

**Hall effect in the metallic antiferromagnet  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  ( $0.72 \leq x \leq 0.90$ )**P. Mandal<sup>1</sup> and P. Choudhury<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>*Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, 1/AF Bidhannagar, Calcutta 700 064, India*<sup>2</sup>*Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute, 196 Raja S. C. Mullick Road, Calcutta 700 032, India*

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We have investigated the magnetic and magnetotransport properties of  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  single crystals in the heavily doped region ( $0.72 \leq x \leq 0.90$ ). Both the Hall coefficient ( $R_H$ ) and the susceptibility ( $\chi$ ) exhibit strong temperature dependence in the antiferromagnetic (AFM) as well as in the paramagnetic (PM) states. As the AFM ordering sets in, below  $T_N = 21$  K,  $R_H$  decreases sharply with  $T$  down to  $\sim 10$  K and then increases rapidly. The temperature and field dependence of  $R_H$  indicates the emergence of a weak ferromagnetic-like phase below 10 K. In the AFM state,  $R_H$  scales linearly with  $\chi$ . The observed  $T$  dependence of  $R_H$  in the PM state has been discussed in light of the theoretical model proposed for strongly correlated electrons in a triangular lattice.

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

The layered sodium cobaltite  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  has attracted considerable experimental and theoretical attention for its anomalous physical properties and rich phase diagram.<sup>1–17</sup> The initial interest in this compound was to understand the origin of the unusually large thermopower with good metallic conductivity.<sup>2,3</sup> Subsequent studies have revealed that superconductivity and many other complex physical phenomena arise due to the strong electronic correlation, the coupling of magnetic states with electronic states near the Fermi level, and the specific crystal structure of the system.<sup>3,4,7–14</sup> The interplay between the magnetic fluctuations and the superconductivity is one of the central issues not only in this system, but also in cuprates, heavy fermions, and iron pnictides. The fundamental building blocks related to the charge conduction and magnetic properties in  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  are the  $\text{CoO}_2$  layers. The two-dimensional metallic  $\text{CoO}_2$  planes are electronically separated by the insulating layers of Na ions, and the Co ions in each  $\text{CoO}_2$  plane are arranged in a triangular lattice. Because of the triangular geometry, the undoped compound ( $x = 0$ ) with spin-1/2  $\text{Co}^{4+}$  is speculated to be a spin-frustrated Mott insulator. With Na doping, charge carriers are introduced, and the spin-1/2  $\text{Co}^{4+}$  changes into spinless  $\text{Co}^{3+}$ . Thus, Na doping enhances conductivity and relaxes magnetic frustration as a result of which a long-range antiferromagnetic (AFM) spin-density-wave (SDW) ordering occurs for  $x > 0.70$  with  $T_N \sim 21$  K. In the AFM state, the Co spins are ferromagnetically aligned in the plane and are stacked antiferromagnetically along the  $c$  axis. Unlike other layered materials, the intralayer and interlayer magnetic interactions in  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  are of comparable strength, suggesting an essentially three-dimensional nature of the magnetism.<sup>18</sup>

The magnetic, electronic, and thermal properties reveal that several unusual phenomena emerge with the increase in Na content in the heavily doped region ( $x > 0.70$ ).<sup>12–14</sup> The main findings are the strong enhancement of the electronic density of states and spin fluctuations in a narrow range of  $x$  close to 0.70 and the opening of a gap in the Fermi surface due to the SDW ordering above  $x = 0.70$ .<sup>13,14</sup> For  $x \geq 0.75$ , the spin fluctuations get suppressed, and a long-range ferromagnetic-(FM)-like ordering sets in around 8 K. Besides these intriguing

phenomena, the breaking of charge homogeneity of the Co ions that stabilizes a charge-ordering-like state and the intricate high-temperature Na ordering are the other remarkable aspects in this doping region.<sup>9,15</sup> Both experimental and theoretical studies reveal that all these phenomena deeply modify the low-energy electronic structure of the system.<sup>8–14</sup> As a consequence, one expects unusual physical properties and a rich interplay of spin and charge degrees of freedom in the heavily doped region.

