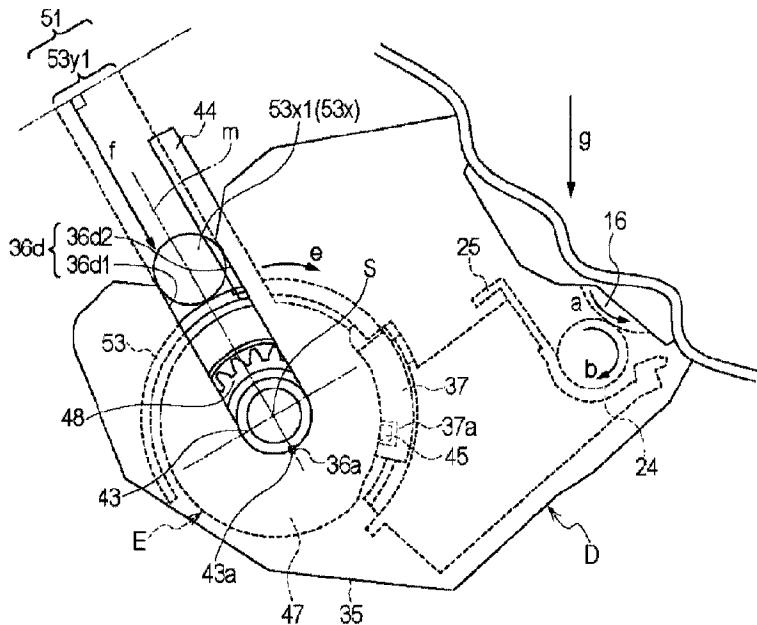




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(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
KIMURA, TAKASHI, JP;
KOJIMA, HISAYOSHI, JP;
KASHIIDE, YOSUKE, JP
(73) Propriétaire/Owner:
CANON KABUSHIKI KAISHA, JP
(74) Agent: RIDOUT & MAYBEE LLP

(54) Titre : CARTOUCHE D'ENCRE ET MECANISME D'ALIMENTATION EN ENCRE
(54) Title: TONER CARTRIDGE AND TONER SUPPLYING MECHANISM



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

To develop a conventional structure of a toner cartridge. Toner cartridge includes a container and an open/close member. The container includes an accommodating portion, a discharge opening and a cartridge side guide. the open/close member includes a closing portion and an engaging portion and is movable between a closing position and an opening position. When the toner cartridge is dismounted from a receiving apparatus, the engaging portion receives a force for moving the open/close member from the opening position toward the closing position, the engaging with a receiving apparatus side guide of the receiving apparatus.

[ABSTRACT]:

To develop a conventional structure of a toner cartridge. Toner cartridge includes a container and an open/close member. The container includes an accommodating portion, a discharge opening and a cartridge side guide. the open/close member includes a closing portion and an engaging portion and is movable between a closing position and an opening position. When the toner cartridge is dismounted from a receiving apparatus, the engaging portion receives a force for moving the open/close member from the opening position toward the closing position, the engaging with a receiving apparatus side guide of the receiving apparatus.

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DESCRIPTION

[TITLE OF INVENTION] TONER CARTRIDGE AND TONER SUPPLYING MECHANISM

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[TECHNICAL FIELD]

[0001] The present invention relates to a toner cartridge and a toner supplying mechanism to be used for forming an electrophotographic image.

10 [BACKGROUND ART]

[0002] In an electrophotographic image forming apparatus, there has been known a structure in which elements such as a photosensitive drum and a developing roller as a rotatable member to be used for image formation are integrated into a cartridge mountable to and dismountable from an image forming apparatus main assembly (hereinafter, main assembly of the image forming apparatus).

[0003] In a structure in which a cartridge is dismountably mounted in an image forming apparatus, there is also known a structure in which a toner cartridge containing toner (developer) to be consumed with the image formation can be replaced separately from the photosensitive drum and developing roller.

[0004] With such a structure, the toner (developer) contained in the toner cartridge is supplied into a developing device including a developing roller and the like through a discharge port. In addition, in order to prevent the toner from leaking to the outside from the discharge port, an opening and closing member such as a shutter for opening and closing the discharge opening is provided.

[0005] For example, Japanese Laid-open Patent Application No. H07-199623 discloses a structure in which a shutter is opened by rotating a toner cartridge

when a cylindrical toner cartridge (developer supply container) is mounted in the image forming apparatus main assembly.

[SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION]

5 [Problems to be Solved by Invention]

[0006] The object of the present invention is to develop the aforementioned prior art.

[Means to solve the problem]

[0007] A representative structure according to the present application is a toner cartridge detachably mountable to a receiving apparatus, the receiving apparatus including a toner receiving opening and a receiving apparatus side guide, said toner cartridge comprising a container including an accommodating portion for accommodating toner, a discharge opening for discharging the toner from said accommodating portion toward said receiving opening, and a cartridge side guide configured to be guided by the receiving apparatus side guide; and an open/close member including a closing portion for closing said discharge opening, an engaging portion engageable with the receiving apparatus side guide, wherein said open/close member being movable relative to said container between a closing position for causing said closing portion to close said discharge opening and an opening position for causing said closing portion to open said discharge opening, wherein when said toner cartridge is dismounted from said receiving apparatus, said engaging portion receives, by engagement with the receiving apparatus side guide, a force for moving said open/close member from the opening position to the closing position.

25 [Effect of the invention]

[0008] The above-mentioned conventional technique can be developed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 1 are side views of a toner cartridge according to an embodiment.

[0010] Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view schematically showing a structure of an image forming apparatus according to an embodiment.

[0011] Figure 3 is a schematic side sectional view illustrating a state in which the toner cartridge is mounted on the developing unit.

[0012] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 4 are schematic perspective views of the developing unit according to the embodiment.

[0013] Parts (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of Figure 5 are schematic views of the toner cartridge according to the embodiment.

[0014] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 6 are schematic illustrations of a developing unit and a toner cartridge before mounting (insertion).

[0015] Figure 7 is a schematic illustration of the developing unit and the toner cartridge during mounting (insertion).

[0016] Parts (a), (b) and (c) of Figure 8 are schematic side views illustrating a modified example of the structure of an insertion guided portion (portion to be guided in insertion).

[0017] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 9 are schematic side views illustrating a force relationship acting on the toner cartridge.

[0018] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 10 are schematic illustrations showing a state in which the abutting portion and the abutted portion are abutted against each other.

[0019] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 11 are schematic illustrations when the container frame is rotated so that the toner cartridge is positioned in place.

[0020] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 12 are schematic illustrations when each shutter moves to an open position and each toner storing portion is communicated.

[0021] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 13 are perspective views illustrating a modified example of the structure of an operating portion of the toner cartridge.

[0022] Figure 14 is a perspective view of the developing unit and the toner cartridge showing a modified example of the structure of an extending member.

5 [0023] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 15 are side views in a case where a drive transmission portion engaging with a second drive transmission portion is provided in the toner cartridge.

10 [0024] Parts (a), (b) and (c) of Figure 16 are side cross-sectional views of the developing unit and the toner cartridge showing a modified example of the structure of a restricting portion.

[0025] Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 17 are perspective views of the developing unit.

[0026] Parts (a), (b) and (c) of Figure 18 are sectional views of the developing unit and the toner cartridge.

15 [0027] Figure 19 is an illustration of an arrangement relationship of a second shutter.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

20 [0028] In the following, using the drawings, an image forming apparatus for forming an electrophotographic image, a toner image forming portion and a toner cartridge will be described. Here, an image forming apparatus is an apparatus for forming an image on a recording material with using, for example, an electrophotographic image forming process. For example, it includes an electrophotographic copying machine, an electrophotographic printer (for example, a LED printer, a laser beam printer, and so on), an electrophotographic facsimile machine, and the like.

25 [0029] Here, in the following examples, a monochromatic image forming

apparatus provided with one toner image forming portion is illustrated. However, the number of toner image forming portions provided in the image forming apparatus is not limited to such an example. For example, the image forming apparatus may have a plurality of toner image forming portions to form a color image.

[0030] Similarly, with respect to each constitution disclosed in the embodiments, materials, arrangement, dimensions, other numerical values and the like are not limited to the described examples unless otherwise described. In addition, unless otherwise specified, "above" means upward in the direction of gravity when the image forming apparatus is installed.

<Embodiment 1>

[0031] In this embodiment, a structure that contributes to improvement of usability will be described in detail. More specifically, it relates to an improvement in the operation feeling when the user mounts the toner cartridge to the developing unit.

[0032] First, the structure of the entire image forming apparatus will be described, and thereafter, the developing unit and the toner cartridge will be described in detail. Here, the operation of mounting the toner cartridge to the developing unit is referred to as a mounting operation, and the operation of dismounting the toner cartridge from the developing unit is referred to as a dismounting operation.

[0033] In addition, the position at which the projection, the hole, and so on are engaged with each other is referred to as the engagement position, and the position at which the engagement is released is referred to as the non-engagement position (disengagement position).

[Description of Electrophotographic Image Forming Apparatus]

[0034] Figure 2 is a side sectional structure illustration of the structure of the image forming apparatus A according to this embodiment. The image forming apparatus A shown in Figure 2 receives image information from an external

5 device such as a personal computer which is communicably connected therewith. And, according to received image information, the image forming apparatus A forms an image (toner image) with a developer (toner) on a recording material P (for example, recording sheet, OHP sheet, cloth, and so on) through an electrophotographic image forming process.

10 [0035] A toner image forming portion (toner image forming unit) B is dismountably provided in the main assembly of the image forming apparatus A.

The toner image forming unit (toner image forming unit) B of this embodiment comprises a drum unit C, a developing unit (developing device) D, and a toner cartridge E. The toner cartridge E can be mounted to and dismounted from the 15 developing unit D. That is, the developing unit D has a mounting portion for mounting the toner cartridge E, and is a receiving device (receiving device) for receiving the toner cartridge E.

[0036] Here, the toner image forming unit (toner image forming unit) B can be regarded as a unit including the photosensitive drum 1 and elements (process 20 members) acting on the photosensitive drum.

[0037] The drum unit C and the developing unit D are integrated, and can be dismountably mounted to the main assembly of the image forming apparatus as one cartridge. A cartridge in which the drum unit C and the developing unit D are integrated is sometimes called a process cartridge in particular. That is, the 25 toner cartridge E is mounted to and dismounted from the developing unit D of the process cartridge. In this case, the receiving device is a device which receives the entire process cartridge.

[0038] In addition, with the toner cartridge E mounted on the developing unit D, the process cartridge is mountable to and dismountable from the apparatus main assembly.

That is, the drum unit C, the developing unit D, and the toner cartridge E can be mounted to and dismounted from the apparatus main assembly

5 in a state of being integrated. Therefore, a toner image forming portion (toner image forming unit) B including all of the drum unit C, the developing unit D,

and the toner cartridge E may be referred to as a process cartridge.

[0039] Here, the drum unit C, the developing unit D, and the toner cartridge E

may be individually formed into respective cartridges. In this case, the drum

10 unit C is called a drum cartridge, and the developing unit D is called a developing cartridge.

In addition, in some cases, the photosensitive drum (or the drum unit

including the photosensitive drum) is fixed to the main assembly of the apparatus,

and only the developing unit (developing cartridge) D and the toner cartridge E

are dismountable.

15 [0040] In addition, the photosensitive drum or the developing unit may be

fixed to the apparatus main assembly, and only the toner cartridge E may be

dismountably mounted to the apparatus main assembly. In such a case, the

image forming apparatus itself can be regarded as a receiving device for the toner

cartridge E.

20 [0041] In addition, the combination of the receiving device and the toner

cartridge E may be referred to as a toner supply mechanism (toner supply unit,

toner supply device) or the like. In the toner supply mechanism, the toner is

supplied (replenished) from the toner cartridge E to the developing unit D

provided in the receiving apparatus.

25 [0042] Here, in this example, a photosensitive drum as an image bearing

member has a structure in which a flange or the like is integrated with a cylinder

having a photosensitive layer.

[0043] Mounting and dismounting of each cartridge is performed by the user (operator). In addition, the main assembly of the apparatus (main assembly of the image forming apparatus) refers to the constitutional portion excluding these cartridges (drum unit C, developing unit D, toner cartridge E) from the image forming apparatus A.

