

Title of the Invention: Pipeline beads mill

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a pipeline beads mill which is disposed in a feeding line for transferring a material to be treated, for example, a slurry (or mill base) in which solid particles are suspended in a liquid, for preliminary treatment or the like of the material to be treated.

Background Information

In a chemical field for producing various products such as coating materials by treatment such as stirring, not only in the case of materials to be treated having a high viscosity, but also in the case of slurry having a low or medium viscosity, relatively large power is required to conduct the stirring treatment uniformly. Particularly, in the case of dispersing apparatuses, for example, a wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus in which the material to be treated is finely ground by stirring it together with beads, a pre-treatment (pre-mixing) of preliminarily stirring the material to be treated is conducted before feeding the material to be treated to the dispersing apparatus. It is commonly known that if the material to be treated is simply stirred as the pre-treatment, primary particles can hardly be formed from solids (powder) and a large amount of secondary agglomerates is deposited in pipelines. Such deposits largely influence the cleaning property of the pipelines or the like, and have caused problems of contamination.

Further, by the presence of a large amount of secondary agglomerates as mentioned above, when the treatment is carried out by the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus or the like, it takes a long period of time for

dispersion to finely grind the material to a desired particle size. In addition, the secondary agglomerates tend to cause clogging of a screen disposed in the medium-dispersing apparatus for the purpose of separating the dispersion media such as beads from the material to be treated, resulting in one of causes of deterioration in operation efficiency.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a pipeline beads mill, by which when a material to be treated such as a slurry is subjected to dispersion treatment with a wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus as mentioned above, secondary agglomerates can be disintegrated for preliminary dispersion during the passage of the material to be treated in a feeding line.

The present invention provides a pipeline beads mill which comprises a dispersion chamber which has at one side a material-feeding port to be connected to a pipeline for feeding a material to be treated, and at another side, a material-discharging port to be connected to another end of the pipeline for feeding a material to be treated; a tubular outer stator which is disposed in the dispersion chamber and opens to a side of the material-feeding port; an inner stator which exists at an inner side of the outer stator and opens to a side of the material-discharging port; a treatment gap formed between the outer stator and the inner stator; a tubular rotor which partitions the treatment gap into an outer gap and an inner gap; a drive shaft for rotating the rotor; a circulation port formed on the rotor by which dispersion media contained in the treatment gap are allowed to pass the outer gap and flow in the inner gap, and then circulated to the outer gap by the rotation of the rotor; a flow-out port which is formed on the inner stator and allows the material to be treated to flow out

from the material-discharging port; and a screen which is disposed at the flow-out port and separates the dispersion media from the material to be treated. The above object has been accomplished by this apparatus.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig.1 is a cross-sectional view showing an example of the present invention.

Fig.2(A) and Fig.2(B) show a top face portion of a rotor, and Fig.2(A) is a plan view and Fig.2(B) is a front view.

Fig.3(A), Fig.3(B) and Fig.3(C) are partial cross sectional views showing flow-controlling surface disposed on a rotor, an outer stator and/or an inner stator. Fig.3(A) is a view illustrating the case where projecting portions are disposed on the outer face of the rotor, Fig.3(B) is a view illustrating the case where projecting portions are disposed on the outer face of the rotor and the outer face of the inner stator, and Fig.3(C) is a view illustrating the case where projecting portions are disposed on the inner and outer faces of the rotor, the outer face of the inner stator, and the inner face of the outer stator.

Fig.4(A), Fig.4(B) and Fig.4(C) show states in use of the pipeline beads mill of the present invention. Fig.4(A) is a view illustrating the case where the pipeline beads mill of the present invention is disposed between a pump and a wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus, Fig.4(B) is a view illustrating the case where the pipeline beads mill of the present invention is disposed in a pipeline through which a slurry is circulated to a stirring tank, and Fig.4(C) is a view illustrating the case where a dispersion line of a conventional wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus is installed after the apparatus of Fig.4(B).

PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

Fig.1 is a cross-sectional view showing an example of the present invention. In this figure, at one side of a main body (2) which constitutes dispersion chamber (1), a material-feeding port (3) is formed, and at another side, a material-discharging port (4) is formed, and these ports are connected to a pipeline (L) for feeding a material to be treated such as a slurry.

The main body (2) is formed by connecting an inlet-side member (5), a medium part member (6) and a discharge-side member (7), respectively, with bolts (8).... At the inlet-side member (5), the material-feeding port (3), a flow-in chamber (9) and a pouring port (11) for dispersion media (10) such as beads, are formed. Further, through an axial sealing portion (12) and a cover plate (13) disposed at the inlet-side member (5), a drive shaft (14) driven by a motor (not shown) extends toward the inside of the main body.