The Hall effect is one of the most widely used measurements to characterize the low-energy electronic state of a system. Often, the Hall effect in strongly correlated materials is very different from that in a simple metal. In  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$ , the temperature and doping ( $x$ ) dependence of the Hall coefficient ( $R_H$ ) has not been studied systematically in the heavily doped region where the electronic correlation is believed to be strong and a long-range magnetic ordering appears at low temperatures.  $R_H$  is extremely sensitive to the magnetic ground state of the system also. In this paper, we show that  $T$  and  $x$  dependences of  $R_H$  in the heavily doped region (0.72–0.90) are quite different from those reported for  $x \leq 0.71$ .<sup>4,11</sup> Both the weak  $T$  dependence of  $R_H$  below  $\sim 85$  K and the strong  $T$ -linear behavior at high temperatures are consistent with the theoretical prediction for a triangular lattice.<sup>10</sup> In the AFM state, below  $T_m \simeq 10$  K,  $R_H$  increases rapidly with the decrease in  $T$  and exhibits a nonlinear  $H$  dependence. To the best of our knowledge, there is no experimental evidence on the effect of this low-temperature transition on any transport properties.

**II. EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS**

Single crystals of nominal compositions  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  ( $0.72 \leq x \leq 0.90$ ) were grown by floating-zone technique using an image furnace. The growths were carried out in an oxygen atmosphere with a typical growth rate of 4 mm/h. X-ray powder diffraction shows that all samples are single phases. The chemical composition of the crystal pieces used in the present paper was thoroughly analyzed by energy dispersive x ray (Quanta 200 FEG, FEI). For the determination of the Na:Co ratio, we scanned at several points and found that the variation in Na content is within 2% of the nominal composition. This

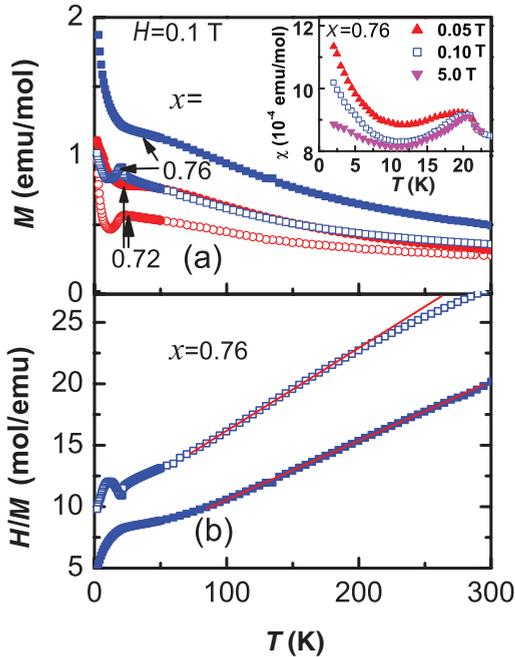


FIG. 1. (Color online) (a) Temperature dependence of magnetization for an applied field  $H = 0.1$  T parallel (open symbols) and perpendicular (closed symbols) to the  $c$  axis of  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  single crystals with  $x = 0.72$  and  $0.76$ . The inset shows the behavior of  $\chi_{\parallel c}^{-1}(T)$  below  $T_N$  for different  $H$ 's for the  $x = 0.76$  sample. (b)  $H/M$  versus  $T$  plot for the  $x = 0.76$  crystal for  $H = 0.1$  T. The solid line shows the linear behavior of  $H/M$ .