[0044] The drum unit C is a unit integrally including a photosensitive drum (image bearing member) 16, a charging roller 17, a cleaning blade 19, and the like, and in this embodiment, it is connected to the developing unit D to constitute a portion of the process cartridge. In addition, the developing unit D is a unit including integrally a developing roller (developer carrying member) 24 and the like, and in this embodiment, it is a portion of the process cartridge. The toner cartridge E is a cartridge integrally including a toner container (developer accommodating container, container) 47 for containing toner t as a developer.

[0045] The photosensitive drum 16 rotates in the direction of the arrow a shown in Figure 2. A surface of rotating photosensitive drum 16 is uniformly charged by the charging roller 17 as charging means. The laser beam L corresponding to the image information is irradiated from the laser scanner (exposure means) 1 onto the photosensitive drum 16 by which an electrostatic latent image corresponding to image information is formed on the photosensitive drum 16. And, the toner t carried on the developing roller 24 develops the electrostatic latent image. By this, a toner image is formed on the photosensitive drum 16.

[0046] Here, referring to Figure 3, the developing process in the toner image forming portion B will be described. A frame 35 of the developing unit D as the receiving apparatus rotatably supports the developing roller 24. The developing roller 24 receives a driving force from a power source such as a motor (not shown) provided in the main assembly of the apparatus and is rotationally driven

in a forward direction (a direction of arrow b in the drawing) with respect to the photosensitive drum 16.

[0047] A thickness t of the toner t in the developing chamber 31 is discharged regulated by the developing blade 25 and is carried on a circumferential surface 5 of the developing roller 24. During the layer thickness being regulated, electric charge is imparted to the toner by triboelectrical charging. And, the charged toner develops the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive drum 16.

[0048] In the developing unit D, the developing chamber 31 communicates with the first toner containing portion (developer accommodating portion) 28 10 through the first opening portion 29. A first toner feeding means 27 which is rotationally driven by the driving source (not shown) supplies the toner t from the first toner containing portion 28 to the developing chamber 31.

[0049] In addition, a communicating portion 58 is formed by a second opening portion (containing body opening, receiving opening, receiving opening) 30 and a 15 third opening portion (container opening, discharge opening, discharge opening) 49. Through this communication portion 58, the first toner containing portion (containing member accommodating chamber) 28 is in fluid communication with the second toner containing portion (container accommodating chamber) 47t of the toner cartridge E.

20 [0050] The second toner container portion 47t is a space provided inside the container 47 for containing the toner.

[0051] A third opening portion 49 is formed in the container frame 47a, and is a discharge opening for discharging the toner from the second toner container portion 47t to the outside of the container 47 (that is, into the developing unit D). 25 The toner discharged from the third opening portion 49 is received in the second opening (receiving port) 30 of the developing unit D.

[0052] The toner t is supplied from the second toner container portion 47t into

the first toner container portion 28 by the second toner feeding member 46 which rotates by the driving force inputted from the apparatus main assembly by way of the developing unit D.

[0053] Referring back to Figure 2, the description will be made further. The 5 recording material P contained in the feeding cassette 2 is separated and fed one by one by the cooperation of the pickup roller 3 and the pressure contact member 5 pressed against the pickup roller 3. And, in synchronization with the toner image formed on the photosensitive drum, the recording material P is fed along the feeding guide 4 to the transfer roller 6 as a transfer means.

10 [0054] Next, the recording material P passes through the transfer nip portion 11 formed by the photosensitive drum 16 and the transfer roller 6 to which a predetermined voltage is applied. At this time, the toner image formed on the photosensitive drum 16 is transferred onto the recording material P. The recording material P onto which the toner image has been transferred is fed to a 15 fixing means 8 by a feeding guide 7.

[0055] The fixing means 8 includes a driving roller 8a and a fixing roller 8c incorporating a heater 8b therein. The recording material P receives heat and pressure when passing through the nip portion 8d formed between the fixing roller 8c and the driving roller 8a. By this, the toner image transferred onto the 20 recording material P is fixed thereon. Thereafter, the recording material P on which the toner image has been fixed is fed by a pair of discharge rollers 9 and discharged to a discharge tray 10.

[0056] The cleaning blade 19 is elastically in contact to the outer peripheral surface of the photosensitive drum 16. By this, the toner t (untransferred residual toner) remaining on the photosensitive drum 16 which has not been transferred onto the recording material P is scraped off by the cleaning blade 19. The scraped toner t is stored in the removed toner containing portion (waste toner 25

containing portion) 18a of the frame 18 to which the cleaning blade 19 is fixed.

[0057] As described in the foregoing, in the image forming apparatus of this embodiment, an image is formed on a recording material (recording material) by using a developer (toner) through an electrophotographic image forming method.

5 The image forming apparatus will suffice if it can form an image on a recording material, and its form is not limited to an electrophotographic copying machine, an electrophotographic printer (a laser beam printer, a LED printer, and so on), an electrophotographic facsimile machine, an electrophotographic word processor, or the like.

10 **[0058]** As described in the foregoing, the toner image forming portion B includes the electrophotographic photosensitive member (photosensitive member) which is the image bearing member and the process means acting on the photosensitive member. In this embodiment, this toner image forming portion can be dismountably mounted to the main assembly of the image forming apparatus as one or more cartridges.

15 **[0059]** The process means includes charging means (charging member, charging device), developing means (developing device, developing unit), cleaning means (cleaning device, cleaning member) and the like.

20 **[0060]** The developing device develops the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive member. In this embodiment, the developing device (developing unit) can be mounted to and dismounted from the image forming apparatus as a portion of the process cartridge.

25 **[0061]** In addition, the toner cartridge (developer cartridge, toner bottle, developer bottle, toner container, developer container) is a cartridge containing the developer (toner) used for developing the electrostatic latent image formed on the photosensitive member.

[Structure of Each Cartridge (Each Unit)]

[0062] Next, a detailed structure of each cartridge (each unit) dismountably provided in the image forming apparatus will be described.

5 (Details of Neighborhood of Toner Cartridge Receiving Portion of Developing Unit)

[0063] Referring to Figure 4, a detailed structure of the neighborhood of the receiving portion of the toner cartridge E of the developing unit D according to this embodiment will be described. Figure 4 is a perspective view of the 10 neighborhood of the receiving portion (mounting portion) of the toner cartridge E of the developing unit D. Part (a) of Figure 4 shows a state in which the second opening portion 30 is closed (the first shutter 37 is in the closed position). In addition, part (b) of Figure 4 illustrates a state in which the second opening portion 30 is opened (the first shutter 37 is in the open position). In this 15 embodiment, the longitudinal direction of the developing unit D is a direction parallel to the rotational axis direction of the developing roller 24 of the developing unit D. Here, in a state in which the toner cartridge E is mounted to the developing unit, the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E is substantially parallel to the longitudinal direction of the developing unit D.

[0064] In the developing unit D, the toner cartridge E can be mounted (removable) to the frame (developing frame) 35 at the receiving portion. In the neighborhood of the receiving section, the developing unit D is provided with the second opening (containing body opening, receiving port) 30 and the first shutter (containing body shutter, receiving apparatus side shutter, receiving apparatus 25 side opening/closing member) 37. In this embodiment, the second opening portion 30 is provided in the center portion in the longitudinal direction of the developing unit D. However, the position of the second opening portion 30 is

not limited to this position as long as it faces the third opening (container opening) 49 which will be described hereinafter.

[0065] As shown in part (a) of Figure 4, the second opening portion 30 is sealed by a first shutter 37 having a shape with a curvature along the outer peripheral surface of the toner cartridge E.

[0066] The first shutter 37 has a hole portion 37a engageable with a projection (a container side engaging portion, an opening/closing member moving portion, a container side projection) 45 provided on the toner cartridge E. Two projections 45 and two hole portions 37 are provided. The hole 37 is provided outside a sealed area where the first shutter 37 seals the second opening portion 30.

[0067] In addition, both end portions in the longitudinal direction of the first shutter 37 are engaged with a first shutter guide portion 34 provided in the frame 35 of the developing unit D. By this, the first shutter 37 is slidable (movable) along the first shutter guide portion 34 (in the directions of arrows W1 and W2).

[0068] By this, the first shutter 37 is movable between the closing position for closing the second opening portion 30 (the receiving opening closing position, part (a) of Figure 4) and the open position for opening the second opening portion 30 (the inlet opening position, part (b) of Figure 4).

[0069] In addition, as shown in part (b) of Figure 4, a first sealing seal 32 for sealing the space between the first shutter 37 and the second opening portion 30 is mounted to the frame 35 of the developing unit D so as to surround the second opening portion 30.

[0070] The developing unit D is provided at opposite ends of the frame 35 in the longitudinal direction with insertion guide portions (receiving device side guides) 35d, 36d for guiding while maintaining the attitude (mounting attitude) of the toner cartridge upon mounting (insertion) of the toner cartridge E.

[0071] In addition, the developing unit D is provided with abutted portions

(portions to be abutted to) 35a, 36a against which the abutting portions 42a, 43a of the toner cartridge E abut when a toner cartridge E is inserted as will be described hereinafter.

[0072] Furthermore, the developing unit D is provided at opposite ends of the 5 frame 35 in the longitudinal direction with rotation guide portions 35b, 36b for guiding the rotation of the toner cartridge E when opening and closing the first shutter 37 and the second shutter (toner cartridge side shutter) 53.

[0073] The insertion guide portions 35d, 36d are formed linearly and parallel 10 to each other along the inserting direction f (part (a) of Figure 4) of the toner cartridge E. Here, the direction in which the toner cartridge E is inserted and the opposite direction thereto may be referred to as a removal direction. The removal direction is the direction to remove the toner cartridge E from the developing unit D. The downstream side in the inserting direction can be regarded as the upstream side in the removal direction, and the upstream side in 15 the inserting direction can be regarded as the downstream side in the removal direction.

[0074] Regarding the opposite end sides in the longitudinal direction of the developing unit D, the side on which the drive unit such as a gear (e.g. The first drive transmission portion 38) is disposed is hereinafter referred to as a drive side. 20 The non-driving side of the developing unit is opposite to the driving side in the longitudinal direction.

[0075] On the non-driving side of the developing unit D, the abutted portion 25 (portion to be abutted to) 35a and the rotation guide portion 35b are provided on the downstream side in the inserting direction f of the insertion guide portion 35d, and on the driving side, the abutted portion (portion to be abutted to) 36a and the rotation guide 36b are provided on the downstream side in the inserting direction f of the insertion guide portion 36d.

[0076] Furthermore, the developing unit D is provided with a first drive transmission portion 38 for transmitting drive to the second toner feeding unit 46 of the toner cartridge E which will be described hereinafter, at one end in the longitudinal direction of the frame 35.

5 [0077] The first drive transmission portion 38 is a gear, and is connected to the driving mechanism of the image forming apparatus main assembly, inside the developing unit D. The first drive transmission portion 38 is a torque transmission unit (drive force transmission unit) for transmitting the rotational force for driving the second toner feeding member 46, from the outside of the 10 toner cartridge E.

(Detailed Description of Toner Cartridge)

[0078] Referring to Figure 5, a detailed structure of the toner cartridge E according to this embodiment will be described.

15 [0079] Part (a) of Figure 5 is a perspective view of the toner cartridge E as viewed from the second drive transmission portion (48) side (drive side). In addition, part (b) of Figure 5 is a perspective view of the toner cartridge E as viewed from the side (non-driving side) opposite to the second drive transmission portion (48) side. Part (c) of Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of the toner cartridge E in the closed state of the third opening portion 49 as viewed from the side opposite to the second drive transmission portion (48) side. In addition, 20 part (d) of Figure 5 is a sectional view of the toner cartridge E in the state that the third opening portion 49 is opened, as viewed from the side opposite to the second drive transmission portion (48) side. And, part (e) of Figure 5 is a perspective view of the toner cartridge E when the second shutter 53 is in the open position (state in which the third opening portion 49 is opened). Here, in 25 Figure 5, the toner t is not shown.