On the drive shaft (14), axial flow blades (15) are disposed so that the material to be treated which flows in the flow-in chamber (9) will flow in an axial direction through the medium part member (6) and toward the material-discharging port (4) side. As the axial flow blades (15), it is preferred to use paddling-down blades which function to paddle the material to be treated in the flow-in chamber (9) down toward the medium part member (6) side, as shown in the figure. However, axial-flow propellers may be used.

At the upper portion of the medium part member (6), an inward projecting edge (17) is formed which inwardly projects toward the center, slants downward in an inverted conical shape, and forms a flow-in port (16). Further, at the lower portion, an outer stator (18) is provided. At the central portion of the discharge side member (7), the material-discharging port (4) extends downward, and an inner stator (20) having a flow-out port (19) which

is communicated to the discharge port (4) is provided upward. Each of the outer stator (18) and the inner stator (20) is formed in a tubular shape. At the inner side of the outer stator (18) which opens to the material-feeding port side, the inner stator (20) which opens to the material-discharging port side is disposed. An annular and bottomed treatment gap (21) is formed between both stators. Although both stators (18) and (20) are formed in a cylindrical tubular shape, these may be formed in an appropriate polygonal tubular shape. In the treatment gap (21), the dispersion media (10) ...are contained.

Into the treatment gap (21), a tubular rotor (24) is inserted from the opening side of the treatment gap so that the treatment gap is partitioned into an outer gap (22) and an inner gap (23) and the outer gap (22) and the inner gap (23) are communicated at the front end side. The rotor (24) has a rotor top face portion (25) of a substantially truncated conical shape which is disposed at the lower end of the drive shaft (14) and a rotor main body (26) of a tubular shape connected to the rotor top face portion (25). The rotor (25) is rotated in the treatment gap (21) by the drive shaft. The width of the treatment gap (21), particularly the width of the outer gap (22), is formed to be at the same level as a conventional annular type medium-dispersing apparatus, and adjusted so as to efficiently exert the shearing force by use of the dispersion media to the material to be treated.

Between the rotor top face portion (25) and the inward projecting edge (17), a conical gap (27) that communicates to the outer gap (22) is formed. On the outer face of the rotor top face portion (25) and/or on the inner face of the inward projecting edge (17) which faces the conical gap (27), it is preferred to form an appropriate outflow-preventing projection (28) so that the dispersion media (10)... in the treatment gap will not pass through the conical gap (27) and flow out from the flow-in port (16)

toward the flow-in chamber (9) side.

Fig.2(A) and Fig.2(B) show an example of the rotor top face portion to which the outflow-preventing projection (28) is provided, wherein outflow-preventing projections (28) which spirally project are formed over a conical slope face (29) and a tubular face (30) of the rotor top face portion (25). By this structure, when the rotor rotates, the movement of the dispersion media (10)...toward the conical gap (27) is prevented by the projection (28) and returned to the treatment gap (21). Instead of the projection, spiral grooves or projections providing paddling-down effects may be disposed (not shown).

When the rotor (24) rotates, the dispersion media (10)... flow in the treatment gap (21) by the rotor. A circulation port (31) is formed on the rotor (24) so that the dispersion media which pass through the outer gap (22) and flow into the inner gap (23) will be returned to the outer gap (22) from the inner gap (23). As the circulation port (31), in the example as shown in the figure, two long slots extending axially on the periphery of the rotor main body (26) are provided. The site at which the circulation port (31) is formed, and the size, number, shape and the like of the circulation port (31) may suitably be constructed.

At the discharge port (19) of the inner stator (20), a screen (32) having flow holes such as pores, slits or net is formed so as to separate the dispersion media (10)... from the material to be treated. In Fig.1, the inner stator is entirely covered with a tubular net screen (32). However, as shown in Fig.3, a screen (32a) may be formed only on the flow-out port (19). Otherwise, other appropriate screen structure may be formed. Further, the inner lower face of the rotor top face portion of the rotor and the upper end face of the inner stator may be formed in appropriate shapes, and these faces may be combined face-to-face, to form a narrow gap at a level such

that the passage of the dispersion media can be prevented, between both members, namely, a gap separator is formed (not shown).