confirms that these samples are chemically homogeneous. The cleaved crystal was cut into a rectangular shape of the typical size of  $3 \text{ mm} \times 2 \text{ mm} \times 0.2 \text{ mm}$ . The Hall measurements were performed using a standard four-probe contact with  $H$  parallel to the  $c$  axis. The Hall voltage was measured at fixed  $T$  by slowly sweeping  $H$  from  $-8$  to  $8$  T, and the Hall coefficient ( $R_H$ ) was calculated using the relation  $R_H = \rho_H/H$ , where  $\rho_H$  is the Hall resistivity. In this method, one can eliminate the longitudinal offset voltage due to a small misalignment of the Hall contacts and can determine  $H$  dependence of  $R_H$ . Zero-field-cooled magnetization ( $M$ ) with  $H$  parallel ( $M_{\parallel c}$ ) and perpendicular ( $M_{\perp c}$ ) to the  $c$  axis has been measured using a commercial superconducting quantum interference device magnetometer (Quantum Design) with fields up to  $5$  T.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The representative plots of  $M(T)$  for  $x = 0.72$  and  $0.76$  samples are shown in Fig. 1(a).  $M$  exhibits a strong anisotropy with  $M_{\perp c} > M_{\parallel c}$  over the whole range of  $T$ . Upon cooling, the anisotropy increases, and a weak downward curvature appears below  $85$  K in both  $M_{\perp c}$  and  $M_{\parallel c}$ . With further lowering of  $T$ , the system undergoes a paramagnetic (PM) to AFM transition at  $T_N \simeq 21$  K. Below  $T_N$ ,  $M_{\perp c}$  continues to increase rather sharply, whereas,  $M_{\parallel c}$  initially decreases rapidly and then increases for  $T < 10$  K.  $M_{\perp c}$  does not show any visible change around  $10$  K, but a weak anomaly is observed in  $dM_{\perp c}/dT$ . The inset of Fig. 1(a) shows  $\chi_{\parallel c}^{-1}(T)$  [ $=M_{\parallel c}(T)/H$ ] for different  $H$ 's in the magnetically ordered state. It is clear from the figure that  $\chi_{\parallel c}^{-1}$  decreases

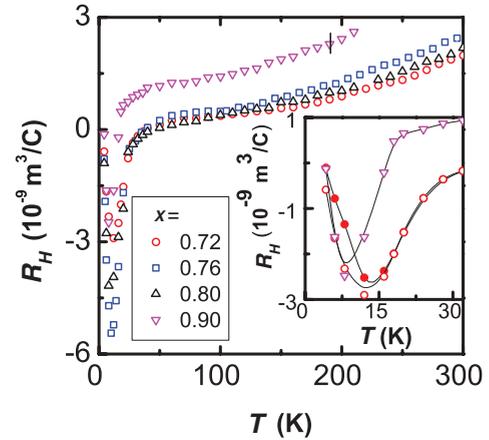


FIG. 2. (Color online) Temperature dependence of the Hall coefficient ( $R_H$ ) for  $H (=8 \text{ T})$  parallel to the  $c$  axis of  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  crystals with  $x = 0.72, 0.76, 0.80,$  and  $0.90$ . The inset shows the enlarged view of  $R_H(T)$  for  $x = 0.72$  ( $\bullet$  for  $H = 2$  T and  $\circ$  for  $H = 8$  T) and  $0.90$  ( $\nabla$  for  $H = 8$  T) samples below  $T_N$ .