[0080] The toner cartridge E includes the container 47, the second shutter (developer container shutter) 53 movable with respect to the container 47, the second toner feeding member 46 provided inside the container 47, and the second drive transmission portion (gear) 48 mounted to the second toner feeding member 46, and the like.

[0081] The container 47 has a substantially cylindrical shape. That is, the frame (container frame) 47a constituting the main assembly portion (main portion) of the container 47 has a substantially cylindrical shape. Here, the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E is the longitudinal direction (axial direction) of the cylindrical shape.

[0082] An insertion guided portion (guided portion, cartridge side guide portion) 42 projecting outward in the longitudinal direction beyond the side wall 47a2 of the container frame 47a is provided at the end portion of the container 47 in the longitudinal direction. Similarly, at the other longitudinal end portion of the container 47, an insertion guided portion (guided portion, cartridge side guide portion) 43 projecting outward in the longitudinal direction beyond the side wall 47a1 of the container frame 47a is provided.

[0083] In addition, the container 47 is provided with an operating portion 44 to be operated by the user. The operating portion 44 is a U (U-shaped) projection integrally formed with the frame 47a. Here, the shape of the operating portion 44 is not limited to the U shape. In addition, it may be integrally molded with the container frame 47a or may be made of a member separate from the frame 47a and is mounted to the frame 47a. The operating portion 44 is a holding portion (grip, gripping) for the user to grip when inserting or removing the toner cartridge E.

[0084] As shown in part (c) of Figure 5, the container frame (cylindrical portion) 47a is hollow, and forms a second toner container portion 47t in which

toner is stored. A second toner feeding member 46 for feeding the toner is rotatably provided inside the second toner container portion 47t of the container frame 47a. The second drive transmission portion 48 for receiving the power (rotational force, driving force) for rotationally driving the second toner feeding member 46 is provided at one end portion in the longitudinal direction (rotational axis direction) of the second toner feeding member 46 (part (a) of Figure 5).
5 The second drive transmission portion 48 is a gear (drive input gear) which receives the driving force (rotational force) from the outside of the toner cartridge E (that is, from the developing unit D as the receiving device).

10 [0085] Here, in this embodiment, the driving force is directly transmitted from the second drive transmission portion 48 to the second toner feeding member 46. However, the driving force may be transmitted from the second driving force transmitting portion 48 to the second toner feeding member 46 through another drive transmitting member (for example, one or a plurality of gears). Such a
15 structure will be described hereinafter, referring to Figure 15.

[0086] In addition, as shown in part (e) of Figure 5, a third opening portion 49 for discharging the toner t of the second toner container portion 47t is provided in the peripheral surface of the container frame 47a. In this embodiment, the third opening portion 49 is provided in the outer peripheral surface of the container frame 47a at the center in the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E.
20 However, the position of the third opening portion 49 is not limited to a specific position as long as it is a position facing the second opening portion 30.

[0087] As shown in part (c) of Figure 5, a cross portion of the second shutter 53 (section along a plane perpendicular to the center axis R of the container frame 47a) has a curved shape (substantially circular arcuate shape) along the outer circumference of the container frame 47a.
25

[0088] The container frame 47a has a curved surface (substantially cylindrical

shape, substantially circular arc shape) at least around the third opening portion 49. The second shutter 53 is rotatable (revolvable) around the container frame 47a along a curved surface portion (circular arcuate portion) around the third opening portion 49. By this, the second shutter 53 can open and close the third opening portion 49.

5 [0089] The second shutter 53 has a shutter body portion 53m (body portion, closing portion) for closing the third opening portion 49. Here, the longitudinal direction of the shutter body 53m is substantially parallel to the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E.

10 [0090] In addition, the second shutter 53 is provided with an extending portion 53x extending in the longitudinal direction. A restricting portion 53x1 projecting outward in the longitudinal direction beyond the side wall 47a1 of the container frame 47a is provided at the end portion in the longitudinal direction of the extending portion 53x. Similarly, a restricting portion 53x2 projecting 15 outward in the longitudinal direction beyond the side wall 47a2 of the container frame 47a is provided at the other longitudinal end portion of the extending portion 53x (Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 5).

20 [0091] In addition, the state in which the second shutter 53 is opened (part (d) in Figure 5) changes from the state where the third opening portion 49 is closed (part (c) in Figure 5). At this time, the extending portion 53x and the restricting portions 53x1 and 53x2 are disposed away from the operating portion 44.

25 [0092] More specifically, when the second shutter 53 is relatively moved from the state shown in part (c) of Figure 5 in the arrow n direction with respect to the container frame 47a, the third opening portion 49 is opened from the closed state (part (d) of Figure 5). At this time, the extending portion 53x provided in the second shutter 53 also moves in the arrow n direction with respect to the container frame 47 similarly to the second shutter 53. That is, when the second

shutter 53 becomes in a state where it is opened from a state in which the third opening portion 49 is closed, the extending portion 53x moves away from the operating portion 44.

[0093] In addition, when the second shutter 53 becomes in a closed state from 5 the state in which the third opening portion 49 is opened, the extension portion 53x approaches to the operating portion 44.

[0094] Here, in this example, although the extended portion 53x is formed integrally with the second shutter 53, it may be formed separately. In addition, at least a portion of the extended portion 53x may be made of a member (metal 10 rod or the like) having a higher strength than that of a portion other than the extending portion 53x.

[0095] And, two projections 45 are provided on the cylindrical outer periphery of the container frame 47a so as to be engageable with the hole portion 37a of the first shutter 37. The two projections 45 project substantially in the same 15 direction. The two projections 45 project toward the downstream side in the inserting direction in which the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D. In addition, a line connecting the two projections 45 is substantially parallel to the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E.

[0096] In addition, the end portion 53c on the free end side of the second 20 shutter 53 is on the downstream side, in the direction (arrow u direction) in which the second shutter 53 moves with respect to the container frame 47a when closing the third opening portion 49. The end portion 53c on the free end side of the second shutter 53 is the end portion in the lateral direction of the second shutter 53 (the direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction of the second shutter 25 53).

[0097] As shown in part (c) of Figure 5, the toner cartridge E is seen along the longitudinal direction. The state in which the second shutter 53 is opened from

the state (part (b) of Figure 5) becomes the state in which the third opening portion 49 is closed (part (e) in Figure 5). At this time, the two projections 45 are arranged on the side remote from the end portion 53c on the free end side of the second shutter 53.

5 [0098] In the longitudinal direction of the container 47, the two projections 45 are arranged outside the third opening portion 49. In more detail, as projecting the two projections 45 and the third opening portion 49 onto an imaginary line parallel to the center axis R of the container frame 47a which is the rotation axis of the second shutter 53, the entire projection area of the third opening portion 49 10 falls within the range sandwiched between the projection areas of the two projections.

[0099] The opposite end portions 53n in the longitudinal direction of the second shutter 53 (shutter body portion 53m) are engaged with second shutter guide portions (opening and closing guides) 52 provided on opposite sides of the 15 container frame 47a in the longitudinal direction of the third opening portion 49. And, the shutter body 53m of the second shutter 53 is assembled along the second shutter guide portion 52 so as to be slidable in the circumferential direction on the outer peripheral surface of the container frame 47a. By this, the second shutter 53 is movable between the opening position (container open position, part (e) of 20 Figure 5) for opening the third opening portion 49 along the outer circumferential surface of the toner cartridge E, and closing position for closing the third opening portion 49 (container closing position, part (b) of Figure 5).

[0100] Here, it is preferable that when the second shutter 53 is in the open position, as shown in part (e) of Figure 5, the third opening portion 49 is entirely 25 opened from the shutter body portion 53m (closed portion). However, if the toner t can be discharged by the required amount from the third opening portion 49 when the second shutter 53 is in the open position, a portion of the third

opening portion 49 may be covered by the shutter body portion 53m (closed portion). That is, it will suffice if when the second shutter 53 is in the open position, the shutter body 53m at least partially opens the third opening portion 49, so that the toner t can be supplied from the toner cartridge E to the developing unit D.

[0101] In addition, it is preferable that when the second shutter 53 is in the closed position, as shown in part (b) of Figure 5, the third opening portion 49 is entirely covered by the shutter body portion 53m. However, the third opening portion 49 may be slightly opened provided that the third opening portion 49 is substantially closed by the shutter body portion 53m and toner leakage from the third opening portion 49 is sufficiently suppressed. That is, it suffices if the shutter body 53m substantially closes the third opening portion 49 when the second shutter 53 is in the closed position.

15 (Modified example of operating portion)

[0102] Here, referring to Figure 13, a modified example of the structure of the operating portion 44 will be described.

[0103] As shown in part (a) of Figure 13, the shape of the operating portion 44 may be in the form of a projection provided at each of the opposite longitudinal ends of the frame 47a. In addition, as shown in part (b) of Figure 13, the operating portion 44 is not necessarily provided at both longitudinal ends of the frame but may be projections provided at one longitudinal end. Here, in this embodiment, the operating portion 44 is formed integrally with the frame 47a, but it may be made of a member different from the frame 47a and is mounted to the frame 47a.

[0104] It is preferable that the operating portion 44 is disposed on the container frame 47a outwardly beyond the extending portion 53x (the restricting

portions 53x1, 53x2) in the longitudinal direction.

[Mounting of toner cartridge to developing unit]

[0105] Next, the process of mounting the toner cartridge E to the developing

5 unit D will be described. With the toner cartridge E having been inserted in the developing unit D, the toner cartridge E is rotated so that the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 are opened and closed.

(Insertion Operation of Toner Cartridge into Developing Unit)

10 [0106] Referring to Figure 1, Figure 6, and Figure 7, the operation of inserting the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D will be described. Here, Figure 1, part (b) of Figure 6 and Figure 7 are views through the insertion guide portions 35d and 36d for the sake of better illustration.

15 [0107] Part (a) of Figure 1 is a side view when the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D, as viewed from the non-driving side. Part (b) of Figure 1 is a side view of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D as viewed from the driving side and indicates the positional relationship of the operating portion 44 and the abutment portion 43a with respect to the mounting direction of the toner cartridge E.

20 [0108] Figure 6 is a schematic illustration showing states of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D before the toner cartridge E is mounted (inserted), and part (a) of Figure 6 is a perspective view thereof, and part (b) of Figure 6 is a side view thereof.

25 [0109] Figure 7 is a side view illustrating the state of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D in the middle of mounting (insertion) process of the toner cartridge E.

[0110] As shown in part (a) of Figure 1, the toner cartridge E includes a

rotation guided portion (portion to be guided for rotation) 42b. This rotation guided portion 42b guides the container frame 47a when opening and closing the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 by rotating the toner cartridge E. The container 47 can be rotated smoothly by the rotation guided portion 42b. The 5 rotation guided portion 42b is a rotation guide (toner cartridge side rotation guide) for guiding the rotation of the toner cartridge E. The rotation guided portion 42b has a curved surface shape (substantially circular arcuate shape) (details will be described hereinafter).

[0111] In this embodiment, on the non-driving side, the abutting portion 42a, 10 the rotation guided portion 42b, the restricting portion 42c1, and the restricting portion 42c2 are formed integrally with the insertion guided portion 42. However, they may be provided as separate members as long as they satisfy the respective functions.

[0112] As shown in part (b) of Figure 1, the insertion guided portion 43 is 15 provided with an abutting portion 43a abutting against an abutted portion 36a of the developing unit D when toner cartridge E is inserted. The structure is such that the insertion guided portion 43 also serves as a rotated guide portion (toner cartridge side rotation guide portion) for guiding the container frame 47a when the abutting portion 43a opens and closes the first shutter 37 and the second 20 shutter 53.

[0113] In this embodiment, on the driving side, the insertion guided portion 43 and the abutment portion 43a may be constituted by separate members. In addition, the rotated guide portion may be provided as a separate member from the abutting portion 43a. As described above, the portions (non-functional 25 portions, non-contact portions) where the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D do not abut each other may be appropriately omitted, based on the consideration of the strength and the like.

[0114] In addition, in this embodiment, the insertion guided portion 43 is provided at the end portion of the second drive transmission portion 48 at the end portion in the longitudinal direction of the second toner feeding portion 46.

