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# Induced Migration of CO<sub>2</sub> from Hydrate Cages to Amorphous Solid Water under Ultrahigh Vacuum and Cryogenic Conditions

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exclusively while  $CO_2$  in  $5^{12}6^2$  cages  $(CO_2@5^{12}6^2)$  got transferred to the ASW matrix and  $CO_2$  in the  $5^{12}$  cages  $(CO_2@5^{12})$  remained as is. This cage-matrix exchange may create a more conducive environment for chemical transformations in interstellar environments.

he existence of clathrate hydrates (CHs) under high and  $\checkmark$  ultrahigh vacuum (UHV) and cryogenic conditions is now well established.<sup>1-17</sup> While CH of CO<sub>2</sub> at 120 K in a vacuum of  $10^{-6}$  to  $10^{-7}$  Torr has been known since 1991,<sup>12</sup> the formation of CHs of CH4,<sup>6,18</sup> C2H6,<sup>14</sup> CO2,<sup>6,18</sup> acetone,<sup>15</sup> formaldehyde,<sup>16</sup> and tetrahydrofuran  $(THF)^{13}$  in UHV has been observed in the past few years in the range of 10–130 K. CHs are crystalline host-guest inclusion compounds and have drawn wide interest due to their scientific and technological implications.<sup>19-21</sup> CHs often coexist along with water ice and are mainly classified into structures I (sI, consisting of two small  $5^{12}$  and six large  $5^{12}6^2$  cages per unit cell) and II (sII, consisting of 16 small 5<sup>12</sup> and eight large 5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>4</sup> cages per unit cell). While  $CO_2$  is known to be encased in small  $5^{12}$  and large 5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages, THF due to its larger van der Waals radius occupies the large  $5^{12}6^4$  cage exclusively.<sup>2,9,13,22</sup> In UHV, spectroscopic signatures of molecules in different hydrate cages  $(5^{12}, 5^{12}6^2, \text{ and } 5^{12}6^4)$  were reported,  $6^{13-16}$  although these structures have not been confirmed by X-ray diffraction experiments. However, in a high vacuum, in situ synchrotron X-ray diffraction experiments have been used to establish the existence of CHs of CH<sub>4</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>8</sup> Various CHs could exist along with the water matrix, although their extended crystalline phase has not been observed, in UHV. The presence of CH nuclei in the nanometric domain suggests the coexistence of various phases such as CH, amorphous ice, and dilute solutions of molecules under UHV and cryogenic conditions.<sup>14</sup>

The dynamics of host and guest molecules in CHs have been studied, revealing the reorientation of water and diffusion of guest molecules.<sup>23-29</sup> Moudrakovski et al.,<sup>27</sup> by choosing two sets of guest pairs,  $THF-CO_2$  and isobutane- $CO_2$ , have shown that the coupled motions of water and CO<sub>2</sub> are faster in the former case when THF and  $CO_2$  occupy the large  $(5^{12}6^4)$ and small  $(5^{12})$  cages of sII hydrate, respectively. They have also shown that such molecular dynamics are the result of synergistic guest A-host water-guest B  $(CO_2-H_2O-THF)$ hydrogen-bonding interactions. Also, using molecular dynamics simulations performed at elevated temperatures (310, 315, and 320 K) and at a pressure of 100 MPa, Liang et al.<sup>30</sup> reported mechanisms of CO<sub>2</sub> migration within CO<sub>2</sub> CHs and suggested that for the diffusion of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules through fivemembered water rings of the  $5^{12}$  cage, at least one water vacancy is required, and for CO<sub>2</sub> molecules to pass through the six-membered water rings of the 51262 cage, only a slight distortion of the local ring structure is sufficient. Such molecular migrations suggest that host-guest interaction in molecular solids can create a conducive environment for

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chemical transformations. However, similar observations (for vapor-deposited ice film) under UHV and at extremely low temperatures as reported in this work have not been explored. Chemical evolution in interstellar ices depends mostly on the migration of reacting atoms and molecules at cryogenic temperatures. CH formation/dissociation in such conditions may provide mobility to the molecular species enabling chemical transformation. Also, the interstellar medium is expected to be more complex because a variety of clathrateforming molecules exist along with water. Various single and mixed CHs may form along with pure solids of CO<sub>2</sub> and other molecular species, including CH<sub>4</sub>, CO, CH<sub>3</sub>OH, and NH<sub>3</sub> that exist there. Thus, preparing mixed CH and studying guest migration under UHV and cryogenic conditions may have implications for astrophysical and prebiotic science. While  $CO_2^{6}$  and THF<sup>13</sup> CHs are reported to form in UHV, during thermal annealing, these CH cages are likely to undergo molecular exchange leading to the structural evolution of cages. In this study, we have used a custom-built UHV setup,<sup>3</sup> illustrated in Figure 1, to investigate the evolution of clathrate cages of CO<sub>2</sub> during the formation of THF CH under UHV and cryogenic temperatures.



Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the experimental setup. In the schematic, the surface is oriented to do RAIR measurements.

To understand the evolution of clathrate cages of  $CO_2$ , we first prepared CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup>. Figures 2A,B show the temperature-dependent RAIR spectra of 300 ML CO2@  $H_2O$  (150@150 ML) layered film in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region in the 90-150 K window. Spectra in a broader temperature window of 10-150 K are shown in Figure S1. Figures 2A,B show two IR peaks at 2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup> at 90 K, which are assigned to the  $CO_2$  encased in small  $5^{12}$  $(CO_2(a5^{12}))$  and large  $5^{12}6^2$   $(CO_2(a5^{12}6^2))$  cages of sI, respectively. The observed frequencies are comparable to the previous reports (2346, 2337 cm<sup>-1</sup>),<sup>1,2</sup> where CH was grown by molecular deposition of water-guest gaseous mixtures in a vacuum at cryogenic temperatures. The frequency separation for the  $CO_2@5^{12}$  and  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cages in this study is ~7  $cm^{-1}$ , which is comparable to ~9  $cm^{-1}$  of the previous report.<sup>1</sup> Notably, at 90 K, the peaks at 2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup> have full

width at half-maximum (FWHM) values of 3.4 and 6.7 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively (shown in Figure S2), which are comparable to the FWHM values of 4 cm<sup>-1</sup> (for CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> cages) and 8 cm<sup>-1</sup> (for CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages) of the previous report.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, we have confirmed the formation of CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages using quantum chemical simulations (see later). Based on the above observations, the 2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup> peaks are assigned to CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages, respectively. This partitioning of CO<sub>2</sub> in different CH cages at 90 K without the "help guest" molecules (THF, ethylene oxide, etc.) is seen for the first time in UHV.<sup>1,2,9</sup> However, upon annealing the sample above 90 K (also presented as contour plot in Figure 2B), the intensities of both the peaks (2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup>) decreased proportionally before vanishing completely at 150 K due to the dissociation of the CH.

In one of our previous studies,<sup>6</sup> we had reported that in a codeposited mixture of CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O ice at 10 K under UHV,  $CO_2$  primarily occupies 5<sup>12</sup> cages (2346 cm<sup>-1</sup>) of sI along with a fraction of untrapped  $CO_2$  (2353 cm<sup>-1</sup>) that exists in the pores of the amorphous water matrix. However, in this study, a peak at  $\sim 2382$  cm<sup>-1</sup> was observed for the sequentially deposited CO<sub>2</sub>@H<sub>2</sub>O layered film at 10 K (Figure S1). This peak is assigned to the multilayer  $CO_2$  ice film (compared to the spectrum of 150 ML of pure CO<sub>2</sub> film, Figure S3). The peak at 2382 cm<sup>-1</sup> in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region did not change significantly during annealing the sample up to 80 K (Figure S1). However, at 90 K, the temperature at which pure  $CO_2$  desorbs, most of the  $CO_2$  diffuses through the water matrix and desorbs, leaving only a small fraction of it in the ice matrix that were later encaged in CH cages. The annealing temperature and associated mobility of CO<sub>2</sub> (mainly induced due to UHV environment) are crucial for forming the CH structure at 90 K. A shift in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region from  $\sim 2382$  cm<sup>-1</sup> at a lower temperature to a doublet (2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup>) at 90 K suggests CO<sub>2</sub> diffusion into the water matrix and interaction with water. This frequency shift was noted to be abrupt between 80 and 90 K (Figure S1).