systematically with increasing  $H$ , but the decrease is faster below  $10$  K. In order to elucidate the nature of the magnetic ground state,  $M(H)$  has also been measured (not shown). Both  $M_{\perp c}(H)$  and  $M_{\parallel c}(H)$  are linear above  $T_N$ . Below  $T_N$ , although  $M_{\perp c}(H)$  is linear,  $M_{\parallel c}(H)$  develops a weak hysteresis and nonlinear  $H$  dependence at low fields similar to that reported earlier.<sup>6,7</sup> These  $H$  and  $T$  dependences of  $M_{\parallel c}$  indicate a weak FM-like character. However, the estimated value of spontaneous moment ( $\sim 10^{-4} \mu_B/\text{Co}$ ) in the so-called FM state is unusually small compared to a typical FM. Qualitatively, similar behavior has been observed for other compositions. For a better understanding of the PM state, we have plotted the inverse of dc susceptibility  $\chi^{-1}$  ( $=H/M$ ) as a function of  $T$  for the  $x = 0.76$  sample [Fig. 1(b)]. In the PM state,  $H/M_{\perp c}$  is almost linear above  $85$  K, but  $H/M_{\parallel c}$  shows a downward curvature above  $180$  K, indicating a deviation from the simple Curie-Weiss (CW) behavior. Although  $H/M_{\parallel c}$  starts to deviate from linearity above  $180$  K, a  $T$ -linear dependence is observed in the region  $85 \text{ K} < T < 180 \text{ K}$ . It has been suggested that this deviation is due to the presence of a  $T$ -independent term in susceptibility.<sup>7</sup> However, Schulze *et al.* have shown that, apart from the high-temperature Na ordering at  $\sim 285$  K, there is a further Na rearrangement occurring at around  $200$  K, and the Coulomb potential due to this  $\text{Na}^+$  rearrangement strongly affects the magnetic properties of the sample.<sup>13</sup> In particular, the magnetic transition around  $10$  K is extremely sensitive to this phenomenon. At present, it is not clear whether the departure in  $\chi$  is due to the Na rearrangement or presence of a  $T$ -independent positive term.

We now turn to the Hall effect results on  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$ .  $R_H$  with  $H (=8 \text{ T})$  along the  $c$  axis is plotted as a function of  $T$  in Fig. 2 for  $x = 0.72, 0.76, 0.80,$  and  $0.90$ . For all compositions,  $R_H$  shows a nonmonotonic  $T$  dependence.  $R_H$  decreases with  $T$  down to  $T_N$  and changes its sign around  $T_N$ . On further cooling below  $T_N$ , a sharp decrease occurs in the interval  $T_N > T > T_m$  followed by an abrupt increase in crossing  $T_m$ . The inset of Fig. 2 displays  $R_H(T)$  for the  $x = 0.72$  and  $0.90$  samples below  $T_N$ . For  $x = 0.72$ , we have plotted  $R_H(T)$  for two different fields. The figure shows that the sharp variations

in  $R_H$  at  $T_N$  and  $T_m$  are less sensitive to  $H$ . The magnitude of  $R_H$  at  $T_m$  increases rapidly by a factor of 2 as  $x$  increases from 0.72 to 0.76 and then decreases with a further increase in  $x$ . The systematic decrease in magnitude of  $R_H$  at  $T_m$  for  $x > 0.76$  and the shift in  $T_m$  towards lower  $T$  for  $x = 0.90$  indicate that the FM interaction gets weakened possibly due to the reduction in the  $\text{Co}^{4+}$  ion. Closer inspection reveals that several anomalies observed in  $M(T)$  are also reflected in  $R_H(T)$ . Other than the sharp changes at  $T_N$  and  $T_m$ , a change in slope near 85 K is also common in both  $\chi_{\parallel c}(T)$  and  $R_H(T)$ . On the contrary, we observe an anomaly in the resistivity only at  $T_N$ . This suggests that the transverse resistivity is very sensitive to the magnetic state of the sample.