However, the insertion guided portion 43 may be provided on the container frame

5 47a.

[0115] Here, referring to part (a) of Figure 1, the arrangement of the operating portion 44 in the container frame 47a will be described. This Figure shows a positional relationship between the operating portion 44 and the abutting portion 42a in the inserting direction f.

10 **[0116]** Here, the inserting direction f will be described. The direction along the plane of the restricting portion 42c is defined as an f direction. More specifically, in the direction along the surface of the restricting portion 42c, the direction in which the abutting portion 42a is on the downstream side with

respect to the insertion guided portion 42 can be said to be the f direction. That is, the direction in which the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit 15 D is the f direction.

[0117] A plane (imaginary plane passing through a rotation center S of the container frame 47a) which is parallel to the inserting direction f of the toner cartridge E regulated by the restricting portion 42c1 and the restriction portion 20 42c2 and which passes through the abutting portion 42a and the abutting portion 43a is assumed to be a plane m.

[0118] The operating portion 44 is provided on a downstream side of the plane m in the opening direction (direction e in part (a) of Figure 1) of the third opening portion 49 (part (d) of Figure 5). Here, the opening direction (direction of arrow

25 e) of the third opening portion 49 is a direction (setting direction) in which the toner cartridge E is rotated in order to set the toner cartridge E to the developing unit D.

[0119] In addition, the arrangement of the restricting portion (engaging portion) 53x1 and the restricting portion (engaging portion) 53x2 provided on the longitudinal end portions of the extending portion 53x with respect to the container frame 47a will be described. As shown in part (a) of Figure 1, the 5 insertion guided portion 42, the restriction portion 53x1, and the restriction portion 53x2 are arranged in a predetermined direction (inserting direction f or removal direction). That is, the insertion guided portion 42, the restriction portion 53x1, and the restriction portion 53x2 are arranged in a straight line along the inserting direction f (or removal direction). In addition, the restricting portion 10 53x1 and the restricting portion 53x2 are arranged on the upstream side of the insertion guided portion 42 in the inserting direction f.

[0120] In addition, the insertion guided portion 42 is arranged as a single body extended along the predetermined direction (the inserting direction f or the removal direction). That is, the insertion guided portion 42 extends along the 15 inserting direction f (or removal direction).

[0121] The arrangement of the insertion guided portion 42, the restricting portion 53x1, and the restricting portion 53x2 will be described in more detail below. An imaginary line (first imaginary line) extending perpendicularly to the inserting direction f of the toner cartridge E as the toner cartridge E is viewed 20 along its longitudinal direction is n. As the insertion guided portion 42 and the restriction portion 53x2 are projected on the line n, respectively, the projection area 53y2 of the restricting portion 53x2 falls within the projection area 50 of the insertion guided portion 42. Here, it is not necessary that all of the projection area 53y2 of the restricting portion 53x2 is within the projection area 50 of the 25 insertion guided portion 42, but at least a portion thereof is within it.

[0122] Similarly, as shown in part (b) of Figure 1, when the insertion guided portion 43 and the restriction portion 53x1 are projected on the line n,

respectively, the projection area 53y1 of the restriction portion 53x1 falls within the projection area 51 of the insertion guided portion 43. It is not necessary for all of the projection area 53y1 of the restricting portion 53x1 to be included in the projection area 51 of the insertion guided portion 43, and it is sufficient if at least 5 a portion thereof is within it.

[0123] With such a structure, in a state in which the toner cartridge E is mounted to the developing unit D, the restricting portion 53x2 and the restricting portion 53x1 can be engaged with the insertion guide portion 35d and the insertion guide portion 36d, respectively (details will be described hereinafter).

[0124] Here, if the restricting portions 53x1, 53x2 are disposed as described above, it is not necessary to arrange the extended portion 53x in a straight line in the longitudinal direction, and it may have a crank shape or the like (Figure 14).

[0125] Next, the operation of inserting the toner cartridge into the developing unit will be described.

[0126] As shown in part (a) of Figure 6, before the toner cartridge E is mounted to the developing unit D, the first shutter 37 is in the closed position for the second opening portion 30 (not shown), and the second shutter 53 is in the closed position of the third opening portion 49 (not shown). That is, the second opening portion 30 (part (a) of Figure 4) of the developing unit D and the third opening portion 49 (part (d) of Figure 5) of the toner cartridge E are closed by the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53.

[0127] On the insertion guided portion 42 of the toner cartridge E, a restricted portion (regulated surface, attitude restricting portion, inserting direction restricting portion) 42c1 and 42c2 for regulating the insertion attitude and 25 removal attitude (inserting direction, removal direction) of the toner cartridge E are provided.

[0128] The user grips the operating portion 44 and moves the toner cartridge E

with respect to the developing unit D in the inserting direction f. The user moves the toner cartridge E such that the insertion guided portion 42 of the toner cartridge E and the insertion guide portion 35d of the developing unit D engage with each other, and the insertion guided portion 43 and the insertion guide portion 36d engage with each other. As the insertion guided portions 42, 43 are guided by the insertion guide portions 35d, 36d of the developing unit D, the attitude of the toner cartridge E when the toner cartridge E is being mounted is stabilized.

5 [0129] Here, as shown in part (b) of Figure 6, in this embodiment, the insertion guided portions 42, 43 and the insertion guide portions 35d, 36d are constituted so that the inserting direction f is oblique to the gravity direction g.

10 [0130] In other words, the toner cartridge E is inserted while the restricting portion 42c1 on the lower side in the gravity direction g of the insertion guided portion 42 and a surface 35d1 on the lower side in the gravity direction g of the insertion guide portion 35d are in contact with each other (part (a) in Figure 1). Similarly, the toner cartridge E is inserted while the restricting portion 42c2 on the lower side in the gravity direction g of the insertion guided portion 42 and a surface 35d2 on the lower side in the gravity direction g of the insertion guide portion 35d are in contact with each other (part (b) of Figure 1).

15 [0131] And, as shown in Figure 7, the restricting portion 42c1 on the lower side (in the gravity direction g) of the insertion guided portion 42 is placed on the surface 35d1 of the insertion guide portion 35d, so that the position of the insertion guided portion 42 is determined relative to the rotation guide portion 35b. By this, the attitude of the toner cartridge E relative to the developing unit D is determined.

20 [0132] As the user further moves the toner cartridge E in the f direction while maintaining its attitude, as shown in part (a) of Figure 1, the abutting portion 42a

of the insertion guided portion 42 provided in the toner cartridge E abuts against the abutted portion 35a provided in the developing unit D. Similarly, as shown in part (b) of Figure 1, the abutting portion 43a provided on the toner cartridge E abuts against the abutted portion 36a provided in the developing unit D. By this,
5 the insertion of the toner cartridge E is completed.

[0133] In addition, in the course of mounting the toner cartridge E to the developing unit, at least a part of the restricting portion 53x2 enters the insertion guide portion 35d. Similarly, at least a part of the restricting portion 53x1 enters the insertion guide portion 36d.

10

(Modified Example of Inserted Guide Portion)

[0134] Here, referring to part (a) of Figure 8, part (b) of Figure 8, part (c) of Figure 8, a modified example of the structure of the insertion guided portion 42 will be described. Here, for the sake of better illustration, the insertion guide portion 35d is seen through.
15

Parts (a) to (c) of Figure 8 are side views showing various exemplary structures of the insertion guided portion 42, the abutting portion 42a, the restricting portion 42c of the toner cartridge E, respectively.

In this embodiment, as shown in Figure 7, the insertion guided portion
20 42 of the toner cartridge E is constituted by a single projection having a long round shape. However, other shapes and structures as shown in parts (a) to (c) of Figure 8 may be employed as long as they can perform the same function. However, the shape, number, and arrangement of the projections are not limited to the structures shown in the Figures.

[0135] That is, as shown in part (a) of Figure 8, a structure in which a long round projection and a cylindrical projection are combined may be employed. With such a structure, the surface 42d of the elongated round projection comes

into contact with the surface 35d1 of the insertion guide portion 35d, and the surface 42c2 of the cylindrical projection contacts the surface 35d2 of the insertion guide portion 35d. By this, the attitude of the toner cartridge E at the time of insertion is restricted. In addition, the abutting portion 42a of the long round projection abuts against the abutted portion 35a, by which the insertion of the toner cartridge E is completed.

5 [0136] In addition, as shown in part (b) of Figure 8 and part (c) of Figure 8, the insertion guided portion may be a combination of a plurality of columnar projections. Needless to say, the shape of the projection need not be cylindrical but it may be triangular prism. That is, the shape may be any if the inserted guide portion is arranged along the inserting direction f of the toner cartridge E, and the insertion attitude of the toner cartridge E can be regulated. Similarly, it does not matter whether the number of the insertion guided portion is plural or single.

10 [0137] In the structure of part (b) of Figure 8, the columnar projections 42e and 42f aligned along the inserting direction f contact the surface 35d1 of the insertion guide portion 35d. In addition, the surface 42c2 of the columnar projection 42 contacts with the surface 35d2 of the insertion guide portion 35d. By this, the attitude of the toner cartridge E is regulated. Similarly, the 15 columnar projection 42f disposed on the downstream side in the inserting direction f is provided with the abutting portion 42a and the abutting portion 42a abuts against the abutted portion 35a. By this, the insertion of the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D is completed.

20 [0138] In addition, in the structure of part (c) of Figure 8, the columnar projections 42e and 42f aligned along the inserting direction f contact the surface 35d1 of the insertion guide portion 35d, respectively. In addition, the columnar projections 42e and 42f make contact the surface 35d2 of the insertion guide

portion 35d. By this, the attitude of the toner cartridge E is regulated. In addition, the columnar projection 42f disposed on the downstream side in the inserting direction f is provided with the abutting portion 42a, and it abuts against the abutted portion 35a, by which the insertion of the toner cartridge E into the 5 developing unit D is completed.

[0139] As described above, in the case where a plurality of projections are provided at the longitudinal end portion of the toner cartridge E, it is only necessary to pay attention to the portion in contact with the developing unit D.

[0140] Here, in all structures of parts (a) to (c) of Figure 8, the insertion 10 guided portion 42 and the restricting portion 53x1 are projected onto a surface n perpendicular to the inserting direction f. At this time, the projection area 53y2 of the restricting portion 53x2 falls within in the projection area 50 of the insertion guided portion 42.

15 (Positioning of toner cartridge relative to developing unit)

[0141] Referring to part (a) of Figure 10, part (b) of Figure 10, part (a) of Figure 11, part (b) of Figure 11, positioning of the toner cartridge E relative to the developing unit D will be described.

[0142] Part (a) of Figure 10 is a side view of the insertion guided portion 42 of 20 the toner cartridge E and the frame 35 of the developing unit D in a state that the abutting portion 42a and the abutted portion 35a abut against each other. Part (b) of Figure 10 is a sectional view of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D in a state in which the abutting portion 42a and the abutted portion 35a abut against each other.

[0143] Part (a) of Figure 11 is a side view of the insertion guided portion 42 of 25 the toner cartridge E and the frame 35 of the developing unit D in a state in which the toner cartridge E is positioned relative to the developing unit D. Part (b) of

Figure 11 is a sectional view illustrating the engagement relationship between the positioned toner cartridge E and the developing unit D. More specifically, part (b) of Figure 11 is a cross-sectional view in which the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D are sectioned at the position of the second shutter 53.

5 [0144] Part (a) of Figure 10 shows a state after the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D. In order to open and close the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53, the container 47 is rotated in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S of the toner cartridge E. Then, as shown in part (a) of Figure 11, the abutting portion 42a and the rotation guided portion 42b are 10 engaged with the rotation guide portion 35b. By this, the toner cartridge E is positioned relative to the developing unit D. At this time, the rotation guided portion 42b is guided by the rotation guide portion 35b provided in the developing unit D. By this, the container 47 can rotate smoothly.

15 [Opening and Closing Operation of Shutter]

[0145] In the following, the opening/closing operation of the first shutter 37 provided in the developing unit D and the second shutter 53 provided in the toner cartridge E will be described in detail.

