

Generation of 130 mW of 397.5 nm tunable laser via ring-cavity-enhanced frequency doubling

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We report on the frequency doubling of a tapered amplifier-booster distributed-Bragg-reflector continuous-wave laser system at 795 nm, using a PPKTP crystal placed in an external ring cavity. A tunable 397.5 nm violet laser power of 130 mW with a mode-matched input 795 nm laser power of 416 mW is obtained (conversion efficiency $\eta = 31\%$), limited by thermally induced bistability. However, when the violet laser is at the maximum output, a stable operation more than 30 min is hard to reach due to thermal effects. With a scanning cavity, the peak violet laser power rises up to 180 mW, corresponding to an overall efficiency of $\eta = 43\%$. The generated 397.5 nm laser with good beam quality and satisfying power has huge potential use in quantum optics and cold-atom physics. © 2014 Optical Society of America

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1. INTRODUCTION

Compact high-power tunable violet laser sources are of interest for many scientific and technological applications, such as optical data storage, laser printing and lithography, spectroscopy, quantum optics, and cold-atom physics. The cooling and trapping of Ca^+ ions, which play an important role in quantum manipulation and quantum computing areas, have been realized with a tunable 397 nm light source in several experiments [1–4]. Particularly, in the field of quantum optics, the major objective of the violet laser is the realization of the squeezed lights by pumping an optical parametric oscillator (OPO). The generated squeezing lights corresponding to the transitions of alkalis such as cesium (Cs) and rubidium (Rb) have great potential use, including in nonclassical spectroscopy [5], light–atom interaction [6,7], information storage and readout [8], quantum information networks [9], and ultraprecise measurement [10,11].

A universal approach to realize violet laser sources is second harmonic generation (SHG) of near-infrared light. However, this is limited by the absorption of nonlinear materials at violet wavelengths and associated thermal effects. Benefiting from the development of nonlinear crystals and low-loss coatings during the past decades, frequency doubling of Ti:sapphire lasers and tapered diode amplifiers has become an effective approach to realizing such violet lasers. For years, various nonlinear materials have been used. The potassium niobate (KNbO_3) crystal is widely used due to its large nonlinearity ($d_{\text{eff}} \sim 18$ pm/V). In 1991, 650 mW of blue radiation at 430 nm was achieved with KNbO_3 in a ring cavity [12]. However, the phase-matching temperature for SHG of 795 nm is below the freezing point or above 100°C , which requires special precautions. What is more, the strong blue-induced infrared absorption (BLIIRA) at lower temperature renders it unsuitable for the generation of violet wavelengths. Another

widely used material is lithium triborate (LBO) because of its wide transparent range (160–2600 nm). In 2008, using a LBO crystal in an external enhancement cavity, 1.1 W at 378 nm was generated, and the conversion efficiency was 35% [13]. Recently, 1 W at 399 nm has been obtained with a LBO crystal in a ring cavity, with an efficiency of 80% [14]. However, due to the low nonlinear coefficients ($d_{\text{eff}} < 1$ pm/V), the SHG efficiency for LBO is sensitive to intra-cavity loss. Thus, it is unsuitable for the frequency conversion of low power sources, which requires a precise control of loss. Although a commercial LBO-based frequency doubler is available for the generation of violet light near 397 nm, the bad beam quality prevents it from pumping an OPO. Recently, quasi-phase-matched (QPM) materials such as PPLN and PPKTP have been available, which have the advantages of being free of walkoff, a convenient phase-matching scheme, and large effective nonlinearities ($d_{\text{eff}}(\text{PPLN}) \sim 17 - 18$ pm/V and $d_{\text{eff}}(\text{PPKTP}) \sim 7 - 9$ pm/V). For violet laser generation, PPKTP is superior to PPLN, which is resistant to photorefractive damage at room temperature. PPKTP has been used to generate 234 mW at 461 nm [15], 330 mW at 426 nm [16], and 318 mW at 404 nm [17] by means of external-cavity-enhanced SHG. In a recent paper, 340 mW blue light was generated with PPKTP by sum-frequency generation (SFG) between a tapered amplifier (TA) operated in a coupled cavity and a single-pass TA [18]. Compared with the method of SHG, the advantage of this approach is the tenability, which can easily be expanded to all the visible spectrum. However, this system is a little complicated with two TAs. Although many papers [8,9,19,20] mentioned the generation of 397.5 nm violet lasers by external-cavity SHG with PPKTP crystals, none of them presented a detailed study. In 2013, Zhai *et al.* [21] solely discussed the frequency doubling to 397 nm with PPKTP crystals in a ring cavity. However, they employed a tight focusing