In the heavily doped region,  $R_H$  is large, negative, and shows strong  $T$  dependence below  $T_N$ . In  $\text{Na}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_2$  too,  $R_H$  is large and negative below 75 K and exhibits a minimum around 30 K.<sup>4</sup> However, in this sample, the large  $R_H$  is due to the suppression of the charge carrier at the charge-ordering/AFM transition. Also, for  $\text{Na}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_2$ ,  $R_H \rightarrow 0$  as  $T \rightarrow 0$  due to the particle-hole symmetric state. Although we are unable to deduce the value of  $R_H$  accurately for  $T \rightarrow 0$ , the extrapolation of the low-temperature data reveals a nonzero positive value of  $R_H$  at  $T = 0$  for all samples. The nature of  $R_H(T)$  for the present samples may be compared with that reported for the metallic  $x \leq 0.71$  samples.<sup>4,5,19</sup> Comparing our results with those reported earlier, we find that  $R_H$  exhibits much sharper variations at  $T_N$  and  $T_m$  for the present  $x \geq 0.72$  samples.<sup>4,5,11,19</sup> This difference is possibly due to the lower Na content in the earlier samples. The detailed magnetic, thermal, and muon spin rotation studies reveal that the bulk AFM phase below  $T_N$  and the low-temperature phase below  $T_m$  appear for  $x > 0.70$ .<sup>13</sup> This suggests that the amount of ordered magnetic phases present in earlier samples is small and, hence, the reduction in sharpness at  $T_N$  and the absence of anomaly below 10 K in  $R_H(T)$ .<sup>4,11</sup> In order to shade some more light, we have investigated the  $H$  dependence of  $\rho_H$  both above and below  $T_N$  for  $x = 0.72$ –0.90 samples. Here, we have shown the plots for  $x = 0.72, 0.76$ , and 0.80 only [Figs. 3(a)–3(c)]. For all compositions, we observe that  $\rho_H$  is linear in  $H$  above  $T_N$ , but it is large and nonlinear in  $H$  below  $T_N$ . From the figures, we see that  $\rho_H(H)$  is almost linear for  $12 \text{ K} < T < T_N$ . The nonlinearity in  $\rho_H(H)$  appears mainly below 12 K and increases with decreasing  $T$ . The nonlinear behavior of  $\rho_H(H)$  is stronger for the  $x = 0.72$  sample. For the  $x = 0.90$  sample, we observe that the qualitative behavior of  $\rho_H(H)$  is similar to that for  $x = 0.76$  and 0.80 samples. The observed nonlinearity and sign change of  $\rho_H$  cannot be explained by taking into account two types of carriers with different mobilities because both phenomena occur either below or in the vicinity of  $T_N$ . Also, the sign change is accompanied by a sharp drop in  $\rho_H(T)$ . Although the sign change for the  $x = 0.68$  sample occurs smoothly as expected in the presence of two different types of carrier, the nonlinearity in  $\rho_H(H)$  appears only below  $T_N$ .<sup>5</sup> In ferromagnets, however,  $\rho_H(H)$  is nonlinear below  $T_C$  and shows an abrupt sign change in the vicinity of  $T_C$ . Furthermore,  $R_H(T)$  mimics the low field  $M(T)$  below  $T_N$ . All these facts support the magnetic origin for the nonlinear behavior of  $R_H(H)$  below  $T_N$ . The weak anomaly at around 7.5 T in  $\rho_H(H)$  curves for the  $x = 0.80$  sample is due to the metamagnetic transition. Similar to an

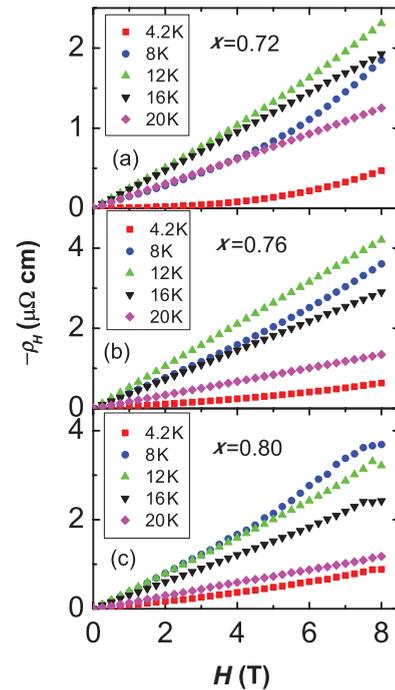


FIG. 3. (Color online) Hall resistivity  $\rho_H$  as a function of field with  $H$  parallel to the  $c$  axis of  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  crystals for (a)  $x = 0.72$ , (b) 0.76, and (c) 0.80.

earlier report,<sup>16</sup> we have also observed a clear signature of metamagnetic transition in magnetoresistance.