We conducted a time-dependent RAIR experiment using a 300 ML CO<sub>2</sub>@H<sub>2</sub>O layered film at 80 K to further understand this abrupt frequency change, or, in other words, diffusion of  $CO_2$  into the water matrix and subsequent CH formation. The corresponding IR spectra at 80 K in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region are shown in Figures 2C,D. At 0 min, a peak at  $\sim 2382$  cm<sup>-1</sup> was observed and was assigned to the multilayer film of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>6</sup> Upon annealing the sample at the same temperature under UHV for several hours, the peak at 2382 cm<sup>-1</sup> changes its shape and position with time due to the diffusion and desorption of CO2 through the ice matrix. In other words, this band's evolution and shift are directly related to the thickness of the multilayer CO<sub>2</sub> film.<sup>32</sup> In addition, to confirm this, IR spectra of pure CO<sub>2</sub> ice of different thicknesses (2-150 ML) in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region at 10 K were collected as shown in Figure S4. The IR spectra in Figure S4 suggest that the intermediate spectra in Figures 2C,D are because of the different (reduced) thicknesses of the  $CO_2$  film. This is because, at 80 K, in the  $CO_2@H_2O$  (150@ 150 ML) layered film,  $CO_2$  molecules diffuse into water matrix. The shift and shape change in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region were observed until  $\sim$ 3 h (see the contour plot, Figure 2D). Finally, the 2382 cm<sup>-1</sup> peak was shifted to 2348 and 2341  $cm^{-1}$  and remained there until the end of the experiment (6 h). These observations suggest that  $CO_2$  in the



**Figure 2.** (A, B) Temperature-dependent RAIR spectra of 300 ML  $CO_2@H_2O$  (150@150 ML) layered film in the 90–150 K window in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region. (C, D) Time-dependent RAIR spectra of 300 ML  $CO_2@H_2O$  (150@150 ML) layered film at 80 K in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region. The peak at 2382 cm<sup>-1</sup> (at 0 min) evolved with time and finally resulted in the twin peaks at 2348 and 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup> after 3 h. The ice samples were created by vapor deposition at 10 K and further annealed to the set temperatures at an annealing rate of 2 K min<sup>-1</sup>. Thermal annealing of the as-prepared sample and corresponding physical changes in ice matrix are schematically illustrated in the top panel.



**Figure 3.** (A, B) Normalized time-dependent RAIR spectra of 300 ML  $CO_2@(THF+H_2O; 1:5)$  ice film at 130 K in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of  $CO_2$ . (C, D) Time-dependent RAIR spectra of the same system in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of THF. The ice sample was created by vapor deposition at 10 K and further annealed to 130 K at an annealing rate of 2 K min<sup>-1</sup>.

layered  $CO_2@H_2O$  film near its desorption temperature diffuses through the water matrix (illustrated schematically in the top panel of Figure 2), and the enhanced mobility of  $CO_2$  leads to its insertion into the different CH cages formed simultaneously at ~90 K.

To examine the host-guest dynamics under UHV at cryogenic temperatures, we have chosen two guests, CO<sub>2</sub> and THF, and prepared 300 ML of CO<sub>2</sub>@(THF+H<sub>2</sub>O; 1:5) composite film at 10 K. See the Experimental Section for details of sample preparation. The resulting ice sample was