of the waist size to 25 μm in a 30 mm PPKTP crystal, resulting in severe thermal effects and low SHG power output (40 mW).

In the present work, we perform a detailed study on efficient 397.5 nm tunable violet light conversion from frequency doubling of a TA-boosted 795 nm distributed-Bragg-reflector (DBR) laser system with a PPKTP crystal in a ring cavity. Compared to the Ti:sapphire laser, our diode-based pump laser system is compact, inexpensive, and easy to operate. In general, the TA is seeded by an external-cavity diode laser (ECDL). Compared with this scheme, the DBR diode laser without external gratings is more compact and stable. By adjusting the temperature and injection current of the DBR laser, we are able to tune the wavelength of the laser and then address atomic transitions. When the laser is tuned to 793.676 nm, the SHG violet laser corresponds to a $^{40}\text{Ca}^+ 4S_{1/2} - 4P_{1/2}$ transition, which can be applied in laser cooling and trapping of Ca^+ ions. In this context, our group is engaged in the generation of polarization squeezed lights resonant with Rb D_1 transitions (795 nm), improving the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) and sensitivity of the Rb-based SERF magnetometer and spin gyroscope by replacing the coherent probe laser. Based on this, the aim of our work is to achieve the violet laser at 397.5 nm with satisfying power and beam quality, which is suitable for pumping an OPO.

With the system, a maximum power of 130 mW at 397.5 nm is achieved with a mode-matched power of 416 mW, while in scanning mode this value rises up to 180 mW. When the violet laser is at the maximum output, the absorption of the violet laser leads to obvious thermal effects. As a consequence, a stable operation more than 30 min is hard to reach. We briefly discuss the thermally induced bistability and dephasing, which limit the efficiency and power stability in continuous-wave (cw) mode at high incident power. Finally, the beam profile and power stability of the generated violet light are presented.

2. SHG SETUP

A schematic drawing of the experimental setup is shown in Fig. 1. The pump laser is a TA-boosted 795 nm DBR diode laser. The DBR diode laser is TO-8 packaged, and the nominal linewidth and the maximum output power are ~ 1 MHz and 180 mW at 795 nm, respectively. A 30 dB optical isolator is

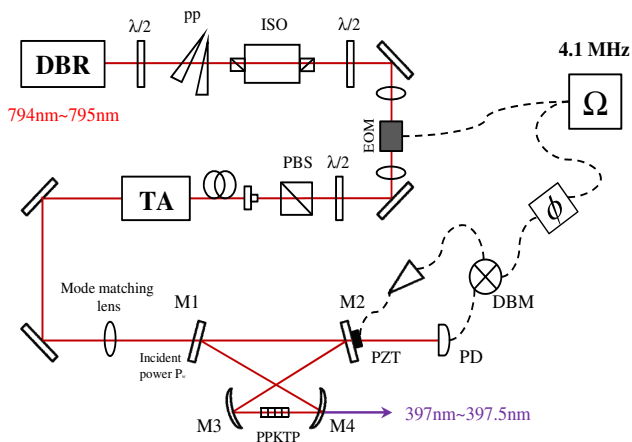


Fig. 1. Schematic of the experimental setup. DBR, distributed Bragg reflection diode laser; PP, plastic prism; TA, tapered amplifier; DBM, double-balanced mixer.