20 [0146] In this embodiment, in the process of mounting the toner cartridge E to the developing unit D, the first shutter 37 of the developing unit D and the second shutter 53 of the toner cartridge E open the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 (move to the open position), respectively. On the contrary, in the process in which the toner cartridge E is removed from the developing unit D, the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 close the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 (move to the closed position), 25 respectively.

[0147] The toner cartridge E is mounted to the developing unit D by a

mounting operation involving at least rotational operation. More specifically, the toner cartridge E is linearly inserted into the developing unit D, and thereafter, it is rotated to be mounted to the developing unit D. In interrelation with the rotational motion when mounting the toner cartridge E, the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 move from the closed positions to the open positions.

5 [0148] Similarly, the toner cartridge E is dismounted from the developing unit D at least by a dismounting operation including a rotating operation. More specifically, the toner cartridge E is rotated relative to the developing unit D, and thereafter, and is removed from the developing unit D substantially linearly.

10 [0149] Along with the rotating operation at the time of dismounting the toner cartridge E, the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 are moved from the open positions to the closed positions.

(Opening Operation of Shutter)

15 [0150] Referring to part (a) of Figure 1, part (b) of Figure 10, part (a) of Figure 11, part (b) of Figure 11, part (a) of Figure 12 and part (b) of Figure 12, the description will be made as to the opening operation of the first shutter 37 of the developing unit D and the second shutter 53 of the toner cartridge E. Part (a) of Figure 12 is a side view of the insertion guided portion 42 of the toner cartridge E and the frame 35 of the developing unit D with the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 opened. Part (b) of Figure 12 is a sectional view of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D with the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 opened.

20 [0151] In this embodiment, in a state that the toner cartridge E is positioned relative to the developing unit D (mounted state), the relative positions of the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 can be different. In other words, the structure is such that at least two positions (two states) can be

taken by rotating the toner cartridge E in the state of the toner cartridge E mounted to the developing unit D.

[0152] At the first position of the toner cartridge E, the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 do not overlap each other, and are in non-communicating positions where the first toner containing portion 28 and the second toner container portion 47t are in a non-communicated state (part (b) of Figure 10). In this state, the first shutter 37 is in the closed position closing the second opening portion 30.

[0153] At the second position of the toner cartridge E, the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 overlap each other and are in communication positions where the first toner containing portion 28 and the second toner container portion 47t are in the communicating state (part (b) of Figure 12). In this state, the first shutter 37 is in the open position where the second opening portion 30 is opened.

[0154] As shown in part (a) of Figure 1, when the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D, the projection 45 of the container frame 47a and the hole portion 37a of the first shutter 37 are engaged with each other. That is, the insertion attitude of the toner cartridge E is restricted so that the insertion guided portion 42 is guided by the insertion guide portion 35d to insert the projection 45 into the hole portion 37a.

[0155] In addition, when the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D, at least a part of the restricting portion 53x2 provided at one end in the longitudinal direction of the extending portion 53x enters the insertion guide portion 35d. In addition, at least a part of the restricting portion 53x1 provided at the other longitudinal end of the extending portion 53x enters the insertion guide portion 36d. That is, by inserting the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D, the restricting portion 53x2 and the restricting portion 53x1 engage with

the insertion guide portion 35d and the insertion guide portion 36d, respectively.

[0156] From the mounting position shown in part (a) of Figure 1, the container frame 47a of the toner cartridge E is rotated in the direction of the arrow e by the operation of the operating portion 44 by the user. By this, the engaged state

5 between the insertion guided portion 42 and the frame 35 becomes the state shown in part (a) of Figure 11 and then to the state that the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 shown in part (a) of Figure 12 overlap with each other (not shown). At this time, the rotational axis S of the toner cartridge E (container frame 47a) is substantially parallel to the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E.

[0157] Here, part (a) of Figure 1 is a side view when the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D as viewed in the longitudinal direction. At this time, the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position of contacting with the surface 35 d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to

15 rotate in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the container frame 47a starts to rotate in the direction of the arrow e, as shown in part (a) of Figure 10, the restricting portion 53x2 provided at one end in the longitudinal direction of the extending portion 53x abuts to the surface 35d2 of the insertion guide portion 35d. By this, the restricting portion 53x2 receives 20 the reaction force F1 from the surface 35d2. For this reason, as shown in part (a) of Figure 11, even if the rotation of the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow e advances, the restricting portion 53x2 continues to receive the force F1 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extending portion 53x does not rotate together with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow e.

25 **[0158]** In other words, the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D. At this time, if the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35 d2 when the toner cartridge E

continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S, the extending portion 53x does not rotate together with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow e.

[0159] In addition, part (b) of Figure 1 is a side sectional view of a state when

5 the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D, as seen from the side opposite from the driving side. At this time, the restricting portion 53x1 is in a position where it contacts with the surface 36 d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the container frame 47a starts 10 to rotate in the direction of the arrow e, as shown in part (b) of Figure 10, the restricting portion 53x1 of the extending portion 53x abuts against the surface 36d2 of the insertion guide portion 36d. By this, the restricting portion 53x1 receives the reaction force F2 from the surface 36d2. For this reason, as shown 15 in part (b) of Figure 11, even if the rotation of the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow e advances, the restriction portion 53x1 continues to receive the force F2 from the surface 36d2. Therefore, the extending portion 53x does not rotate together with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow e.

[0160] With the above structure, the insertion guide portions 35d, 36d restrict

20 the extending portion 53x so as not to rotate in the direction of the arrow e together with the container frame 47a. This restricts the second shutter 53 from rotating in the arrow e direction together with the container frame 47a. From this state, the container frame 47a is further rotated in the mounting direction (direction of arrow e) of the toner cartridge E with respect to the developing unit 25 D. Then, the container frame 47a moves in the direction (opening direction) to open the third opening portion 49 for supplying the toner to the developing unit.

[0161] In other words, the second shutter moves relative to the container

frame 47a in the direction of opening the third opening portion 49. The force F1 received by the restricting portion 53x2 and the force F2 received by the restricting portion 53x2 are forces for moving the second shutter 53 from the closed position to the open position.

5 [0162] In addition, as shown in part (b) of Figure 11, when the container frame 47a rotates in the direction of the arrow e, the surface 45a of the projection 45 and the surface 37a1 of the hole portion 37a come into contact with each other and then a force F5 is applied from the surface 45a to the surface 37a1. By this, the first shutter 37 is pushed in the rotational direction (the direction of the arrow 10 e) of the container frame 47a. As a result, the first shutter 37 moves in interrelation with the rotation of the container frame 47a, so that the second opening portion 30 is opened. The projection 45 provided on the container frame 47a is a release force applying portion (open position moving portion, opening/closing member moving portion) for applying the force to the first 15 shutter 37 to move the first shutter 37 to the open position.

[0163] Thereafter, as shown in part (a) of Figure 12 and part (b) of Figure 12, the first toner containing portion 28 and the second toner containing portion 47 are communicated with each other through the third opening portion 49 and the second opening portion 30. By this, the opening operations of the second 20 opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 are completed.

[0164] At this time, the abutting portion 42a and the rotation guided portion 42b are engaged with the rotation guide portion 35b. By this, with the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 opened, the relative movement of the toner cartridge E to the developing unit D in the direction of the 25 arrow e is restricted.

[0165] In this state, the second drive transmission portion 48 of the toner cartridge E is connected to the drive transmission portion 38 (part (a) of Figure 4)

of the development unit D. By this, the driving force for rotating the second toner feeding member 46 is in a state that it can be transmitted from the developing unit D.

[0166] From the above, transportation (supply) of the toner t from the second toner container portion 47t of the toner cartridge E to the first toner containing portion 28 of the developing unit D is enabled.

[0167] Here, in this embodiment, the drive transmission portion 38 for transmitting the drive to the second drive transmission portion 48 of the toner cartridge E is provided on the developing unit D side. However, as shown in Figure 15, a drive transmission portion 38 which is engaged with the second drive transmission portion 48 may be provided on the toner cartridge E side. Here, Figure 15 is a side view of the toner cartridge E as viewed from the drive side in the case where a drive transmission portion 38 is engaged with the second drive transmission portion 48 is provided. Part (a) of Figure 15 illustrates a state in which the third opening portion 49 (not shown) is closed by the second shutter 52. In addition, part (b) of Figure 15 illustrates a state in which the third opening portion 49 (not shown) is opened.

[0168] In the modification shown in Figure 15, the toner cartridge E is provided with two gears (38, 48). The drive transmission portion 38 is a drive input gear for receiving a driving force from the developing unit D. The second drive transmission portion 48 is a transmission gear (second gear) that transmits the driving force received by the drive transmission portion 38 toward the second toner feeding member 46. The second driving force transmitting portion 48 is arranged coaxially with the second toner feeding member 46.

[0169] The structure is such that as the second shutter 52 moves from the closed position (part (a) in Figure 15) to the open position (part (b) in Figure 15), the restricting portion 53x1 and the restricting portion 53x2 approach to the axis

of the drive input gear (drive transmission portion 38).

[0170] Here, the engagement between the gears is called a meshing, and also when a belt or the like provided with the projection engages, it is considered as being meshing.

5

(Switching from a toner cartridge inserting operation to the shutter release operation)

[0171] Next, referring to parts (a) of Figure 1, Figure 9, and part (b) of Figure 9, switching operation from the inserting operation of the toner cartridge E to the shutter release operation which is a feature of this embodiment will be described.

10 Part (a) of Figure 9 is a side view illustrating the force relationship acting on the toner cartridge E upon completion of insertion into developing unit D. In addition, part (b) of Figure 9 is a side view illustrating a force relationship acting on the toner cartridge E in another structure example of the abutting portion 42a.

[0172] Here, for the sake of convenience, the insertion guide portion 35d is seen through.

[0173] As shown in part (a) of Figure 9, the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D by the user's operation, by which the abutting portion 42a and the abutted portion 35a abut each other. At this time, the force F1 and the force F2 act on the toner cartridge E. More specifically, the force F1 applied when the toner cartridge E is inserted by the user acts on the operating portion 44, and an equivalent force F2 acts on the abutting portion 42a of the insertion guided portion 42 by a reaction.

[0174] Here, a plane (imaginary plane) m parallel to the mounting direction of the toner cartridge E and passing through the rotation axis S of the toner cartridge E (rotation center of the second shutter member 53) is considered. A length of an arm extending from the plane m to the operating portion 44 is r1, and a length

of the arm from the rotation axis (rotation center) S to the abutting portion 42a is r_2 . At this time, a moment M acting around the rotation axis S of the third opening portion 49 (part (d) of Figure 5) of the toner cartridge E can be expressed by the following equation.

$$5 \quad M = F_1 \times r_1 + F_2 \times r_2$$

[0175] In addition, as shown in part (a) of Figure 9, the direction of rotation of the toner cartridge E (container frame 47a) when opening the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 is the counterclockwise arrow e direction when the toner cartridge E is viewed along the axial direction of

10 rotation of the container frame 47a. Here, in this embodiment, the abutting portion 42a is positioned on a plane m passing through the rotation center S of the container frame 47a and parallel to the inserting direction (guide direction) f, and therefore, $r_2 = 0$. In addition, the operating portion 44 is provided on the downstream side of the plane m in the rotational direction e when the opening direction (the direction of the arrow e) of the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 is positive.

[0176] Therefore, $F_1 \times r_1 > 0$, and then, $M > 0$.

[0177] Because $F_1 \times r_1 > 0$, $M > 0$, the force F_1 which the user applies when inserting the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D is converted into a 20 rotational force in the opening direction e of the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49. Therefore, the entire toner cartridge E is rotated by the force F_1 in the direction of inserting the toner cartridge E in the direction f.

[0178] Here, the larger the value of the moment M is, the more easily the toner cartridge E is rotated. In other words, the larger the value of the moment M , the 25 easier it is to operate the opening operation of the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 more smoothly.

[0179] Here, as a structure for increasing the moment M , for example, it is

conceivable to change the position where the abutting portion 42a is disposed as shown in part (b) of Figure 9. More specifically, it is conceivable to arrange the abutting portion 42a at a position away from the operating portion 44 with respect to the plane m passing through the rotation center S of the container frame 47a and parallel to the mounting direction f.