In magnetic materials, often the strong  $T$  dependence and sign change of  $R_H$  in the vicinity of magnetic transition arise due to the asymmetric scattering of the charge carrier by the local moments.<sup>20–23</sup> To interpret these results, we use the well-known phenomenological expression for the Hall resistivity:  $\rho_H = R_o B + R_s M_s$ , where  $R_o$  is the normal Hall coefficient,  $R_s$  is the coefficient of anomalous Hall effect,  $B$  is the applied magnetic induction, and  $M_s$  is either the spontaneous magnetization or the field-induced magnetization.<sup>21,22</sup> For a simple nonmagnetic metal, the second term is zero, but for a FM metal, this term can be very large below  $T_C$ . For  $T$  above  $T_N$  or  $T_C$ , although there is no spontaneous moment contribution to  $R_H$ , the PM moment induced by the applied field is important. In the PM state,  $M_s$  should be replaced by  $\chi H$ , and one obtains  $R_H = R_o + \chi(R_o + R_s)$ . So, we expect a linear relation between  $R_H$  and  $\chi$  in the PM state of a magnetic material. This behavior has been experimentally verified for several systems.<sup>21–23</sup> For  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$ , the above relation cannot be satisfied because  $\chi$  decreases while  $R_H$  increases with the increase in  $T$  above  $T_N$ . Usually,  $M$  increases linearly with  $H$  in the AFM state. Also, in such cases, one expects a linear relation between  $R_H$  and  $\chi$  below  $T_N$ . In Fig. 4(a), we have plotted  $R_H$  as a function of  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  below  $T_N$  for  $x = 0.72$  and 0.76 samples. We have plotted  $R_H$  versus  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  for two different fields  $H = 0.10$  and 5.0 T. For both samples,  $R_H$  increases approximately linearly with  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  in the AFM state. However, the data below 8 K do not fall on the line, and their values are slightly larger. This deviation is related to the FM nature of the magnetic state below  $T_m$ . Surprisingly enough, we observe an unusual dependence between  $R_H$  and  $\chi_{\parallel c}$ ; instead

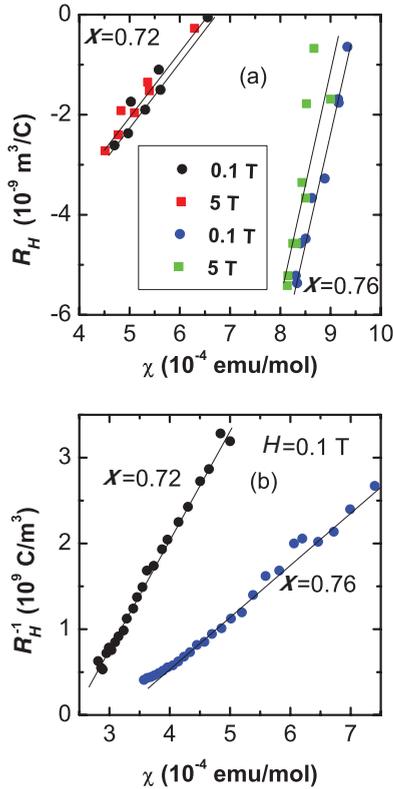


FIG. 4. (Color online)  $R_H$  for  $H$  parallel to the  $c$  axis versus  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  ( $=M/H$ ) plot for  $x = 0.72$  and  $0.76$  samples: (a) below  $T_N$  and (b) in the PM state above 50 K. The different magnetic fields at which both  $R_H$  and  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  have been measured are indicated in the figures.

of  $R_H$ ,  $R_H^{-1}$  depends linearly on  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  above  $\sim 50$  K in the PM state [Fig. 4(b)]. For  $x = 0.76$ , the deviation from linearity below a critical value of  $\chi_{\parallel c}$  is due to the departure of  $\chi_{\parallel c}(T)$  from the CW law above 180 K. The  $R_H$ - $\chi_{\parallel c}$  plots for  $x = 0.80$  and  $0.90$  samples (not shown) are qualitatively similar to that for  $x = 0.72$  and  $0.76$  samples.