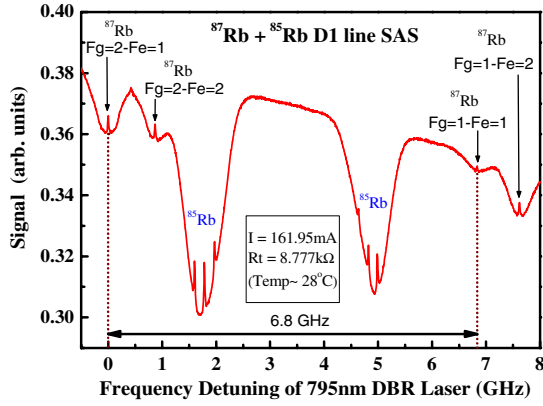
adopted between the DBR laser and TA to prevent the optical feedback into the DBR laser. An electro-optical modulator (EOM) carried with a 4.1 MHz radio frequency provides phase modulation of the pump beam to lock the enhancement cavity by using the Pound–Drever–Hall modulation sideband method. A rotatable polarization beam splitter (PBS) cube placed in front of the TA is used to obtain the correct polarization input. The system provides a single-longitudinal-mode power $P_\omega = 500$ mW at 795 nm.

The enhancement cavity is designed in a symmetric bow-tie ring configuration with a folding angle of 8° , which leads to a negligible astigmatism. A lens mode matches the pump beam into the enhancement cavity. The cavity is made of two plane mirrors (M1 and M2) and two curved mirrors (M3 and M4) with radius of curvature of 100 mm. The mirrors are highly reflecting at the fundamental wave (FW) wavelength, except for the input coupler M1 with a power transmission T_1 between 11.7% and 7.4%. In addition, M4 has a power transmission of 94% at the SHG wavelength. The back faces of all mirrors are antireflection (AR) coated at the two wavelengths. M2 is mounted on a piezoelectric transducer (PZT) for the

electronic locking of the enhancement cavity. A 20-mm-long PPKTP (Raicol Crystal Ltd.) crystal with a poling period of 3.15 μm is placed at the waist between the curved mirrors (see Fig. 1). According to the theory proposed by Boyd and Kleinman [22], the optimum confocal condition for an incident Gaussian beam and the desired beam waist are related to the crystal length. They defined the focusing parameters $\xi = L/b$, where L is the length of PPKTP crystal and $b = \pi\omega_0^2/\lambda$. The optimum focusing condition is found to be $\xi = 2.84$, which results in an optimal waist of 22 μm in our case. However, as the SHG wavelength is approaching the limit of the transparency window of KTP (350 nm), the linear absorption becomes an important issue. Earlier reports [19–21] have shown considerable absorption in the violet wavelength with KTP, leading to large thermal effects. Based on this, we deliberately avoid optimal focusing to circumvent these thermal effects. Weak focusing on the crystal can efficiently weaken the thermal effects and still achieve considerable conversion efficiency. This also ensures an increased crystal lifetime. Based on this, we design the cavity with a total length of 60 cm and a distance of 12 cm between curved mirrors. This results in a waist of 40 μm , which is nearly two times as large as the optimal size. The crystal is placed in a copper-made oven, whose temperature is controlled by a thermoelectric Peltier element. The crystal Z axis is matched with the direction of electric-field polarization of the TA laser, and no extra $\lambda/2$ plate is needed. The generated SH beam is transmitted through M4 as shown in Fig. 1. The SHG beam is separated from the nonconverted FW beam with a dichroic mirror.

3. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

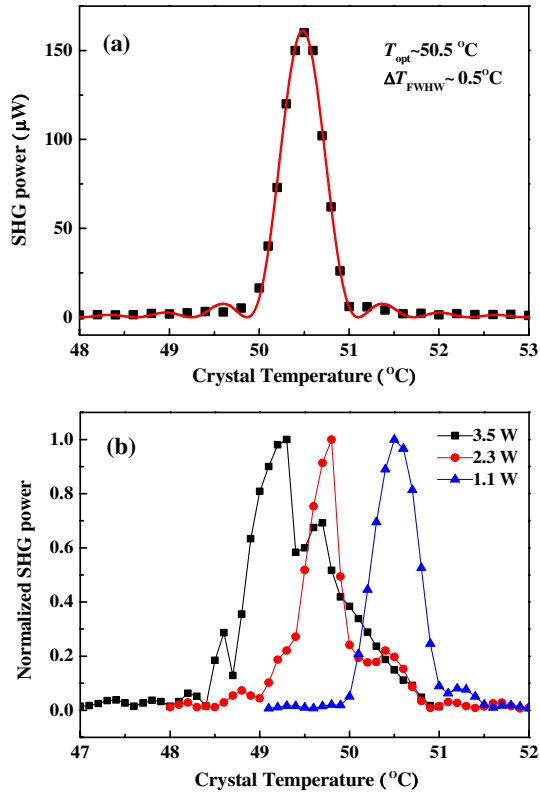
Scanning the injection current of the DFB laser, we obtain the saturation absorption spectroscopy (SAS) of D_1 transitions of Rb⁸⁵ and Rb⁸⁷ atoms, shown in Fig. 2. It is indicated that the 795 nm laser can be tuned continuously around 8.5 GHz. Thus, the 397.5 nm violet laser can also be continuously tuned based on the tunable range of the 795 nm laser. We can lock the laser



F2:1 Fig. 2. Saturation absorption spectroscopy (SAS) of D_1 transitions of
F2:2 Rb^{85} and Rb^{87} atoms obtained by the 795 nm DBR laser.

186 frequency to any of D_1 transitions of Rb^{85} and Rb^{87} atoms,
187 which enables the 397.5 nm laser stabilization.

188 The single-pass conversion efficiency E_{NL} of the PPKTP
189 crystal is measured by removing the input coupler (M1)
190 and detecting the generated SHG power transmitting through
191 M4, which preserves the focusing condition used in the actual
192 resonant cavity. By varying the crystal temperature and hence
193 the phase matching, the temperature tuning curve is measured,
194 shown in Fig. 3(a). We perform the measurement at
195 an incident FW power of 100 mW in order to avoid unwanted



F3:1 Fig. 3. (a) Measured temperature tuning curve with sinc^2 fitting in
F3:2 single-pass configuration. The pump power is 100 mW. The tempera-
F3:3 ture bandwidth from the fitting curve is $\Delta T_{\text{FWHM}} = 0.5^\circ\text{C}$. (b) Tem-
F3:4 perature tuning curve for cavity configuration. The incident powers
F3:5 are ~ 100 mW, ~ 250 mW, and ~ 450 mW, corresponding to the intra-
F3:6 cavity circulating powers of ~ 1.1 W, ~ 2.3 W, and ~ 3.5 W, respec-
F3:7 tively.

contributions from thermal effects. 160 μW of SHG power is
generated at the phase temperature of 50.5°C , resulting in
 $E_{NL} = 1.6\%/W$. The full-width at half maximum (FWHM)
bandwidth is 0.5°C . The measured temperature tuning curve
is in good agreement with sinc^2 fitting in Fig. 3(a), implying
good homogeneity of the refractive index at lower power levels.

We also measure the temperature tuning curve for the cavity
configuration with incident power of ~ 100 mW, ~ 250 mW,
and ~ 450 mW, corresponding to the intra-cavity power of
 ~ 1.1 W, ~ 2.3 W, and ~ 3.5 W, respectively. The temperatures
of phase-matching peaks are 50.5 , 49.8 , and 49.3°C , respec-
tively, shown in Fig. 3(b). At lower incident power, the tem-
perature tuning curve and the phase-matching temperature
stay the same compared with the single-pass configuration.
However, at higher incident FW power, the phase-matching
peak shifts towards lower temperature. As the SHG wave-
length is approaching the limit of the transparency window
of KTP (350 nm), the significantly increased absorption of
the circulating FW power and especially the SHG power at
high power level lead to heating of the crystal. This thermal
effect induces a thermal gradient larger than the crystal ther-
mal acceptance. As a result, the oven temperature has to be
lower to compensate the temperature rise in the crystal. This
is proved by results shown in Fig. 3(b). In addition, we find
that the phase-matching curve deviates from the sinc^2
function at higher power. This might be attributed to the inho-
mogeneous temperature distribution in the crystal caused by
light-induced absorption.

