Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)

Donor-Acceptor Covalent Organic Frameworks Propel Oxygen Reduction Reaction with Push-Pull Dynamics

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Section-1: Materials and experimental section

Materials: The whole experiment was utilized tris(4-formylphenyl) amine was purchased from sigma Aldrich, India. O-dichlorobenzene(o-DCB) acetic acid (AcOH), potassium hydroxide (KOH)were also supplied by Sigma Aldrich, India. Ethanol(EtOH) was purchased from Spectrochem, India, used with no further purification. The water used in all the experiments is was purified through a Milipore system.

Synthesis of 1, 3, 5-tris (4-formylphenyl)-benzene (TFPB)

1, 3, 5-Tribromobenzene (500 mg, 1.59 mmol), Na2CO3 (1.68 g, 15.9 mmol) and (4 formylphenyl) boronic acid (953 mg, 6.35 mmol) were dissolved in toluene (30 mL), water (5 mL) and ethanol (10 mL). The solution was degassed four times, Pd(PPh3)4 (183.7 mg, 0.159 mmol) was added under an argon atmosphere and the mixture was degassed 4 times again. The resulting solution was then heated at 90 °C for 48h. The organic layer was then decanted from the solution. The aqueous layer was extracted two times using CH_2Cl_2 solution. The combined organic layer was washed with water and evaporated. The crude product was purified by chromatography on silica gel using n-hexane/ EtOAc (10%) as the eluent to give the title compound TFPB as an off-white solid (465 mg, 75% yield).¹

¹ H NMR (CDCl3, 400 MHz, ppm): δ 10.11 (s, 3H,), 8.03 (d, 6H), 7.91 (s, 3H), 7.86 (d, 6H).

Synthesis of 2, 4, 6-tris(4-aminophenyl)-1, 3, 5-triazine (TAPT):

We have taken 4-Amino benzonitrile (2 gm) in a round bottom flask equipped with an ice bath and 1 ml triflic acid was added to this drop-wise. The above prepared solution was then stirred

overnight at room temperature. 225 ml of distilled water was added to dilute the solution and the solution was neutralized with 2 (M) NaOH solution. A deep yellow color precipitate was washed with water several times and dried under vacuum. (Yellow solid, 1.9 g, 95%).²

¹H NMR (DMSO-d6, 400 MHz, ppm): δ 8.35 (d, 6H), 6.70 (d, 6H), 5.92 (s, 6H).

Synthesis of TPA_TPT_COF material

A 1:1 mixture of tris(4-formylphenyl)amine and 1,3,5-tris(4-aminophenyl) triazine along with 1:1:0.13 mixture of o-dichlorobenzene (o-DCB), ethanol (EtOH) and acetic acid (AcOH) were combined in a Pyrex glass tube. The mixture was then sonicated until a homogeneous solid precipitate formed and then flash frozen at 77 K in a liquid nitrogen bath and degassed 3 times to reduce the internal pressure to 10^{-3} mbar. The tube was then sealed and heated in an oil bath at 125°C for 4 days. After continuous heating for 4 days, the tube was cooled, and the resulting light-yellow precipitate was filtered and washed several times with acetone. The resulting precipitate was then dried to a powder in an oven at 80°C. Finally, the product TPA_TPT_COF was obtained, with a yield of 76% as shown in reaction below.

Synthesis of TPT_TPB_COF

To synthesize the above TPT_TPB_COF, an 1:1 mixture of 1,3,5-Tris(4 formylphenyl)benzene and 1,3,5-Tris(4-aminophenyl) triazine were taken in a Pyrex glass tube along mixture of Ethanol, o-dichlorobenzene (o-DCB) and acetic acid(AcOH) aqueous solution in a ratio of 1:1:0.13 . This mixture then ultra-sonicated till solid precipitate formed and then flash frozen in liquid N2 bath at 77K followed by degassed it three times so that the internal pressure was decreased to 10^{-3} mbar. Then this tube was sealed and heated in an oil bath at 120° C for 4 days. After 4 days of continuous heating the tube was cooled and the green yellow precipitate obtained was filtered and washed with acetone several times. Then the obtained precipitate was dried to powder in an oven at 80°C. Finally, the Product TPT_TPB_COF was obtained with a yield of 72% as shown in the reaction below:

Synthesis of TPB_TPA_COF

Tris(4-aminophenyl) amine and 1,3,5-Tris(4-formylphenyl) benzene were mixed with 1:1 ratio in a Pyrex glass tube along with 1:1:0.13 mixture of Ethanol, o-dichlorobenzene (o-DCB) and acetic acid(AcOH) aqueous solution. This mixture then ultra-sonicated till solid precipitate formed and then flash frozen in liquid N_2 bath at 77K followed by degassed it three times so that the internal pressure was decreased to 10^{-3} mbar. Then this tube was sealed and heated in an oil bath at 120°C for 4 days. After 4 days of continuous heating the tube was cooled and the brown orange precipitate obtained was filtered and washed with acetone several times. Then the obtained precipitate was dried to powder in an oven at 80°C. Finally, the Product TPB TPA_COF was obtained with a yield of 70% as shown in the reaction below:

TPB_TPA_COF

Instrumentation.

To analyze the crystal structure of the samples, Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) analysis were carried out with Bruker D8 Advances instrument with Cu-Ka (λ = 1.5406 Å) radiation in the 2 θ range from 10° to 70° with an acceleration voltage of 40 KV. The solid-state ¹³C NMR spectroscopy analysis was measured using NMR600 instrument facility form Saif, IIT Bombay. To confirm structural analysis, JEOL NMR600 instrument was used. The high-resolution transmission electron microscope (HRTEM, JEM2100 instrument) was used to further characterize the detailed surface morphology. For surface area analysis, N_2 sorption analysis was carried out in an Anton Paar Quanta Tec Inc. iSorb HP1, gas adsorption analyzer at 77 K. COF sample was degassed at 150 °C for 3 h prior to the sorption measurement. To determine the pore size and to calculate the specific surface area of the samples, Non-local density functional theory (NLDFT) model and Brunauere-Emmette-Teller (BET) were used respectively. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was performed to determine the bonding configuration and surface elemental composition using spectrometer (K-Alpha 1063) instruments in an ultrahigh vacuum chamber ($7X10^{-9}$ torr). All these spectra mentioned above of the synthesized and other control materials were measured under ambient condition & the condition is maintained throughout the experiment.

Electrode preparation:

To prepare the ink at first the synthesized material was taken 5 mg with homogeneous mixture of water and isopropyl alcohol (1:1) followed by ultra sonication for 30 minutes. Before dropcating the sample, Glassy Carbon (GC), Rotating Disk Electrode (RDE)/Rotating Ring Disk Electrode (RRDE) were cleaned with 1,0.3 and 0.05 μ m alumina(Al₂O₃) powder thoroughly and washed them with deionized water through ultra sonication. Then the ink was dropcated and kept in overnight for vacuum drying. In another case Pt/C catalyst 20 wt %) was prepared on the same manner with the addition of Nafion (5%).The mass ration of Pt/C was optimized for the comparison with our synthesized catalyst. All these electrochemical reaction was carried out under room temperature.

Electrochemical Measurements

Electrochemical measurements such as Cyclic Voltammetry (CV) & Linear Sweep Voltammetry (LSV) were carried out with a Rotating Ring Disk Electrode (RRDE; GC area 0.196 cm², Pt ring area 0.041 cm²). All these measurements were carried out in Autolab multichannel electrochemical workstation with a three electrode cell including Ag/AgCl (3M KCl) as a reference electrode, Pt as a counter electrode & RRDE as a working electrode. 0.1 M KOH was used as an electrolyte. To conduct these experiments, Ar or O_2 were purged for 30 minutes depending upon our requirements & the same condition was maintained throughout the experiment. Although all the experiments were carried out with Ag/AgCl as a reference electrode, the final potentials were converted into standard Reversible Hydrogen Electrode(RHE) by the following Nernst equation:

$$
E_{RHE} (V) = E_{Ag/AgCl (3 M KCl)} (in V) + (0.059 \times pH) + 0.210 V
$$
 Eq. (1)

The number of electron transfer (n) per O_2 participate in ORR can be determined by Koutecky Levich (K-L) equation

$$
\frac{1}{J} = \frac{1}{J_{L}} + \frac{1}{J_{K}} = \frac{1}{B\omega^{\frac{1}{2}}} + \frac{1}{J_{K}}
$$
 Eq. (2)

Where *j* is the measured current density, diffusion-limiting (J_L) , kinetic current densities (J_K) and the number of electrons transferred (n) per O_2 molecule, ω is the angular velocity of the disk (ω $= 2\pi N$, N is the linear rotation speed), and B is the Levich slope.