5 [0180] When the force acting on the abutting portion 42a is F3 and the distance from the surface m to the abutting portion 42a is r3 the moment M acting on the center of rotation S can be expressed by the following equation as with the structure in part (a) of Figure 9.

10
$$M = F1 \times r1 + F3 \times r3$$

[0181] At this time, $F3 \times r3$ is the moment of the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 in the opening direction e. Therefore, the moment M becomes large, and the container frame 47a is easy to rotate in the opening direction e. Here, the above-described positional relationship between 15 the abutting portion 42a and the operating portion 44 can be applied to the relationship between the abutting portion 43a and the operating portion 44, with the result of the same effect.

(Closing Operation of Shutter)

20 [0182] Referring to part (a) of Figure 10, part (b) of Figure 10, part (b) of Figure 11, part (b) of Figure 12, the closing operation of the first shutter 37 of developing unit D and the second shutter 53 of toner cartridge E will be described. Closing operations of the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 are opposite to the opening operation described above. Here, the closing direction of the first 25 shutter 37 and the second shutter 53 is the direction in which the container frame 47a rotates in the clockwise direction (the direction of the arrow h in part (b) of Figure 12) as viewed in the axial direction from the side opposite to the mounting

side of the second drive transmission portion 48.

[0183] First, in the state shown in part (b) of Figure 12, the user operates the operating portion 44 to rotate the container frame 47a in the closing direction (the direction of arrow h, the closing direction). Then, as shown in part (b) of Figure

5 11, the surface 45b of the projection 45 of the container frame 47a abuts to the surface 37a2 of the hole portion 37a of the first shutter 37, and a force F6 is applied from the surface 45b to the surface 37a2. By this, the surface 37a2 of the first shutter 37 receives a force in the direction of the arrow h from the surface 45b and rotates in interrelation with the rotating operation of the container 47.

10 And, the first shutter 37 moves to the closed position where the first shutter 37 closes the second opening portion 30. The surface 45b of the projection 45 is a closing force applying portion for moving the first shutter 37 to the closed position by applying a force to the first shutter 37.

[0184] In addition, in the state of Figure 12, the user operates the operating portion 44 to rotate the container frame 47a in the closing direction (the direction of arrow h, the closing direction).

15 **[0185]** Here, the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1 (part (a) of Figure 12), when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h around the rotation axis S. Similarly, the 20 restricting portion 53x1 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h around the rotation axis S.

[0186] When the container frame 47a starts to rotate in the direction of the arrow h, the restricting portion 53x2 of the extending portion 53x abuts against 25 the surface 35d1 of the insertion guide portion 35d, as shown in part (a) of Figure 11. By this, the restricting portion 53x1 receives the reaction force F3 from the surface 35d1. For this reason, as shown in part (a) of Figure 10, even if

the rotation of the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h advances, the restriction portion 53x2 continues to receive the reaction force F3 from the surface 35d1. Therefore, the extending portion 53x does not rotate together with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h.

5 [0187] Similarly, when the container frame 47a starts to rotate in the direction of the arrow h, the restricting portion 53x1 of the extended portion 53x abuts against the surface 36d1 of the insertion guide portion 36 d, as shown in part (b) of Figure 11. By this, the restricting portion 53x1 receives the force F4 in a direction of an arrow Y from the surface 36d1. For this reason, as shown in part 10 (b) of Figure 10, even if the rotation of the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h advances, the restriction portion 53x1 continues to receive the reaction force F4 from the surface 36d2. Therefore, the extending portion 53x does not rotate together with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h.

15 [0188] From the foregoing, the insertion guide portions 35d, 36d regulate the rotation of the extension portion 53 x with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h. That is, they regulate the rotation of the second shutter 53 with the container frame 47a in the direction of the arrow h.

20 [0189] The second shutter 53 and the container frame 47a become movable relative to each other. Therefore, the second shutter 53 moves relative to the container frame 47a to the closed position for closing the third opening portion 49.

[0190] The force F3 received by the restricting portion 53x2 and the force F4 received by the restricting portion 53x1 are effective to move the second shutter 53 from the open position to the closed position.

25 [0191] And, when the container frame 47a is further rotated in the closing direction (direction of arrow h), the toner cartridge E is ready to be removed from the developing unit D, as shown in part (a) of Figure 10 and part (b) of Figure 10.

At this time, the second opening portion 30 and the third opening portion 49 are closed by the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53, respectively.

[0192] In a state where the toner cartridge E has been inserted in the mounting position of the developing unit D (part (a) of Figure 9), the operating portion 44 is positioned on the downstream (in the rotational direction of the container frame 47a) side of an imaginary plane m passing through the rotation center and extending in the inserting direction f, as viewed in the direction of the axis of rotation of the container frame 47a. The structure is such that in this position, the operating portion 44 receives a force to rotate the container frame 47a by the user's operation. This position is a position where a moment acting to rotate the container frame 47a with respect to the developing unit D is produced when the operating portion 44 receives a force acting in the inserting direction f.

[0193] In other words, in the toner cartridge E according to this embodiment, the structure is such that the force (arrow R in Figure 9) acting on the operating portion 44 when rotating the container frame 47a at this position includes a component force (arrow Rf in Figure 9) in the inserting direction f. By the user applying the force to the operating portion 44 in the inserting direction f at the time of insertion, the force in the inserting direction f acts on the operating portion 44, when the toner cartridge E reaches the mounting position. That is, when the toner cartridge E reaches the mounting position, a part of the force required to rotate the container frame 47a has already been applied to the operating portion 44. Therefore, by the user's operation of pushing the operating portion 44 in the inserting direction f, the force in the inserting direction f continues to act on the operating portion 44 even when the container frame 47a rotates following insertion of the toner cartridge E into the mounting position.

[0194] By this, the user grips the operating portion (gripping portion) 44 and

inserts the toner cartridge E to the mounting position of the developing unit D, and thereafter, the force conversion from the inserting operation to the rotating operation is executed smoothly, in a series of mounting operations for rotating the container frame 47a. Therefore, the user can intuitively operate the insertion of 5 the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D and the opening operation of the first shutter 37 and the second shutter 53, thereby significantly improving operability.

[0195] In addition, in this embodiment, when the toner cartridge E is at the mounting position, as the toner cartridge E is viewed in the direction of the axis 10 of rotation of the container frame 47a, the operating portion (gripping portion) 44 is disposed at a position more remote from the center of rotation (rotation axis) than the abutting portion 42a. The structure is such that in this state, the operating portion 44 receives a force from the user. By this, the container frame 47a can be rotated with a small force against the sliding resistance between the 15 abutting portion 42a and the abutted portion 35a and the rotation guide portion 35b during the rotation of the container frame 47a. The same applies to the sliding resistance between the abutment portion 43a and the abutted portion 36a and the rotation guide 36b.

[0196] The arrangement of the operating portion 44 in this embodiment will 20 be described in more detail referring to Figure 19. Figure 19 is an illustration for explaining the arrangement of the operation portion, and shows a state in which the toner cartridge E is viewed along the longitudinal direction of the toner cartridge E.

[0197] Figure 19 shows a state in which the second shutter 53 closes the third 25 opening portion 49. In this state, the operating portion 44 is arranged between a leading end 53c of the second shutter 53 and the extending portion 53x. More specifically, in the direction of the arrow u, the operating portion 44 is located on

the upstream side of the leading end (the end on the downstream side in the arrow b direction) 53c of the second shutter 53. And, the operating portion 44 is disposed on the downstream side of the extending portion 53x and the restricting portions (engaging portions) 53x1, 53x2 in the direction of the arrow u. When 5 the operating portion 44 is provided at such a position, the extension portion 53x and the restriction portions 53x1, 53x2 do not hinder movement of the operation portion when the user opens the second shutter 53 by operating the operating portion 44. That is, when the second shutter 53 is opened, the operating portion 44 is moved in the direction of the arrow u, and therefore, the extending portion 10 53x (restricting portions 53x1, 53x2) disposed on the upstream side of the operating portion 44 in the direction of the arrow u is less likely to affect the movement of the operating portion 44.

[0198] Here, the arrow u direction is the direction in which the container 47 and the operating portion 44 move relative to the second shutter 53 when the 15 second shutter 53 opens the toner outlet (third opening portion 49). At this time, the second shutter 53 moves relative to the container 47 and the operating portion 44 in the direction of the arrow n opposite to the arrow u. The direction of the arrow n is the moving direction of the second shutter 53 (the opening direction of the opening and closing member) when the discharge opening is released.

[0199] Here, the direction of the arrow n indicates the direction in which the container 47 and the operating portion 44 move relative to the second shutter 53 (the moving direction of the container 47) when the second shutter 53 closes the discharge opening (the third opening portion 49). At this time, the second 20 shutter 53 moves in the direction of the arrow u relative to the container 47 and the operating portion 44. That is, the direction of the arrow u is also the moving direction of the shutter 53 (the closing direction of the opening and closing member) when the discharge opening is closed.

[0200] That is, in the closing direction (the direction of the arrow u) in which the second shutter 53 moves relative to the container 47 so as to close the third opening portion 49, the operating portion 44 is located upstream of the downstream end of the second shutter 53, and is located on the downstream side of the extending portion 53x (restricting portions 53x1, 53x2).
5

[0201] Here, with the center R of the container 47 as a reference, the restricting portion (53x1, 53x2) and the operating portion 44 occupy the region of the angle $\theta 1$. In this embodiment, the angle $\theta 1$ is 50 degrees or less. That is, with the center of the container 47 as a reference, the whole of the restricting portion (53x1, 53x2) and the whole of the operating portion 44 are in the region within an angle of 50 degrees. It is preferable that at least a part of the restricting portion (53x1, 53x2) and a part of the operating portion 44 are in the region of the angle of 50 degrees. As described above, the toner cartridge E can be kept small in size.
10

[0202] Here, the center R of the container 47 as the reference of the angle $\theta 1$ is the rotation axis of the container 47. That is, when opening and closing the second shutter 53, the center R of rotation of the container 47 is the reference of the angle $\theta 1$. In addition, the frame of the container 47 has a substantially cylindrical shape. The center R of this cylindrical shape is the reference of the angle $\theta 1$. (modification example of regulation portion)
15

[0203] Here, as shown in Figure 10, in this embodiment, the restricting portion 53x1 and the restricting portion 53x2 provided in the extending portion 53x are constituted to have a circular cross-sectional shape as viewed from the longitudinal direction. However, as long as the above-described arrangement 20 condition is satisfied, the cross-sectional shape thereof is not limited to a circular shape.
25

[0204] A modified example of the structure of the restricting portion 53x2 will

be described referring to part (a) of Figure 16, part (b) of Figure 16, and part (c) of Figure 16. Part (a) of Figure 16, part (b) of Figure 16, and part (c) of Figure 16 are the views as seen from a side opposite (in the longitudinal direction) the driving side, when the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position 5 of the developing unit D. However, it is not intended to limit the shape, number and arrangement of projections to the illustrated example. In addition, the shape and the like are not limited to the restricting portion 53x2 but may be employed for the restricting portion 53x1.

10 [0205] That is, in the part (a) of Figure 16, the cross-sectional shape of the restricting portion 53x2 as viewed in the longitudinal direction may be square. Each of the insertion guided portion 42 and the restricting portion 53x2 is projected on the line n perpendicular to the inserting direction f. At this time, even with this structure, the projection area 53y2 of the restriction portion 53x2 falls in the projection area 50 of the insertion guided portion 42.

15 [0206] In addition, the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow e. More specifically, a surface 53x2a of the restricting portion 53x2 on the downstream side in the direction of the arrow e is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d2 when the toner 20 cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e, the surface 53x2a continues to receive the force F1 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of the arrow e together with the container frame 47a (not shown). In 25 addition, the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow h. More specifically, the surface 53x2 b of the

restricting portion 53x2 on the downstream side in the direction of the arrow h is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h, the surface 53x2 b continues to receive the force F3 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of arrow h together with the container frame 47a (not shown).