annealed to 130 K and held there for 6 h to create mixed CO<sub>2</sub>-THF CH. However, during annealing (of the sample from 10 to 130 K), initially CO<sub>2</sub> diffuses into the THF+H<sub>2</sub>O (1:5) ice matrix, and at ~90 K it forms classical sI hydrate forming the CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages (2348 and 2341  $cm^{-1}$ , as shown in Figure 2). Figure 3 presents the timedependent RAIR spectra of 300 ML of CO<sub>2</sub>@(THF+H<sub>2</sub>O; 1:5) composite film at 130 K in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region (A, B) of solid CO<sub>2</sub> and C–O antisymmetric stretching region (C, D) of solid THF. At 0 h, the spectra in Figures 3A,B show three peaks at 2352, 2346, and 2340 cm<sup>-1</sup> in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region that are assigned to CO<sub>2</sub> in amorphous ice matrix, CO<sub>2</sub> $(@5^{12})$ , and CO<sub>2</sub> $(@5^{12}6^2)$ cages, respectively.<sup>1,6</sup> However, upon annealing the sample at 130 K for 6 h, the peak at 2340 cm<sup>-1</sup> decreases and that at 2352  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  increases, while that at 2346  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  remains unaltered. This means that the  $CO_2$  in the  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cages are being transported to the matrix of ASW and  $CO_2 (0.5^{12})$ cages remain mostly unperturbed in the course of time. Simultaneously, in the C-O antisymmetric stretching region of THF in Figures 3C,D, a new peak arises at 1074  $cm^{-1}$  while the peaks at 1054 and  $\sim 1032 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  decrease within a similar time scale. The peak at 1074  $\rm cm^{-1}$  is the characteristic peak for THF encased in 51264 CH (THF@51264) cages, whereas the peaks at 1054 and  $\sim$ 1032 cm<sup>-1</sup> are assigned to THF trapped in amorphous water pores.<sup>2,7,13,33</sup> Therefore, at 130 K with time, the encased CO<sub>2</sub> is leaving the CO<sub>2</sub> $@5^{12}6^2$  cages (reduction in the intensity of the 2340  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  peak) while THF is forming the  $5^{12}6^4$  cages (emergence of the 1074 cm<sup>-1</sup> peak); also, the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules that vacated the  $5^{12}6^2$  cages moved to the amorphous water matrix (this was confirmed by the emergence of the 2352 cm<sup>-1</sup> peak). Hence, the formation of THF CH enhanced the mobility of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules into the water matrix. Also, the empty clathrate cages  $(CO_2@5^{12}6^2)$  cage in the current case) are inherently unstable, and partial dissociation of the same (which will further enhance the mobility of water molecules) might synergistically help the formation of pure THF CH (or a mixed CO<sub>2</sub>-THF CH) at 130 K. This is because the thermodynamic stability of THF CH is superior compared to  $CO_2$  CH.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the formation of  $CO_2$  $5^{12}$  and THF@ $5^{12}6^4$  cages was confirmed by calculating the vibrational frequencies of guests in the respective cages, and the obtained results are discussed below.

In addition, we have performed two control experiments to examine the role of THF CH and temperature on the migration of  $CO_2$  in the water matrix under UHV. In the first experiment, we created 300 ML of CO<sub>2</sub>@(THF+H<sub>2</sub>O; 1:5) composite ice film at 10 K. The resulting sample was annealed to 120 K and held there for 6 h; the results are shown in Figure S5. During annealing at 120 K, neither the 1074  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  peak (in the C-O antisymmetric stretching region of THF) nor the  $2352 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  peak (in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of  $CO_2$ ) appears, contrary to the results shown in Figures 3A,C. This suggests that at 120 K, neither THF CH forms nor CO<sub>2</sub> migrates into the water matrix. In the second experiment, we created pure  $CO_2$  CH by annealing the  $CO_2@H_2O$  layered film (as discussed in Figure 2) at  $\sim$ 90 K. Then the sample was further annealed to 130 K and held there for 6 h; the result is shown in Figure S6. We observed that the peaks at 2348 and 2341  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region decreased proportionally due to the dissociation of CH and desorption of CO<sub>2</sub> at 130 K. However, a decrease in the peak at 2341 cm<sup>-1</sup> (due to  $CO_2(05^{12}6^2)$  alone and the appearance of peak at 2352 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO<sub>2</sub> in ASW) were not observed. This suggests that in the absence of THF CH, CO<sub>2</sub> does not migrate into the water matrix. Therefore, these two control experiments suggest that the THF CH formation in a water matrix containing CO<sub>2</sub> CH is crucial for the mobility of CO<sub>2</sub> under UHV and at 130 K.

In addition, the mobility of  $H_2O$  molecules during CH formation/dissociation was monitored for  $CO_2@H_2O$  and  $CO_2@(THF+H_2O; 1:5)$  films in the O-H stretching region at 130 K; the results are shown in Figure S7. We observed that after 6 h the change in the shape of the O-H stretching region was not significant for pure  $CO_2$  CH (Figure S7A) as it was observed for mixed CH of  $CO_2$  with THF (Figure S7B). The change in shape of the O-H stretching band depicts the ordering/reorientation of water molecules in the ice matrix;<sup>35</sup> a similar result has been observed in our previous reports.<sup>13,36,37</sup> The higher mobility of water in the case of the  $CO_2@(THF + H_2O; 1:5)$  composite ice film is reasonable because at 130 K the following events occur: (1) formation of THF CH, (2) dissociation of  $CO_2$  molecules into the water matrix.

