range 3600–3100  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  presumably originating from hydroxyl vibrations of oximino and phenolic functions. They are further broadened due to the overlapping of these vibrations with coordinated water molecule after chelation with  $\text{Ho(III)}$ ,  $\text{Er(III)}$  and  $\text{Yb(III)}$  ions [21]. Upon complexation, redistribution of electron density in quinonoid ring resulted in the shifting of (C=O) stretching frequency (1630–1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) towards lower energy side by  $\sim 20$ – $30$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  due to halo-substituents at  $\text{C}_3$  position in 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-monoxime. The oxime function (C=N) was found to be involved in coordination with these metal ions as evidenced from shifting of this band (1590–1570  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) by a magnitude of  $\sim 40$ – $70$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The quinone absorption band (1293–1285  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ), however, remains unaffected after complexation suggesting



**Table 2** Activation energies of 2<sup>nd</sup> stage decomposition for complexes

Complex	Mass loss/%	Analysis range				$E_a$ / kJ mol <sup>-1</sup>
		$T/^\circ\text{C}$		$\alpha$ range		
		start	end	start	end	
Ho <sub>1</sub>	19.3	252	370	0.03	0.89	102.9
Ho <sub>2</sub>	10.0	173	259	0.02	0.94	98.8
Ho <sub>3</sub>	18.6	249	371	0.02	0.91	170.9
Ho <sub>4</sub>	20.7	222	374	0.06	0.89	170.3
Ho <sub>5</sub>	29.4	191	347	0.01	0.84	66.4
Er <sub>1</sub>	12.1	241	328	0.02	0.54	109.2
Er <sub>2</sub>	14.3	237	333	0.01	0.74	131.9
Er <sub>3</sub>	13.0	248	345	0.01	0.76	120.8
Er <sub>4</sub>	11.3	399	443	0.40	0.93	91.5
Er <sub>5</sub>	34.0	228	367	0.02	0.96	121.5
Yb <sub>1</sub>	17.6	317	345	0.26	0.90	246.3
Yb <sub>2</sub>	29.7	206	347	0.01	0.74	71.2
Yb <sub>3</sub>	15.0	260	351	0.02	0.90	173.2
Yb <sub>4</sub>	22.4	226	384	0.06	0.85	90.2
Yb <sub>5</sub>	36.0	219	420	0.02	0.93	79.6

**Table 3** Significant peaks (cm<sup>-1</sup>) in IR spectra of Yb(III) complexes of L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub>

Complex	$\nu(\text{O-H})$	$\nu(\text{C=O})$	$\nu(\text{C=N})$	$\nu(\text{C-O})$	$\nu(\text{N-O})$
Yb <sub>1</sub>	3568	1586	1537	1225	1059
Yb <sub>2</sub>	3362	1586	1518	1223	1060
Yb <sub>3</sub>	3125	1581	1519	1225	1059
Yb <sub>4</sub>	3315	1580	1518	1224	1060
Yb <sub>5</sub>	3384	1581	1520	1223	1055

the presence of fully oxidized quinone form. The (C–O) stretching frequency observed around 1210 cm<sup>-1</sup> in the ligand spectra was found to be present around 1190 cm<sup>-1</sup> for chelates indicating phenolato oxygen as the other site of bonding for ligands. Other evidences for the complexation of 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone monoximates are in concurrence with the earlier reports [22, 23].

#### *Magnetic properties*

The magnetic moments of lanthanide complexes of L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub> are presented in Table 1. The paramagnetic behavior of these complexes denotes the presence of unpaired electrons, which are strongly shielded by outer octet (5s<sup>2</sup>, 5p<sup>6</sup>) both in their spin and orbital

moments. These values are found to be similar to the one reported by Van Vleck [35]. The lowering in these values may be originating from the polymeric nature of these chelates through antiferromagnetic associations of complex molecules. Such associations are established probably through intermolecular hydrogen bonding contacts between coordinated water molecules and ligands. Similar type of nature has already been established for iron(II) complex of 3-amino-2-hydroxy naphthoquinone [11] as well as with lanthanide complexes of quinone derivatives [18–21].