The outer and inner faces of the rotor (24), the inner face of the outer stator (18) and the outer face of the inner stator (20), which face the treatment gap (21), are formed to have a substantially flat and smooth surface. However, if the case requires, in order to control the flow of the dispersion media (10)... and the material to be treated when the rotor (24) rotates, a flow-controlling surface having e.g. unevenness, projections, long slots or spiral grooves may be formed on the respective members. As such flow-controlling surface (33), for example, screw-shaped grooves described in US Patent 4,856,717 and spike-like projections described in US Patent 4,919,347 may be mentioned.

When the flow-controlling surface (33) having e.g. projections is provided, it may be provided at an appropriate site, taking the properties of the material to be treated and the dispersion effects into consideration. For example, it may be provided on the outer face of the rotor (24) as shown in Fig.3(A), on the outer face of the rotor (24) and the outer face of the inner stator (20) (Fig.3(B)), on the outer and inner face of the rotor (24), the inner face of the outer stator (18) and the outer face of the inner stator (20) (Fig.3(C)).

When the flow-controlling surface (33) is provided on the entire outer face of the rotor, the movement of the dispersion medium (10)... is accelerated, and accordingly, the amount of the dispersion media (10)... flowing toward the flow-in port (16) side through the conical gap (27) tends to increase. According to the results of experiments, it was confirmed that such tendency can be suppressed by forming a flat and smooth surface at the upper part of about 1/7 to about 1/5 of the height of outer face of the rotor, and forming the flow-controlling surface (33) at the lower part.

Accordingly, the treatment gap (21) is filled with the dispersion media (10)...to about 60 to 90% capacity. The material to be treated fed to the inside of the dispersion chamber (1) through the material-feeding port (3) from the pipeline (L).. enters the outer gap (22) of the treatment gap (21) from the flow-in port (16) of the dispersion chamber (1) and then flows into the inner gap (23). In the meantime, the dispersion media (10)... to which movement is applied by the rotor (24) act to disintegrate the secondary agglomerates in the material to be treated and at the same time finely grind the solid particles thereof by the impact force or the grinding force generated among the dispersion media. By this movement, the material to be treated is preliminarily dispersed, and only the preliminarily dispersed material is allowed to flow to the material-discharging port (4) and then the pipeline (L) through the screen (32) and the flow-out port (19). At an appropriate site around the dispersion chamber or the like, a jacket for circulating a temperature-controlling medium, may be provided for temperature adjustment.

When comparison was made on a coating material production line, the particle size of secondary agglomerates was from about 250 to 350 μm when pre-treatment was made with a high-speed stirring machine as conventionally carried out, and it was not more than about 50 μm when passed one time through the pipeline beads mill of the present invention.

The pipeline beads mill of the present invention can be used by installing it at an appropriate portion in the pipeline. For example, as shown in Fig. 4(A), in the production line for dispersing and treating the material to be treated with a conventional wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus (35) or the like after the material to be treated passes the stirring tank (34) and is fed to the pump (P), the pipeline beads mill (36) of the present invention is installed between the tank (34) and the wet-type medium-

dispersing apparatus (35), the agglomerates are disintegrated with the pipeline beads mill (36) and then fed to the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus (35).

When this structure was actually tested in the apparatus as shown in Fig. 4(A), with respect to the size of the dispersion media used in the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus (35) and the size of the dispersion media (10) used in the pipeline beads mill (36), it was confirmed that as the size of the dispersion media (10) increases, the preliminary dispersion can be more efficiently carried out. Namely, from the experiments, good results could be obtained by adjusting the size of the dispersion media (10) to be from about 2 to 4 times, preferably about 3 times, of the particle size of the dispersion media used in the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus (35). By adjusting the particle size as above, substantially same results could be obtained both in the case where the surfaces of the rotor and other members which are exposed to the treatment gap (21) are flat and smooth surfaces, and in the case where appropriate unevenness was formed thereon.

When simple fine grinding is carried out, it is advisable to constitute the pipeline in which the material to be treated is circulated to the stirring tank (34) such that the material to be treated will pass repeatedly, and install the pipeline beads mill (36) of the present invention in this line (Fig. 4(B)). As mentioned above, the pipeline beads mill of the present invention may be used as an independent dispersing apparatus.

When it is demanded to conduct further fine grinding, the pipeline may be constituted (Fig. 4(C)) such that the material to be treated is circulated in the line as shown in Fig. 4(B) to sufficiently disintegrate the agglomerates with the pipeline beads mill (36) of the present invention, and a simple fine grinding is carried out, and then the material is circulated

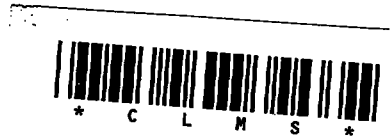
plural times to a conventional wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus (35) to complete the desired dispersion treatment.