The SHG power versus mode-matched FW power can be
written as [15,16]

$$\sqrt{\eta} \left[2 - \sqrt{1 - T_1} \left(2 - L - \Gamma \sqrt{\frac{\eta P_1}{E_{NL}}} \right) \right]^2 - 4T_1 \sqrt{E_{NL} P_1} = 0, \quad (1)$$

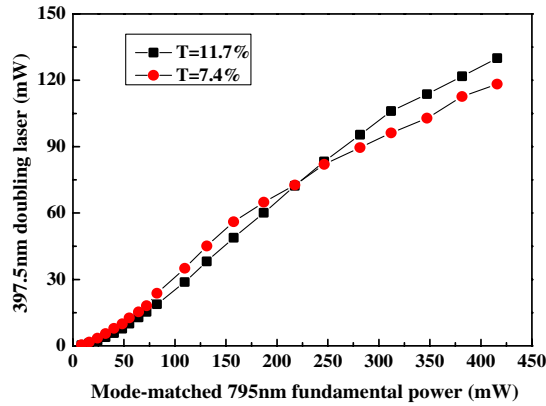
where $\eta = P_2/P_1$ is the overall conversion efficiency, P_1 is the
mode-matched fundamental power, and P_2 is the generated
SHG power. Γ includes all nonlinear losses and can be written
as $\Gamma = E_{NL} + \Gamma_{\text{abs}}$. Γ_{abs} formulates the SH light absorption
inside the crystal: $P_{\text{abs}} = \Gamma_{\text{abs}} P_c^2$. The absorption in the blue
region is in the range of 10%–20%/cm [15,16,23]. As for
397.5 nm, it might be larger. L is the total round-trip loss in
the cavity except for the transmission T_1 of input coupler
M1, which is due to absorption and scattering of crystal and
cavity mirrors. The intra-cavity loss is measured to be 4.5%.

To achieve a high SHG efficiency, optical impedance
matching must be considered. The choice of input coupler de-
pends on the total losses including linear and nonlinear losses.
The optimal transmission T_1 of the input coupler yields [15,16]

$$T_1^{\text{opt}} = \frac{L}{2} + \sqrt{\left(\frac{L}{2}\right)^2 + \Gamma P_1}. \quad (2)$$

Based on the parameters ($L = 4.5\%$, $E_{NL} = 1.6\%/W$,
 $\Gamma_{\text{abs}} = 0.22E_{NL}$, and $P_1 = 0.42$ W) of our cavity, the optimal
 T_1^{opt} is calculated 11.6%. The comparisons for two different
transmissions (11.7% and 7.4%) are shown in Fig. 4. We con-
clude that the 11.7% transmission approaches the optimal

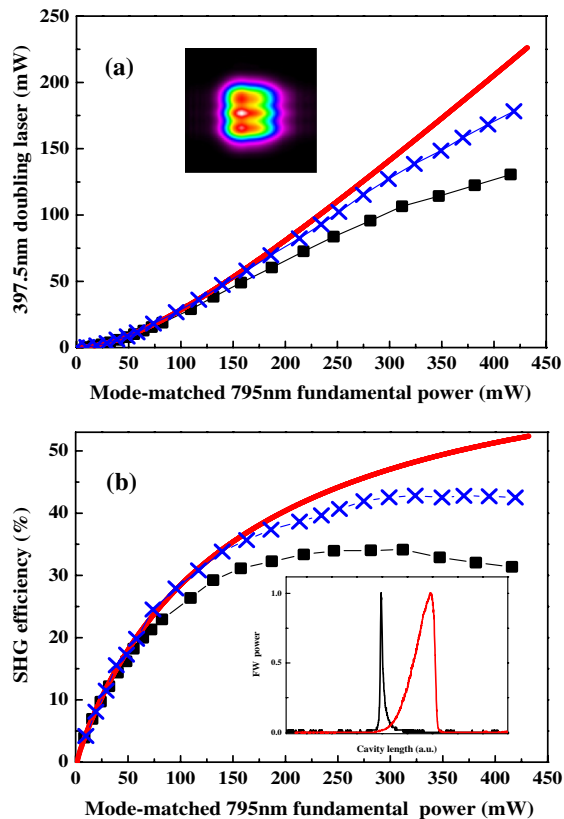
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F4:1 Fig. 4. 397.5 nm doubling power versus the mode-matched fundamental power under two different input couplers (11.7% and 7.4%).
 F4:2 The black squares correspond to $T_1 = 11.7\%$, and the red dots correspond to $T_1 = 7.4\%$.
 F4:3
 F4:4