[0207] In addition, as shown in part (b) of Figure 16, the cross-sectional shape at the end of the extended portion 53x may not be a circle or a square. Here, in 10 this embodiment, the restricting portion 53x2 is a portion indicated by a surface 53x2 c, a surface 53x2 d, and a surface 53x2 e. At this time, as each of the insertion guided portion 42 and the restricting portion 53x2 is projected onto the line n perpendicular to the inserting direction f, the projection area 53y2 of the restricting portion 53x2 falls in the projection area 50 of the insertion guided portion 42.

[0208] In addition, when the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D, a part of the restricting portion 53x2 enters the insertion guide 35d. At this time, the surface 53x2 c of the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow e. More specifically, the surface 53x2c on the downstream side in the direction of the arrow e of the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E 20 continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e, the surface 53x2c continues to receive the force F1 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of the arrow e together with the container frame 25

47a (not shown).

[0209] In addition, the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow h. More specifically, the surface

5 53x2d of the restricting portion 53x2 on the downstream side in the direction of the arrow h is in a position where it contacts the surface 35d1 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h around the rotation axis S. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h, the surface 53x2 d continues to receive the force F3 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of arrow h together with the container frame 47a (not shown).

[0210] In addition, as shown in part (c) of Figure 16, the restricting portion 53x2 may be provided by a plurality of members. Here, in this embodiment, the restricting portion 53x2 is the portions indicated by the projection 53x2 f and the

15 projection 53x2 g. When projecting each of the insertion guided portion 42 and the restricting portion 53x2 onto a line n perpendicular to the inserting direction f, the projection area 53y2 of the restricting portion 53x2 falls in the projection area 50 of the insertion guided portion 42.

[0211] In addition, when the toner cartridge E is inserted into a predetermined position of the developing unit D, a part of the restricting portion 53x2 enters the insertion guide 35d. At this time, the projection 53x2 f of the restricting portion

53x2 is in a position where contacts the surface 35d2 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow e. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow e, the projection 53x2f continues to receive the force F1 from the surface 35d2. Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of the arrow e together with the container frame 47a (not shown).

[0212] In addition, the projection 53x2 g of the restricting portion 53x2 is in a position where contacts the surface 35d1 when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate around the rotation axis S in the direction of the arrow h. For this reason, when the toner cartridge E continues to rotate in the direction of the arrow h, the projection 53x2 g continues to receive the force F3 from the surface 35d2. 5 Therefore, the extended portion 53x does not rotate in the direction of arrow h together with the container frame 47a (not shown).

(Modified example of developing unit D)

[0213] Next, a modified example of the developing unit D will be described referring to Figures 17 and 18. Figure 17 is a perspective view illustrating the periphery of the first shutter 37 of the developing unit D, in which part (a) shows a state in which the first shutter 37 is opened, and part (b) shows a closed state.

Figure 18 is a sectional view of the toner cartridge E and the developing unit D.

15 Part (a) of Figure 18 shows a process in which the toner cartridge E is inserted into the developing unit D, and part (b) of Figure 18 shows a state in which the insertion of the toner cartridge E is completed. In addition, part (c) of Figure 18 is an enlarged view of a part of part (b) of Figure 18.

[0214] In this modified example, a lock arm (receiving apparatus side locking member) 61 is provided in the developing unit D in order to prevent unintended opening of the first shutter 37. As shown in Figure 17, two lock arms 61 are provided on the developing unit D, and each of the lock arms 61 has a claw portion (engaging portion, projecting portion, locking portion) 61a at the free end thereof. In addition, the lock arm 61 can be elastically deformed.

25 [0215] The claw portion 61a of the lock arm 61 is located at the same position as the hole portion 37a of the first shutter 37 in the longitudinal direction of the developing unit D.

[0216] And, in the state in which the first shutter 37 closes the second opening portion 30, the claw portion 61a enters the hole portion 37a to engage with the hole portion 37a. By this, the claw portion 61a locks the movement of the first shutter 37 and suppresses unintended opening of the first shutter 37.

5 **[0217]** Here, in the course of inserting the toner cartridge E into the developing unit D, as shown in part (b) of Figure 18, the two projections 45 provided on the toner cartridge E come into contact with the corresponding claw portions 61a. When the projection 45 comes into contact with the claw portion 61a, the lock arm 61 elastically deforms so that the claw portion 61a is retracted from the hole portion 37a to unlock the first shutter 37. That is, the first shutter 37 becomes movable.

10 **[0218]** When the toner cartridge E is rotated relative to the developing unit D in the state shown in part (b) of Figure 18, as described above, the claw portion 45 is engaged with the hole portion 37a, so that the first shutter 37 can move to 15 the open position.

[0219] In addition, when the toner cartridge E is dismounted from the developing unit D, the claw portion 61a enters the hole portion 37a to lock the first shutter 37 in interrelation with the operation of retracting the projection 45 from the hole portion 37a (Part (a) of Figure 18).

20 **[0220]** In the modified example described above, the projection 45 of the toner cartridge E serves as a release projection for releasing the locking of the lock arm 61.

(Summary)

25 **[0221]** In this embodiment, the second shutter 53 is constituted to be rotatable around the container 47 (container frame 47a). By this, the second shutter 53 can be opened and closed by an operation (rotating operation) in which the toner

cartridge E rotates relative to the developing unit D (receiving device). When opening and closing the second shutter 53 by the rotating operation of the toner cartridge E the space required for opening and closing the second shutter 53 (Space) can be reduced, as compared with the case of opening and closing the 5 second shutter 53 by the linear movement of the toner cartridge E.

[0222] That is, when the toner cartridge E rotates relative to the developing unit D, the center of the toner cartridge E (the rotation axis S) hardly moves relative to the developing unit D although the attitude of the toner cartridge E changes. That is, in the opening and closing operation of the second shutter 53, 10 the area occupied by the toner cartridge E in the developing unit D hardly changes. As a result, it is unnecessary to provide a large space for the developing unit D in order to open and close the second shutter 53. That is, by employing the toner cartridge E as in this embodiment, it is possible to downsize the receiving apparatus (developing unit D) which receives the toner cartridge E 15 and the image forming apparatus provided with the receiving apparatus.

[INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY]

[0223] According to the present invention, a toner cartridge for forming an electrophotographic image and a toner supply mechanism are provided.

20

[Symbols]

- 16: photosensitive drum (image bearing member)
- 17: charging roller
- 19: cleaning blade
- 24: developing roller (developer carrying member)
- 25: developing blade
- 27: first toner feeding means

28: first toner containing portion (developer accommodating portion)

29: first opening

30: second opening (containing body opening, receiving opening)

31: developing chamber

5 32: first seal

34: first shutter guide portion

35: frame

35a: abutted portion

35d: insertion guide portion

10 36a: abutted portion

36d: insertion guide portion

37: first shutter

37a: hole portion

38: first drive transmission portion (second gear)

15 42: insertion guided portion (guided portion, toner cartridge side guide portion)

42a: abutting portion

43: insertion guided portion (guided portion, toner cartridge side guide portion)

20 43a: abutting portion

44: operating portion

45: projection (container side engaging portion, opening/closing member moving portion, container side projection)

46: second toner feeding member

25 47: container

47a: container frame

47a1: side wall

47a2: side wall

47t: second toner container

48: second drive transmission portion

49: third opening (container opening, discharge opening)

5 53: second shutter

53c: free end portion

53m: shutter body

53x: extension

53x1: restriction surface

10 53x2: restriction surface

54: second seal

58: communication portion

A: image forming apparatus

C: drum unit

15 D: developing unit

E: toner cartridge

f: inserting direction

t: toner

Claims

1. A toner cartridge comprising:

(1) a container including, (1 - 1) an accommodating portion for accommodating toner, (1 - 2) a discharge opening for discharging the toner from said accommodating portion toward a receiving opening, and (1 - 3) at least one projection projecting outwardly of said container more than a side wall of said container in a longitudinal direction of said container and extending along a predetermined direction;

(2) an open/close member including, (2 - 1) a closing portion for closing said discharge opening, (2 - 2) an engaging portion projecting outwardly of said container more than the side wall of said container in the longitudinal direction of said container, wherein said open/close member being movable relative to said container between a closing position for causing said closing portion to close said discharge opening and an opening position for causing said closing portion to open opening said discharge opening,

wherein when said projection and said engaging portion are projected onto a first imaginary line perpendicular to said predetermined direction as said toner cartridge is seen in the longitudinal direction, at least a part of a projection area of said engaging portion is between a projection area of said projection.

2. A toner cartridge according to Claim 1, wherein said container is provided with an operating portion.

3. A toner cartridge according to Claim 2, wherein when said open/close member is in the closing position, said operating portion is disposed upstream of a downstream end portion of said closing portion and the downstream of said engaging portion, in a closing direction in which said open/close member moves to close said discharge opening.

4. A toner cartridge according to Claim 3, wherein as seen in the longitudinal direction in a state that said open/close member closes said discharge opening, at least a part of said engaging portion and at least a part of said operating portion are disposed in an angle range of not more than 50° about a center of said container.

5. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 3 - 4, wherein said operating portion has a U-shape.

6. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 3 - 5, wherein said open/close member includes two such said engaging portions, and wherein said engaging portions are provided at opposite longitudinal end portions of said open/close member, respectively.

7. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 3 - 6, wherein said open/close member is provided with an extending portion extending over a entire area of said container in the longitudinal direction of said container, and wherein said engaging portion is provided at an end portion of said extending portion.

8. A toner cartridge according to Claim 7, wherein said open/close member is provided with at least two such engaging portions, and wherein said engaging portions are provided at opposite end portions of said extending portion, respectively.

9. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 7 - 8, wherein at least a part of said extending portion is made of metal.

10. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 3 - 9, wherein said container includes a second projection and a third projection which are arranged in the longitudinal direction of said container and which are projected in a radial direction of said container, and wherein by a operation of said open/close member closing said discharge opening, a downstream end portion of said closing portion in the closing direction of open/close member approaches to said second projection and said third projection.

11. A toner cartridge according to Claim 10, wherein as said second and third projections and said discharge opening are projected onto a second imaginary line extending in the longitudinal direction of said container, at least a part of a projection area of said discharge opening is between projection areas of said second and third projections.

12. A toner cartridge according to Claim 10, wherein on the second imaginary line, an entirety of the projection area of said discharge opening is between projection areas of said second and third projections.

13. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 1 - 12, wherein said container is provided with a drive input gear for receiving a driving force from an outside of said toner cartridge.

14. A toner cartridge according to Claim 13, wherein said container is provided with a feeding member configured to feed the toner from said accommodating portion toward said discharge opening by the driving force received by said drive input gear.

15. A toner cartridge according to Claim 14, wherein said container is provided with a second gear engaging with said drive input gear to receive the driving force.

16. A toner cartridge according to Claim 15, wherein said second gear is provided coaxially with said feeding member.

17. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 13 - 16, wherein with movement of said open/close member from the closing position toward the opening position, said engaging portion approaches to an axis of said drive input gear.

18. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 1 - 17, wherein said container has a substantially cylindrical shape.

19. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 1 - 18, wherein said open/close member is rotatable around and along said container.

20. A toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 1 - 19, wherein said container guides said open/close member by covering an end portion of said closing portion.

21. A toner supply mechanism comprising:

a toner cartridge according to any one of Claims 1 – 20; and

a receiving apparatus including, (i) a mounting portion configured such that the toner cartridge is detachable mountable to the mounting portion, (ii) a receiving apparatus side guide configured to guide the projection of the toner cartridge when the toner cartridge is mounted to the mounting portion, and (iii) the receiving opening configured to receive the toner from the discharging opening of the toner cartridge.