The present invention is constituted as mentioned above, i.e. it comprises a dispersion chamber having a material-feeding port and a material-discharging port which are connected to a pipeline for feeding a material to be treated such as a slurry; a tubular outer stator and a tubular inner stator which exists at the inner side of the outer stator disposed in the dispersion chamber; a treatment gap formed between both stators; a rotor inserted in the treatment gap to partition the treatment gap into an outer gap and an inner gap; a circulation port formed on the rotor by which, when the rotor is rotated by a drive shaft, dispersion media contained in the treatment gap are allowed to pass the outer gap and flow in the inner gap, and then returned to the outer gap; a flow-out port which is formed on the inner stator and allows the material to be treated to flow out from the material-discharging port; and a screen which is disposed at a flow-out port formed on the inner stator and separates the dispersion media so as to allow only the material to be treated to flow in the pipeline through a material-discharging port. Accordingly, the secondary agglomerates present in the slurry are sufficiently disintegrated and preliminarily dispersed while the slurry enters from the material-feeding port and flows out from the material-discharging port, whereby the power of stirring machines of e.g. the stirring tank can be reduced and the fine grinding with the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus can easily be carried out.

Further, when the particle size of the dispersion media used in the present invention is larger than the particle size of the dispersion media of the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus, the secondary agglomerates can be securely disintegrated, and it is thereby possible to shorten the dispersion time with the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus, avoid the

formation of clogging of the screen for separating the dispersion media, treat the material to be treated uniformly even in the case where the fine grinding is not required, and conduct the treatment further efficiently.

Further, when the pipeline beads mill of the present invention is used, it is possible to make the line to be compact as compared with conventional batch system pre-treatment machine, install it in the line easily, and make the production further efficiently. In addition, in the case of a simple fine grinding, the pipeline beads mill of the present invention can be used as an independent dispersing apparatus.

**CLAIMS:**

1. A pipeline beads mill which comprises
 - a dispersion chamber which has at one side a material-feeding port to be connected to a pipeline for feeding a material to be treated, and at another side, a material-discharging port to be connected to another end of the pipeline for feeding a material to be treated;
 - a tubular outer stator which is disposed in the dispersion chamber and opens to a side of the material-feeding port;
 - an inner stator which exists at an inner side of the outer stator and opens to a side of the material-discharging port;
 - a treatment gap formed between the outer stator and the inner stator;
 - a tubular rotor inserted in the treatment gap which partitions the treatment gap into an outer gap and an inner gap;
 - a drive shaft for rotating the rotor;
 - a circulation port formed on the rotor by which dispersion media contained in the treatment gap are allowed to pass the outer gap and flow in the inner gap, and then circulated to the outer gap by the rotation of the rotor;
 - a flow-out port which is formed on the inner stator and allows the material to be treated to flow out from the material-discharging port; and
 - a screen which is disposed at the flow-out port and separates the dispersion media from the material to be treated.
2. The pipeline beads mill according to Claim 1, wherein axial flow blades are disposed on the drive shaft so that an axial flow will be formed from the material-feeding port side to the material-discharging port side.
3. The pipeline beads mill according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein the outer and inner faces of the rotor, the inner face of the outer stator and the outer face of the inner stator, which face the treatment gap, are formed to have a substantially flat and smooth surface.
4. The pipeline beads mill according to Claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein a flow-controlling surface having at least one of unevenness, projections and spiral grooves is



formed on at least one face of the outer and inner faces of the rotor, the inner face of the outer stator and the outer face of the inner stator, which face the treatment gap.

5. The pipeline beads mill according to any one of the preceding claims wherein, a top face portion of the rotor is formed in a substantially conical shape face, and an inward projecting edge which covers the top face portion and has a flow-in port at its central portion is provided, and between the inward projecting edge and the top face portion of the rotor, a conical gap which is communicated to the outer gap is formed.
6. The pipeline beads mill according to Claim 5, wherein an outflow-preventing projection for preventing the outflow of the dispersion media is formed on the outer face of the rotor and/or the inward projecting edge which face the conical gap.
7. The pipeline beads mill according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the pipeline connected to the material-discharging port is connected to an independent wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus, and the particle size of the dispersion media contained in the treatment gap is from 2 to 4 times of the particle size of the dispersion media used in the wet-type medium-dispersing apparatus.