Fleyfel and Devlin<sup>2</sup> have reported the epitaxial growth of sI CO<sub>2</sub> hydrate on ethylene oxide hydrate and sII CO<sub>2</sub> hydrate on THF hydrate under vacuum. For epitaxial growth, the resulting CH structure of CO<sub>2</sub> depends on the type of "help guest" and its base structure. However, in the current study, the results presented in Figure 2 clearly demonstrate the partitioning of  $CO_2$  in  $CO_2@5^{12}$  and  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cages of sI at 90 K without the help guest. In UHV, such a result has not been reported earlier. In addition, when we introduced THF in the CO<sub>2</sub>@H<sub>2</sub>O film, CO<sub>2</sub>@(THF+H<sub>2</sub>O; 1:5), and annealed the resulting ice, we observed a unusual situation where at 130 K the water matrix contains THF as well as CO2@512 and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages. Moudrakovski et al.<sup>27</sup> have presented evidence for cage-to-cage transport of CO<sub>2</sub>, when THF and  $CO_2$  were guests in the 5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>4</sup> and 5<sup>12</sup> cages of sII hydrate, respectively. They have suggested that this is because of the synergistic hydrogen-bonding interactions of THF and CO<sub>2</sub> with the water lattice that promoted the injection of Bjerrum defects, which in turn enabled faster water reorientation. In present study at 130 K, after initial THF CH (THF@51264 cage) formation, caged THF can undergo hydrogen-bonding interaction with  $CO_2$  of both the  $CO_2@5^{12}$  and  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$ cages. However, the results presented in Figure 3A demonstrate the migration of  $CO_2$  from  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cages alone. Here, we have two possibilities: (1) As suggested by Liang et al.<sup>30</sup> that for  $CO_2$  molecules to move from the  $5^{12}6^2$ cage, only a slight distortion of the local ring structure is sufficient, compared to the case of the 5<sup>12</sup> cage, where one water vacancy is required. This suggests that the interaction of THF with water of the  $5^{12}6^2$  cage may provide the required distortion to the local ring structure for CO<sub>2</sub> migration from the  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cages. A similar experimental result has been reported by Devlin and Monreal.<sup>38</sup> In mixed CO<sub>2</sub>-THF sII CH, they observed<sup>38</sup> that over a 5 h period,  $CO_2$  moves from the  $CO_2@5^{12}6^2$  cage and additional  $CO_2@5^{12}$  cage arises at 116 K. (2) It is possible that caged THF may interact with the  $CO_2$  of both the  $5^{12}$  and  $5^{12}6^2$  cages, enabling the migration to  $CO_2$  of both the cages to the water matrix as suggested by Moudrakovski et al.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that primarily  $CO_2$ molecules from both the cages are migrating; in other words, CH cages are dissociating. However, in the presence of THF@  $5^{12}6^4$  cages, the  $5^{12}$  cages are being occupied by CO<sub>2</sub>. Further



**Figure 4.** Computed IR spectra in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of CO<sub>2</sub>. (A) When CO<sub>2</sub> was sequentially added in one small  $5^{12}$  and one large  $5^{12}6^2$  cage of sI. (B) When CO<sub>2</sub> and THF were sequentially added in one small  $5^{12}$  and one large  $5^{12}6^4$  cage of the sII, the result is shown only for encased CO<sub>2</sub> in the  $5^{12}$  cage. IR spectra were generated from fully optimized CH structures along with the guest molecules; the optimized structures of CH cages are shown in (C) and (D).

experimental and computational studies are required to decipher the exact mechanism of  $CO_2$  migration in the presence of THF under UHV conditions.

If we compare the IR peaks for the  $CO_2@5^{12}$  cage in water matrix with and without THF, they are at 2346 and 2348 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. This suggests that there is a structural change<sup>2,22</sup> in the presence of THF. At lower temperature, when THF is not mobile, the diffusing  $CO_2$  forms sI hydrate, and with increase in temperature when THF is mobile, formation of sII hydrate was observed. It should be noted that the IR spectral resolution employed in the work was 2 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The change in vibrational frequency of the  $CO_2@5^{12}$  cage in presence and absence of THF is computed, and the results are discussed below.