The Hall effect in strongly correlated systems is unusual and, in most cases, the semiclassical expression  $R_H = 1/ne$  does not hold well.  $R_H$  is rather sensitive to different physical parameters and the crystal geometry of the system. Both cuprates and sodium cobaltites have layered structures, but the nature of  $T$  dependence of  $R_H$  in the two cases is very different;  $R_H$  decreases with the increase in  $T$  in the former,

whereas, it is just the opposite in the latter. The underlying triangular lattice is believed to play a significant role on the  $T$  dependence of  $R_H$  in  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$ . Shastry *et al.* have shown that, in a triangular lattice,  $R_H$  increases linearly with  $T$  above the Fermi temperature ( $T_F$ ), whereas, for  $T < T_F$ ,  $R_H$  is less sensitive to  $T$  as in the case of a Fermi liquid.<sup>10</sup> The predicted linear behavior is consistent with the reported Hall data for single crystals with  $x = 0.68$ .<sup>4</sup> However, the value of  $dR_H/dT$  estimated by Shastry *et al.* comes out to be a factor of 4 smaller than the experimental one. They speculated that a nearby concentration might reveal a smaller  $dR_H/dT$  to be consistent with the experimental value of the hopping-matrix element  $t/k_B \sim 100$  K. In this regard, it is useful to compare our Hall data with the theoretical predictions as we have measured the Hall coefficient of the  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  single crystal for several compositions above  $x = 0.68$ . Indeed, the approximate high-temperature slope of  $R_H(T)$  for our samples is a factor of  $\sim 4$  smaller than that for the  $x = 0.68$  crystal. Thus, the slope of  $R_H(T)$  for  $x > 0.68$  samples is consistent with the theoretical prediction. The nature of the  $R_H(T)$  curve at low  $T$  can also be explained using this model. In our samples,  $R_H$  is almost  $T$  independent and positive for  $50 \text{ K} < T < 100 \text{ K}$ , which is in line with the prediction by Shastry *et al.*<sup>10</sup> In this temperature region, we deduce carrier (hole) density  $1.5\text{--}3 \times 10^{28} \text{ m}^{-3}$  for  $0.72 \leq x \leq 0.90$ . Also, the extrapolation of  $R_H(T)$  data to  $T = 0$  suggests that, had there been no AFM ordering for  $x \geq 0.72$  samples,  $R_H(T)$  would tend to saturate at a small positive value at low temperatures as predicted theoretically.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, magnetic and magnetotransport properties of  $\text{Na}_x\text{CoO}_2$  ( $0.72 \leq x \leq 0.90$ ) single crystals with  $H$  along the  $c$  axis have been studied.  $R_H$  shows strong  $T$  dependence in the AFM state and, at high temperatures, above 100 K in the PM state.  $R_H$  is almost  $T$  independent in the region  $50 \text{ K} < x < 100 \text{ K}$ . In the AFM state,  $R_H$  scales linearly with  $\chi$ . Both  $M(H, T)$  and  $R_H(H, T)$  data indicate the emergence of a FM-like magnetic phase below 10 K. The observed  $T$  dependence of  $R_H$  above  $T_N$  is consistent with the theoretically calculated  $R_H$  for the triangular lattice in the strong correlation limit. The excellent agreement between theory and experiment is possibly due to the enhancement of electronic correlation above  $x \simeq 0.70$ .

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