B is given by:

$$
B=0.62nFC_0D_0^{2/3}\vartheta^{-1/6}
$$
 Eq. (3)

$$
J_{\mathbf{K}} = \mathbf{n} \mathbf{F} \mathbf{k} \mathbf{C}_0 \qquad \qquad \text{Eq. (4)}
$$

Where J is the measured current density, J_L and J_K are the diffusion-limiting and kinetic current densities, C_0 is the bulk concentration of O_2 in the solution, F is the Faraday constant (F = 96485) C mol⁻¹), n is the overall number of electrons transferred in oxygen reduction reaction, θ is the kinematic viscosity of the electrolyte $(1.09 \times 10^{-2} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1})$, and D_0 is the diffusion coefficient of O_2 in 0.1 M KOH (1.93 \times 10⁻⁵ cm² s⁻¹).

The number of electron transferred & amount of H_2O_2 (%) were calculated by using these formulas;

$$
n = 4 \times \frac{I_{\rm D}}{I_{\rm D} + \frac{I_{\rm R}}{N}}
$$
 Eq. (5)

$$
\%H_2O_2=200\times\frac{\frac{I_R}{N}}{\frac{I_R}{N}+I_D}
$$
 Eq. (6)

where n is the number of electrons transferred (n) during the ORR process, Where I_D and I_R refers to disk current & ring current respectively; N is the current collection efficiency of Pt ring which is 0.249 in this case.

The electrochemical surface area(ECSA) of these three COF materials were calculated by using a three electrode system. To measure it cyclic voltammetry curve at different scan rates from 10 $mV s⁻¹$ to 120 mV s⁻¹ were taken in 0.1 M KOH electrolyte solution. The double layer capacitance (C_{d}) of all the materials were measured through CV curves in a non-faradaic region with various scan rates $(5, 10, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120 \text{ mV s}^{-1})$ by the following equation given below.

$$
\text{ECSA} = \frac{C_{dl}}{C_s} \qquad \qquad Eq. (7)
$$

Where C_s is the specific capacitance

Section-2: Physical and electrochemical characterization

Fig. S1. (a) PXRD patterns of TPT_TPB_COF: experimental (green), Pawley refined (red), and the differences between the Pawley refined and experimental patterns (brown). (b) Perspective view (upper side) and side view (lower side) of TPT_TPB_COF in AA stacking ball-and-stick model (H atoms are omitted for clarity)

Fig. S2. (a) PXRD patterns of TPB_TPA_COF: experimental (blue), Pawley refined (magenta), and the differences between the Pawley refined and experimental patterns (brown). (b) Perspective view (upper side) and side view (lower side) of TPB_TPA_COF in AA stacking ball-and-stick model (H atoms are omitted for clarity)

Fig. S3. (a-b) FESEM image of TPA_TPT_COF material and (c-d) elemental mapping of TPA_TPT_COF electrocatalyst.

Fig. S4. (a-b) FESEM images of TPT_TPB_COF catalyst

Fig. S5. (a-b) FESEM images of TPB_TPA_COF catalyst.

Fig. S6. (a-d) HRTEM images of TPA_TPT_COF catalyst

Fig. S7. (a-b) HRTEM images of TPT_TPB_COF catalyst

Fig. S8. (a-b) HRTEM images of TPB_TPA_COF catalyst

Fig. S9. Solid state 13C NMR of TPT_TPB_COF materials

Fig. S10. Solid state 13C NMR of TPB_TPA_COF material.

Fig. S11. (a) Full survey of XPS analysis of TPT_TPB_COF catalyst (b) High-resolution deconvoluted C1s XPS spectra. (c) High-resolution deconvoluted N1s XPS spectra.