247 value, leading to an excellent perfect impedance matching and
 248 a higher SHG efficiency.

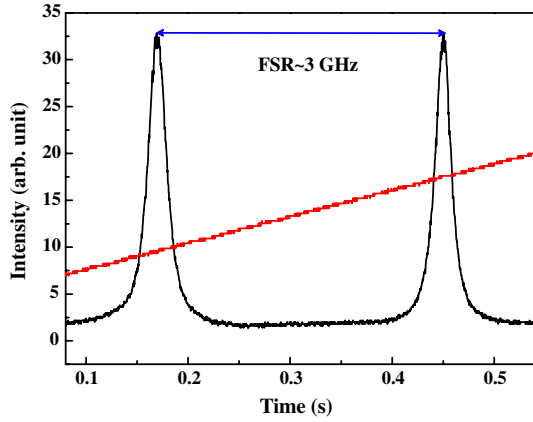
249 The generated 397.5 nm doubling power and conversion effi-
 250 ciency versus the mode-matched fundamental power in cw
 251 and scanning mode with 11.7% transmission of the input cou-
 252 pler are plotted in Fig. 5. The spatial profile of the output beam



F5:1 Fig. 5. (a) 397.5 nm doubling power P_2 and (b) conversion efficiency
 F5:2 η as a function of mode-matched fundamental power P_1 with 11.7%
 F5:3 transmission of input coupler. Solid lines are the theoretically calcu-
 F5:4 lated results on parameters ($E_{NL} = 1.6\%/W$, $L = 4.5\%$, $T_1 = 11.7\%$,
 F5:5 and $\Gamma_{abs} = 0.22E_{NL}$), black squares represent results in cw mode,
 F5:6 and blue crosses represent peak power in scanning mode. The inset
 F5:7 of (a) shows the spatial profile of the output beam from the TA.
 F5:8 The inset of (b) shows the fringe asymmetry observed on the FW fringe
 F5:9 when scanning the PZT (red line, contracting cavity length; black line,
 F5:10 expanding length).