#### Electronic spectra

The electronic spectral studies were carried out in DMSO solvent. The ligands exhibit two absorption bands in the range 27248–27777 and 24390–25000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  which are shifted to higher energy side upon complexation while the complexes show weak  $f-f$  transitions with intense charge transfer absorptions. However, some of the complexes exhibit two transitions in the ranges 17800–19500 and 23600–24600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , respectively for which the assignments [36] are depicted in Table 4. The red shift of hypersensitive bands has been used to calculate nephelauxetic effect ratio ( $\beta$ ) [37], bonding parameter ( $b^{1/2}$ ) and Sinha's parameter ( $\delta$ ) [38] in order to understand bonding in complexes. These values indicate extent of 4f orbital participation in complexation. As ( $b^{1/2}$ ) values are less than unity, no appreciable overlap is present between 4f-metal orbitals and ligand  $\pi$ -orbitals. Also, the average value of Sinha's parameter ( $\delta$ ) and

**Table 4** Electronic spectral data for Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes of L<sub>1</sub>–L<sub>5</sub>

Complex	$\lambda_{\text{max}}/\text{cm}^{-1}$	Assignments	Spectral parameters		
			$\beta$	$\delta$	$b^{1/2}$
Ho <sub>2</sub>	17857	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{H}_{3/2}$	0.9987	1.973	0.0973
	23696	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{I}_{3/2}$			
Ho <sub>3</sub>	18518	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{H}_{3/2}$	0.9987	1.973	0.0973
	24271	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{I}_{3/2}$			
Ho <sub>4</sub>	18518	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{H}_{3/2}$	0.9987	1.973	0.0973
	24271	${}^6\text{H}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{I}_{3/2}$			
Er <sub>2</sub>	19437	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{5/2}$	0.9823	1.800	0.0939
	24096	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{3/2}$			
Er <sub>4</sub>	17241	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{5/2}$	0.9713	1.834	0.0942
	23696	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{3/2}$			
Er <sub>5</sub>	18248	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{5/2}$	0.9987	1.973	0.0973
	23923	${}^8\text{S}_{7/2} \rightarrow {}^6\text{P}_{3/2}$			
Yb <sub>3</sub>	19517	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$	0.9835	1.810	0.0956
	23809	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$			
Yb <sub>4</sub>	19531	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$	0.9726	1.923	0.0906
	24096	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$			
Yb <sub>5</sub>	18181	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$	0.9836	1.760	0.0951
	23815	${}^4\text{F}_{5/2} \rightarrow {}^4\text{D}_{3/2}$			

nephelauxetic ratio ( $\beta$ ) implies weaker covalency in metal-ligand bonding [20, 39] for the present series of complexes.

#### *ESR studies*

Although the lanthanide chelates of quinone oximes exhibit paramagnetic behavior, the analyzable EPR spectrum could not be obtained for them suggesting the strong shielding of f-electrons. Only  $\text{Er}_3$  complex is analyzed for the structural elucidation as a representative of all the chelates. The isotropic EPR spectrum obtained for this complex with  $g=1.996$  suggests that these electrons are not accessible for chemical bond formation. The lowering in the 'g' value as compared to free electron value suggests the polymeric nature of these complexes as has been observed in the thermogravimetric analysis [40].

### Conclusions

Ho(III), Er(III) and Yb(III) complexes of 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone-1-monoximates having  $[\text{ML}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2]$  composition exhibit thermal properties corresponding to three-stage decomposition pattern. Due to the loss of two coordinated water molecules during the initial stage, it was observed that the intermolecular associations involving hydrogen-bonding contacts between free oximino hydroxyl groups and these water molecules are destroyed resulting in the formation of a less thermally stable intermediate species. Such a behavior has resulted in the lowering of the energy of activation for subsequent step; a general feature usually found to be associated with oxime complexes [41]. For some of the chelates, intermixing of these three stages of decomposition has led to a gradual degradation with higher order of thermal reactions probably indicating the polymeric nature for these complexes. It is further corroborated with the EPR measurements of these complexes where 'g' value is found to be appreciably lowered than free electron value. Oximino hydroxyl function is involved in intermolecular hydrogen bonding network as evidenced from the broadening of hydroxyl stretch observed in IR spectrum of these complexes. The oxime ligating system has oximino nitrogen and phenolato oxygen as binding sites of  $\text{L}_1\text{--L}_5$ . Electronic absorption studies indicate negligible covalence in metal–ligand bonding.

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