We confirmed the formation of pure  $CO_2$  CH ( $CO_2 @ 5^{12}$ ) and  $CO_2(@5^{12}6^2)$  and mixed CH of  $CO_2$  with THF  $(CO_2(@5^{12}))$ and THF $(a5^{12}6^4)$  using quantum chemical calculations. The optimized geometries and corresponding vibrational frequencies for different CH structures in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of  $CO_2$  are shown in Figure 4. For pure  $CO_2$ CH, the relevant computed vibrational frequencies for  $CO_2(a)$  $5^{12}$  and  $CO_2 @ 5^{12} 6^2$  cages are 2339.5 and 2334.5 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively, as shown in Figure 4A. The frequency shift between two peaks (of CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages) obtained in computational and experimental studies are ~5 and  $\sim 7 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , respectively (Table S1). Thus, the computationally determined vibrational frequencies in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region during hydrate formation closely match with the experimental values shown in Figure 2A. Similarly, for mixed CH of CO<sub>2</sub> with THF, the computed vibrational frequencies for  $CO_2(@5^{12} \text{ and } THF@5^{12}6^4 \text{ cages are})$ 

2344.5 cm<sup>-1</sup> (in the C=O antisymmetric stretching region of CO<sub>2</sub>) and 1087 cm<sup>-1</sup> (in the C–O antisymmetric stretching region of THF). These computed results agree well with the experimental results shown in Figures 3A,C and are listed in Table S2. The computed IR spectrum for the CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> cage of mixed CH of CO<sub>2</sub>-THF is shown in Figure 4B. If we compare the computed vibrational frequencies for the CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> cage with and without THF in an adjacent cage, they are at 2344.5 and 2339.5 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. This suggest that THF is indeed playing a crucial role in structural evolution of CO<sub>2</sub> CH. Here, all the calculations were done by considering the small and large cages of CH structures adjoining each other. The coordinates of the optimized geometries of pure CO<sub>2</sub> CH (CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>2</sup> cages) and mixed CH of CO<sub>2</sub>-THF (CO<sub>2</sub>@5<sup>12</sup> and THF@5<sup>12</sup>6<sup>4</sup> cages) are given in Tables S3 and S4.

The  $CO_2$  dynamics in the presence of polar THF discussed in this work can be extended for several other guest molecules to understand the molecular mobility and structural evolution of CH cages in such molecular solids under UHV and cryogenic conditions. Such molecular mobility could lead to new reaction pathways for chemical transformation. For example, when  $CO_2$  (or other guest molecule) is encased, these  $CO_2$  molecules are perhaps not available for any reaction. However, if these molecules come out of cages under certain circumstances as the present work suggests, new chemical pathways are possible, which would lead to new possibilities of chemical evolution.

In this study, we observed the migration of  $CO_2$  from  $5^{12}6^2$  CH cages to the bulk of ASW in the presence of THF at 130 K in UHV. Continuous evolution of CH structures and the

corresponding changes in the ice matrix imply rapid structural dynamics and flexibility of the ice matrix, possibly similar to liquid-like order at 130 K, in UHV. This CH cage-to-matrix exchange of molecules suggests an active environment in these molecular solids that enables mobility of the species for chemical transformations, specially with additional activation. The structural evolution in mixed CHs implies mechanical changes in the system, although the time scale of this process has not been examined. It occurs faster than the time needed for spectral measurements (<2 s) so that all the species are captured in one spectrum.

# ASSOCIATED CONTENT

## Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpclett.3c00373.

Experimental Section (including experimental setup, materials and reagents, sample preparation, experimental procedure, RAIRS setup, and computational details); temperature-dependent/time-dependent RAIR spectra of pure CO<sub>2</sub>, CO<sub>2</sub>@H<sub>2</sub>O, and CO<sub>2</sub>@(THF+H<sub>2</sub>O; 1:5) films; comparison of the experimental and computational vibrational frequencies (Tables S1 and S2) and Cartesian coordinates (Tables S3 and S4) for pure CO<sub>2</sub> CH and mixed CH of CO<sub>2</sub> and THF (PDF)

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G.V. and T.P. designed the research; G.V., B.K.M., and S.C. performed the experiments; K.S.S.V.P.R, S.S.R.K.Y., and S.K.R. performed the quantum chemical calculations; G.V., B.K.M., K.S.S.V., J.G., S.C., S.S.R.K.Y., S.K.R., R.K., and T.P. analyzed data; and G.V., B.K.M., R.K., and T.P. wrote the paper.

#### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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