253 from the TA is far from a Gaussian beam shown in the inset of
 254 Fig. 5(a), resulting in a typical mode-matching efficiency of
 255 80%. The temperature is carefully optimized to give the maxi-
 256 mum SHG output for each data point. The measured SHG
 257 power and conversion efficiency in scanning mode are in good
 258 agreement with the theoretical calculation from Eq. (1) with
 259 parameters ($E_{NL} = 1.6\%/W$, $L = 4.5\%$, $T_1 = 11.7\%$, and
 260 $\Gamma_{abs} = 0.22E_{NL}$) until $P_1 = 300$ mW. After this value, slight
 261 deviation is seen as the pump power increases. This is due
 262 to the less accurate evaluation of the mode-matched power
 263 in this range. The transverse beam of the TA becomes worse
 264 gradually with the injection current of the TA increasing. As a
 265 result, the mode-matched power drops at high power range.
 266 The cw results deviate from the scanning results for mode-
 267 matching power larger than 150 mW, which can be attributed
 268 to the increased difficulty in locking the cavity. The inset of
 269 Fig. 5(b) shows the fringe asymmetry observed on the FW
 270 fringe when scanning the PZT of the enhancement cavity. First
 271 consider the case in which the PZT is expanding and therefore
 272 the cavity is shortening (red line). As the cavity is tuned to be
 273 resonant with the FW laser, the circulating FW power and
 274 especially the SHG power become increasingly important,
 275 leading to heating of the crystal. The absorption causes a rise
 276 in crystal temperature, thus resulting in an increase of the opti-
 277 cal path length due to the positive value for dn/dT at the FW
 278 wavelength. This lengthening of the optical length induced by
 279 thermal effects is in the opposite direction to the scanning.
 280 Before the peak of the resonance is reached, this thermal effect
 281 slows down the shortening of the cavity length. Therefore,
 282 the point of the cavity resonance shifts to a shorter cavity
 283 length, which results in a slow increase of the circulating
 284 FW power. This is the self-stabilizing effect of the optical path
 285 to the laser frequency [15]. Once resonance is reached, the
 286 thermal effect decreases and the cavity makes an abrupt transi-
 287 tion out of resonance. For the case in which the cavity is
 288 lengthening (black line), the thermal effect accelerates the
 289 lengthening of the cavity length. Therefore, the cavity sweeps
 290 rapidly through resonance. This thermally induced bistability
 291 prevents locking of the cavity to the top of the distorted fringe
 292 in cw mode, leading to a deviation from the results in the
 293 scanning mode.

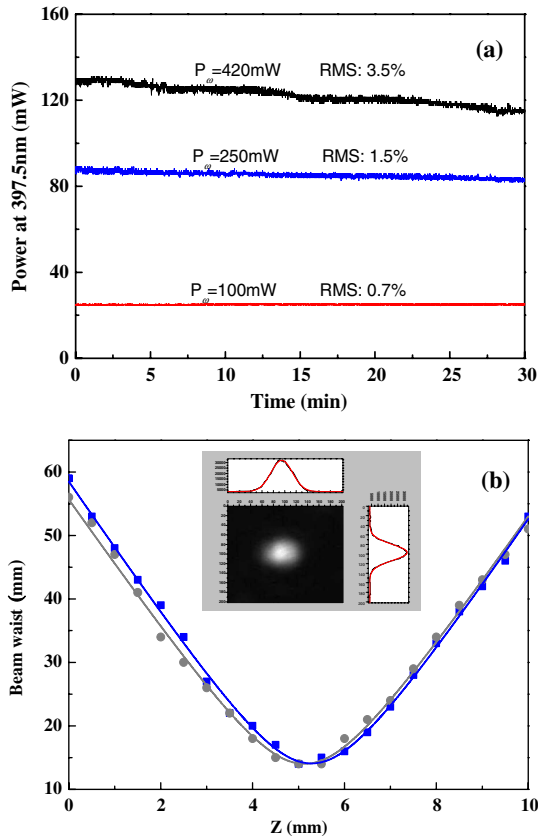
294 The wavelength of the 397.5 nm laser can be tuned by
 295 changing the wavelength of the 795 nm laser and simultane-
 296 ously changing the PPKTP temperature to assure phase
 297 matching. By tuning the 795 nm laser from 794.278 to
 298 795.382 nm, we have tuned the violet laser in the 397.139–
 299 397.691 nm range. The corresponding phase-matching tempera-
 300 ture changes from 38.3 to 57.5°C. In this way, the obtained
 301 power is indeed affected. Meanwhile, we have measured
 302 the continuously tunable range of the violet laser. By tuning
 303 the 795 nm laser continuously, the generated 397.5 nm laser
 304 can be tuned continuously. The generated 397.5 nm laser
 305 passes through a confocal Fabry–Perot (FP) cavity with a cavi-
 306 ty length of 25 mm. When the 795 nm DBR laser is tuned by
 307 scanning the current of the DBR laser with a speed of
 308 5.4 GHz/s, the FP trace of 397.5 nm is shown in the Fig. 6.
 309 It is noticed that the cavity length is not scanned. The scanning
 310 speed is limited by the bandwidth of the cavity feedback loop.
 311 We can infer from the figure that the 397.5 nm laser can be
 312 tuned continuously around 3 GHz without losing the lock
 313 of the cavity. The continuously tunable range is limited by



F6:1 Fig. 6. Confocal FP cavity trace of 397.5 nm laser when the 795 nm
F6:2 laser is tuned.