Fig. S12. (a) Full survey of XPS analysis of TPB_TPA_COF catalyst (b) High-resolution deconvoluted C1s XPS spectra. (c) High-resolution deconvoluted N1s XPS spectra.

Fig. S13. The pore size distribution (PSD) for the TPA_TPT_COF material

Fig. S14. (a) BET adsorption/desorption isotherm and (b) pore size distribution (PSD) for the TPT_TPB_COF material

Fig. S15. (a) BET adsorption/desorption isotherm and (b) pore size distribution (PSD) for the TPB_TPA_COF material

Fig. S16. Electrical sheet resistance measurement (i–v) curve of TPA_TPT_COF, TPT_TPB_COF and TPB_TPA_COF catalysts

Fig. S17. Electrochemical active surface area analysis (a) CV curves of TPA_TPT_COF catalyst at different scan rate (b) Linear fitting of capacitive currents of the TPA_TPT_COF catalyst vs scan rate (c) CV curves of TPT_TPB_COF catalyst at different scan rate (d) Linear fitting of capacitive currents of the TPT_TPB_COF catalyst vs scan rate (e) CV curves of TPB_TPA_COF catalyst at different scan rate (f) Linear fitting of capacitive currents of the TPB_TPA_COF catalyst vs scan rate.

Fig. S18. (a) Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) spectra of TPA_TPT_COF, TPT_TPB_COF, TPB_TPA_COF (inset; zoomed data of all the COF materials) and (b) equivalent fitted circuit of materials.

Fig. S19. (a) Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) polarization curve of TPA_TPT_COF catalyst at all rotation speeds 625 to 4900 rpm in O_2 saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte solution.

Fig. S20. (a) Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) polarization curve of TPT_TPB_COF catalyst at all rotation speeds 625 to 4900 rpm in O_2 saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte solution. (b) KL plots of TPT TPB COF at different potentials. (c) Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) polarization curve of TPB_TPA_COF catalyst at all rotation speeds 625 to 4900 rpm in O2 saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte solution. (d) KL plots of TPB_TPA_COF at different potentials.

Fig. S21. Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) polarization curve of TPA_TPT_COF catalyst at 1600 rpm in O2 saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte solution with ring and disk current.

Fig. S22. Linear sweep voltammetry polarization curve before and after stability of TPA_TPT_COF electro catalyst.

Fig. S23. (a) Full survey of XPS analysis of TPA_TPT_COF catalyst after stability measurement (b) High-resolution deconvoluted C1s XPS spectra. (c) N1s deconvoluted spectra after stability measurent.

Fig. S24. Methanol cross over durability (i-t) curve of TPA_TPT_COF in presence of 1 M methanol in O₂-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution and comparison with Pt/C catalyst.

Fig. S25*.* CV analysis of TPA_TPT_COF electro catalyst with 1 M CH3OH and without CH3OH in O2-saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte.

Fig. S26*.* CV analysis of Pt/C catalyst with 1 M CH3OH and without CH3OH in O2-saturated 0.1 M KOH electrolyte.

The in-situ electrochemical attenuated total reflection infrared (ATR-IR) spectroscopy of the TPA_TPT_COF catalyst:

The in-situ ATR-IR spectroscopic study for the ORR intermediate detection have been performed in Argon and $O₂$ saturated alkaline media The chronoamperometry study at different potentials (1.0, 0.90, 0.80, 0.70, 0.60, 0.50, and 0.40 V vs RHE) in Argon and O₂saturated alkaline electrolytes was performed. The Insitu IR spectra was recorded and intermediate products detected as explained in the main manuscript file. The peak intensity enhancement clearly indicates the formation of the water as a final product in the ORR catalysis.

Fig. S27*.* In-situ ATR-IR curve for TPA_TPT_COF in argon-saturated alkaline media for ORR study

Section-3 Theoretical Study

Computational Methodology: In this investigation, we have used Gaussian16 RevB.01 ref Quantum chemical software for all DFT calculations. The Grimme's dispersion-corrected B3LYP functional (B3LYP-D3) was employed for geometry optimization.^{3,4} Geometry optimization and computation of imaginary frequencies were performed species. The basis set 6-31G** basis set used for C, H, N, and O, in the calculations. $3-5$ Frequency calculations were conducted to identify minima on the potential-energy surface (PES) and determine free energy correction energy. Optimized geometries were visualized using Chemcraft 1.6 (ChemCraft software, version 1.6). Gaussian16 software was used for NBO (Natural Bond Orbital and WBI (Wiberg Bond Index) analyses using DFT methods at B3LYP/Def2TZVP level of theory including Grimme's Dispersion GD3.⁶ NBO analysis provided detailed insights into bonding orbitals and WBI analysis offered bond index values indicating bond nature.