314 the maximum deforming length of the PZT. It is also indicated
315 that the violet laser at 397.5 nm is single-frequency.

316 The output power stability at 397.5 nm is measured at vari-
317 ous fundamental powers for 30 min in cw mode, shown in
318 Fig. 7(a). The RMS fluctuations range from 0.7% at 100 mW
319 to 1.5% at 250 mW of mode-matched FW power, indicating
320 good power stability. However, the degradation of the SHG
321 power is observed when the mode-matched power ap-
322 proaches 420 mW, resulting in a large RMS fluctuation of
323 3.5%. This degradation is largely attributed to thermally



F7:1 Fig. 7. (a) Power stability over 30 min at various fundamental power
F7:2 levels. (b) Beam quality M^2 values of SHG beam for both axes at maxi-
F7:3 mum violet power. The blue squares are results for the x axis, and the
F7:4 gray dots are results for the y axis. The inset is the beam profile of the
F7:5 SHW beam.

induced dephasing [24] caused by absorption at FW and espe- 324
cially SHG wavelengths in PPKTP crystal when it is operated 325
at high power density levels. We restrict the violet power to 326
80 mW to minimize this thermal effect. Operating in the region 327
can also minimize the thermally induced bistability, allowing 328
for a stable locking of the enhancement cavity. The beam 329
quality M^2 values and beam profile are shown in Fig. 7(b). 330
The measured M^2 values for both axes are $M_x^2 = 1.19$ (3) 331
and $M_y^2 = 1.16$ (3). The transverse intensity distribution for 332
both axes is in good agreement with Gaussian fitting. 333

4. CONCLUSION 334

We have demonstrated the generation of 130 mW of cw power 335
at 397.5 nm from frequency doubling of a TA-boosted DBR 336
laser system with a PPKTP crystal in a ring cavity. When 337
the cavity is operated in scanning mode, the violet power rises 338
up to 180 mW with a mode-matched power of 416 mW, cor- 339
responding to an overall efficiency of $\eta = 43\%$. The power sta- 340
bility and beam quality at 397.5 nm are measured to be good in 341
cw mode. The stable and tunable violet laser source with a 342
satisfying power and good beam quality paves the way to 343
the realization of the squeezed light at 795 nm, which is res- 344
onant with the rubidium D_1 line and the cooling and trapping 345
of Ca^+ ions. 346

Compared with Refs. [15–17], our SHG efficiency is lower. 347
This can be attributed to two reasons. For one, as our SHG 348
wavelength is shorter approaching the limit of the transpar- 349
ency window of KTP (350 nm), the absorption at the FW 350
and SHG wavelengths is larger. Although the waist size is 351
nearly two times as large as the optimal size, thermally in- 352
duced bistability and dephasing are observed, which limit 353
the efficiency at high incident power in cw mode. Also, the 354
thermal effects change the eigenmode of the cavity, resulting 355
in a different mode matching. For the other, imperfect optical 356
quality and coatings of cavity mirrors and crystal faces to- 357
gether with the absorption of the crystal at the FW wavelength 358
result in a higher intra-cavity loss of 4.5%. Further improve- 359
ments in efficiency can be obtained by reducing loss in the 360
following aspects. First, the scattering loss can be reduced by 361
using super polished mirrors. Second, the reflecting loss 362
can be lowered by using the ion beam sputter coating technol- 363
ogy for all four cavity mirrors. Third, the intra-cavity loss can 364
be further reduced by a semimonolithic [25] or monolithic [26] 365
cavity configuration. After the loss is reduced, one needs to 366
optimize the input coupler to match with the total loss of 367
the cavity. With these approaches, we believe the efficiency 368
can be improved dramatically. 369

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Queries

1. AU: AR and PZT defined correctly?