The zero-point vibrational energy (ZPVE) corrected complexation energy was calculated according to the following equation.

$$
\Delta E_{Comp}^{ZPVE} = \Delta E_{Comp}^{ZPVE} - E_{COF}^{ZPVE} - E_{O2}^{ZPVE} \qquad Eq. 8
$$

Fig. S28. Diagrammatic representation of molecular orbital interaction between C, N, and O₂ on TPA_TPT_COF catalyst surface.

Fig. S29. 1:1 complex of TPA_TPT_COF with dual binding sites interact with O₂, optimized at B3LYP/6-31** level of theory. The bond length of the adsorbed O_2 is mentioned in Å for each complex, showing that O2 bond length in these complexes has increased compared to that of the pure O2 [Hydrogens are omitted for clarity; colour code: red- oxygen, blue- nitrogen, dark greycarbon atoms]

Fig. S30. 1:1 complex of TPT_TPB_COF with dual binding sites interact with O₂, optimized at B3LYP/6-31** level of theory. The bond length of the adsorbed O_2 is mentioned in \hat{A} for each complex, showing that O2 bond length in these complexes has increased compared to that of the pure O2 [Hydrogens are omitted for clarity; colour code: red- oxygen, blue- nitrogen, dark greycarbon atoms]

Fig. S31. 1:1 complex of TPB_TPA_COF with dual binding sites interact with O₂, optimized at B3LYP/6-31** level of theory. The bond length of the adsorbed O_2 is mentioned in Å for each complex, showing that O₂ bond length in these complexes has increased compared to that of the pure O2 [Hydrogens are omitted for clarity; colour code: red- oxygen, blue- nitrogen, dark greycarbon atoms]

Fig. S32. The 1:1 complex of (a) TPA_TPT_COF (b) TPT_TPB_COF, and (c) TPB_TPA_COF with dual binding sites interact with O_2 , optimized at B3LYP/6-31^{**} level of theory. The bond length of the adsorbed O_2 is mentioned in Å for each complex, showing that O_2 bond length in these complexes has increased compared to that of the pure $O₂$ [Hydrogens are omitted for clarity; colour code: red- oxygen, blue- nitrogen, dark grey- carbon atoms]

Table 1. Atomistic coordinates for the AA-stacking mode of TPA_TPT_COF (space group P3, a = b = 23.6074 Å, c = 3.9443 Å, α = β = 90° and γ = 120°, Rwp = 6.17 % and Rp = 4.24 %)

Table 2. Atomistic coordinates for the AA-stacking mode of TPT_TPB_COF (space group P1 Triclinic, a = 26.0351 b = 26.0975 Å, c = 3.6091 Å, α = 71.5297 β = 85.1851° and γ = 60.1671°, $Rwp = 4.12 %$ and $Rp = 2.48 %$

Table 3. Atomistic coordinates for the AA-stacking mode of TPB_TPA_COF (space group P3 Trigonal, a = b = 23.6781 Å, c = 4.1252 Å, α = β = 90° and γ = 120°, Rwp = 8.30 % and Rp = 8.88 %)

Table T4. Elemental analysis of TPA_TPT_COF, TPT_TPB_COF, and TPB_TPA_COF catalysts obtained from XPS analysis.

Table T5. All the synthesized catalysts performances on the basis of electrocatalytic parameters for ORR

Table T6. Comparison table with recently reported COF materials for ORR analysis in 0.1 M KOH solution

Table T7: The table giving the bond distances of interaction with binding site of COF with O₂ and wiberg bond index (WBI) indicating about bond strength with respect of each one.

Table T8: The table giving the bond distances of interaction with binding site of COF with O₂ and wiberg bond index (WBI) indicating about bond strength with respect of each one.

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