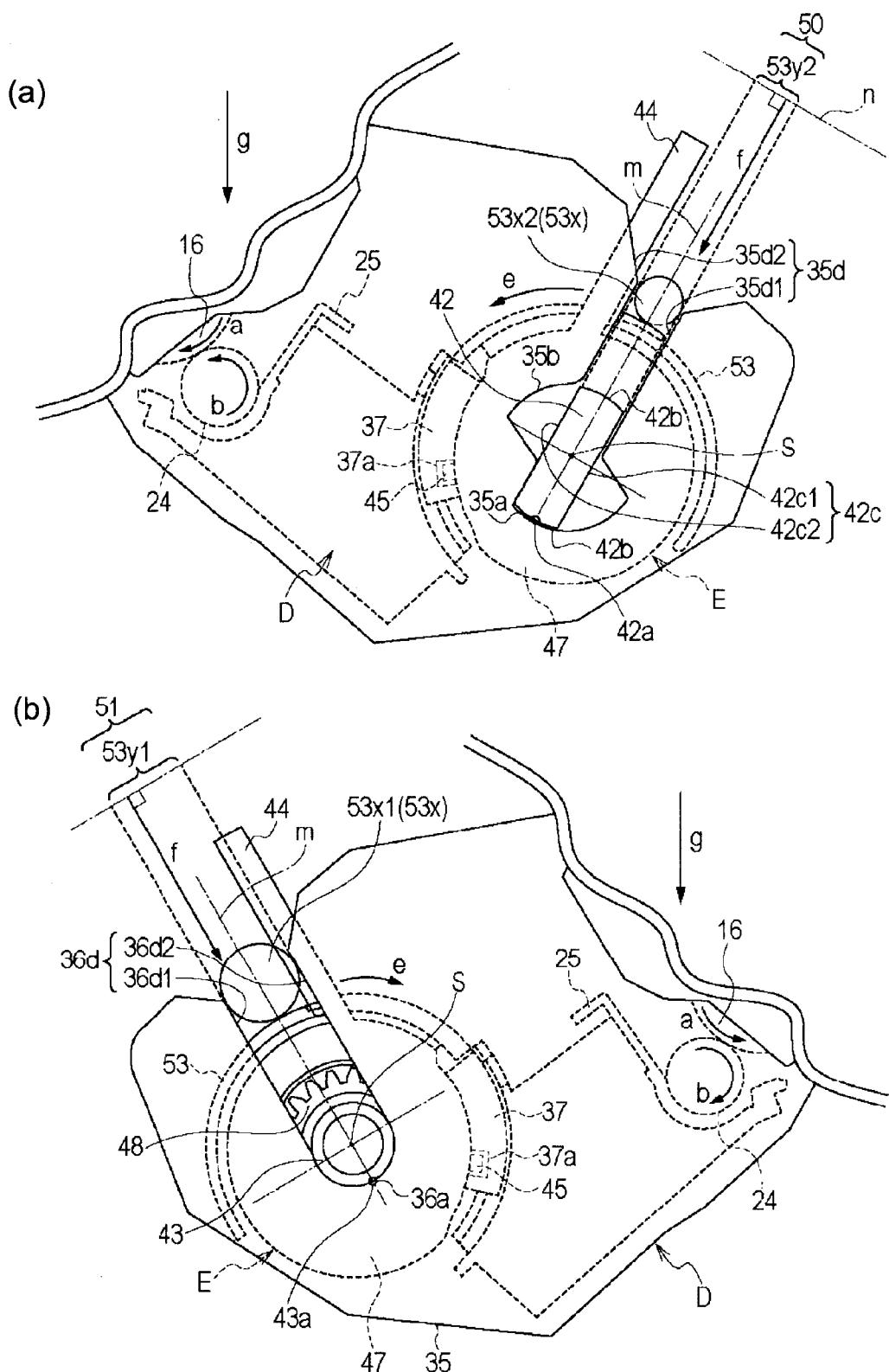


Fig. 1

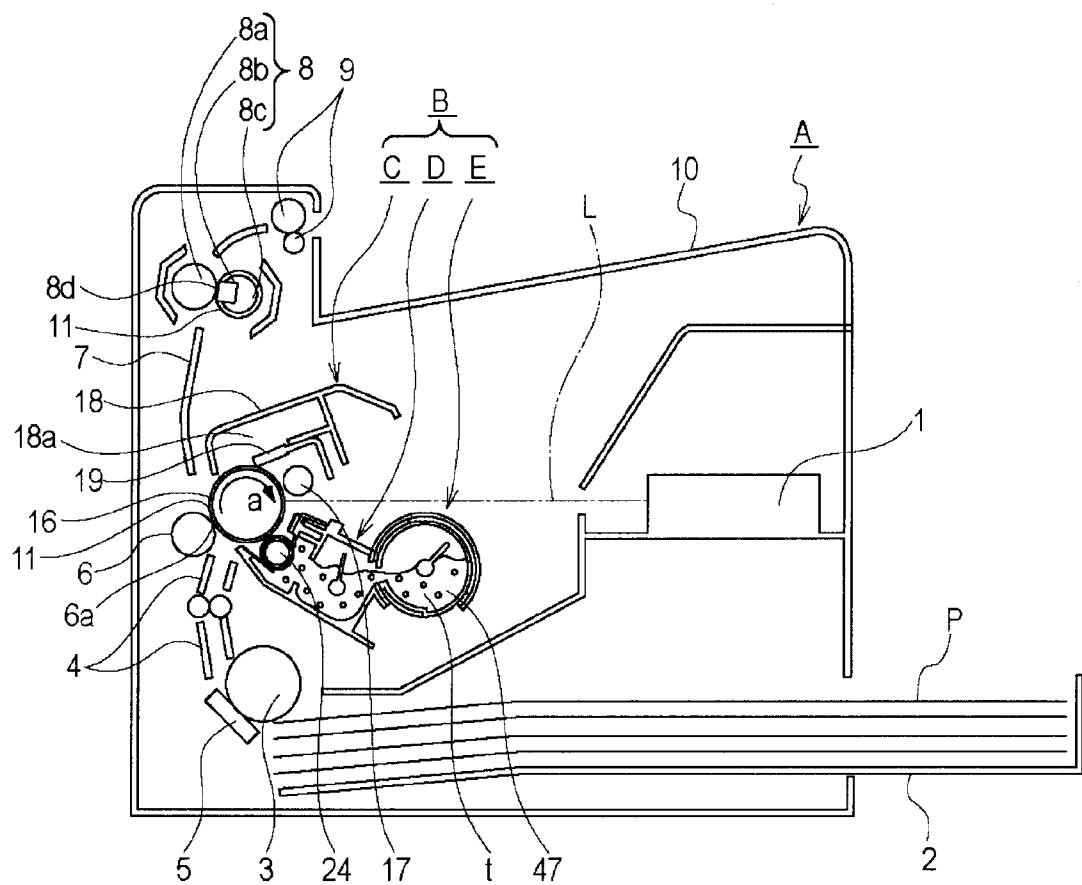


Fig. 2

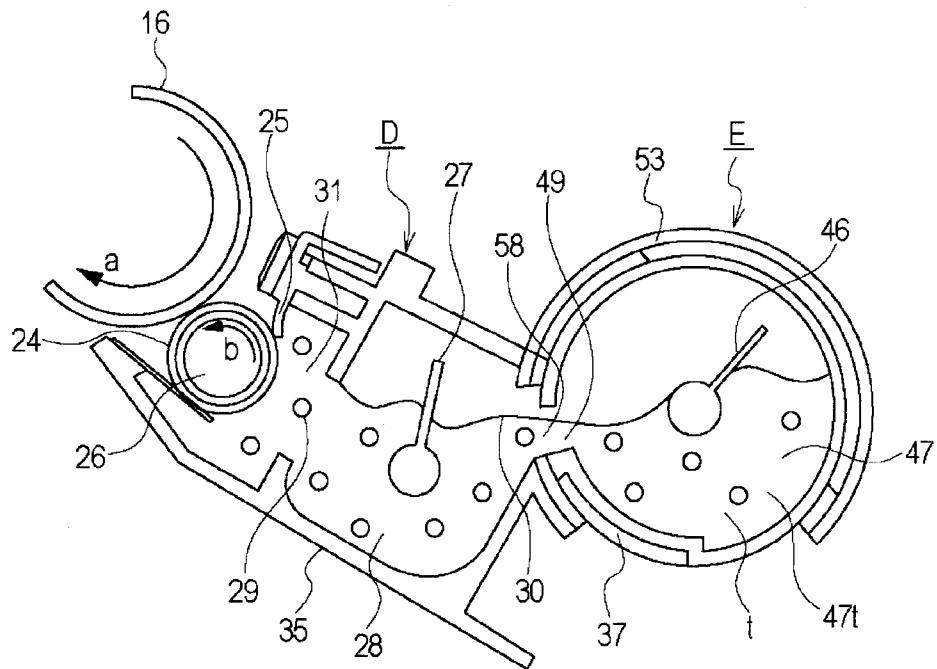


Fig. 3

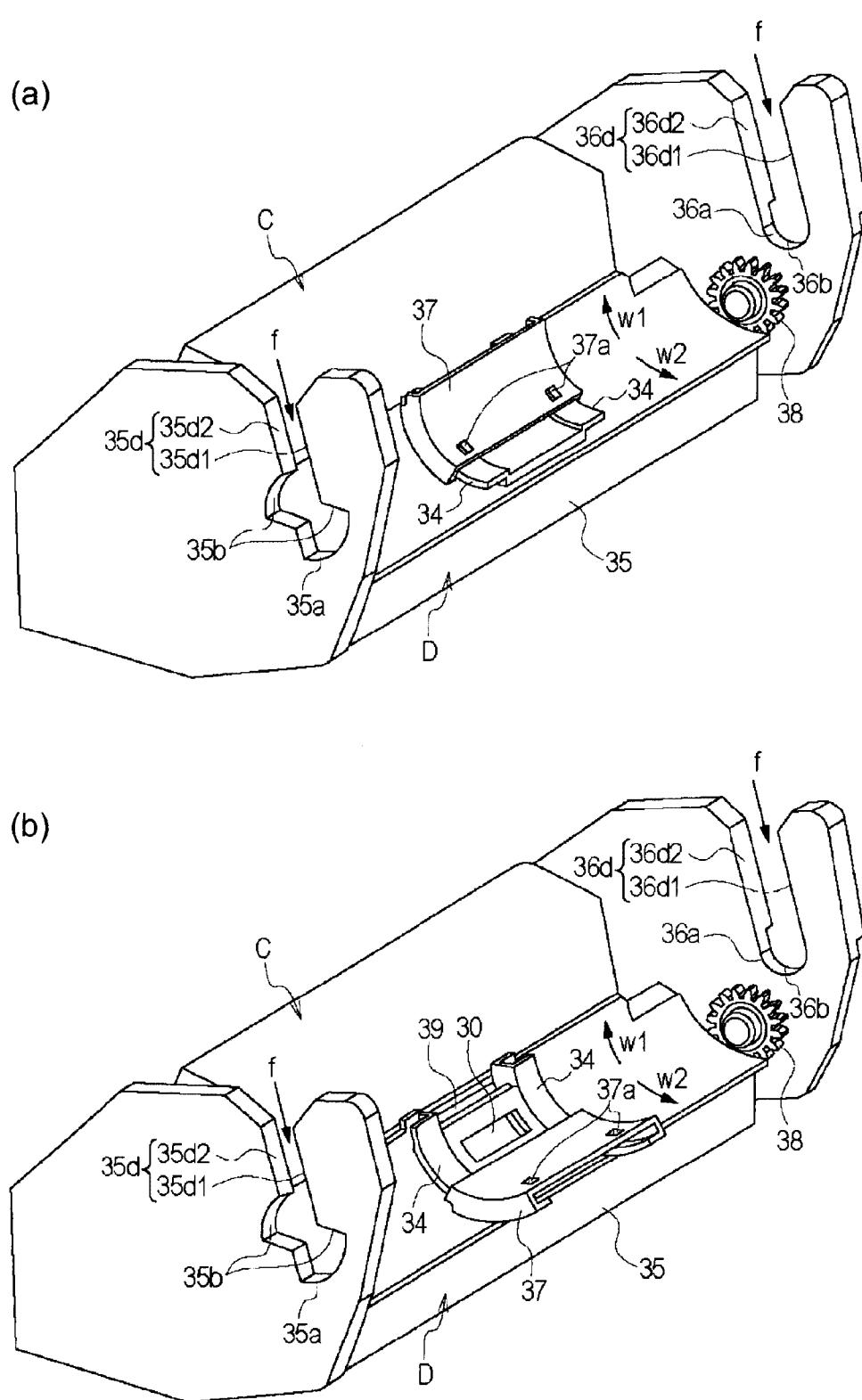


Fig. 4

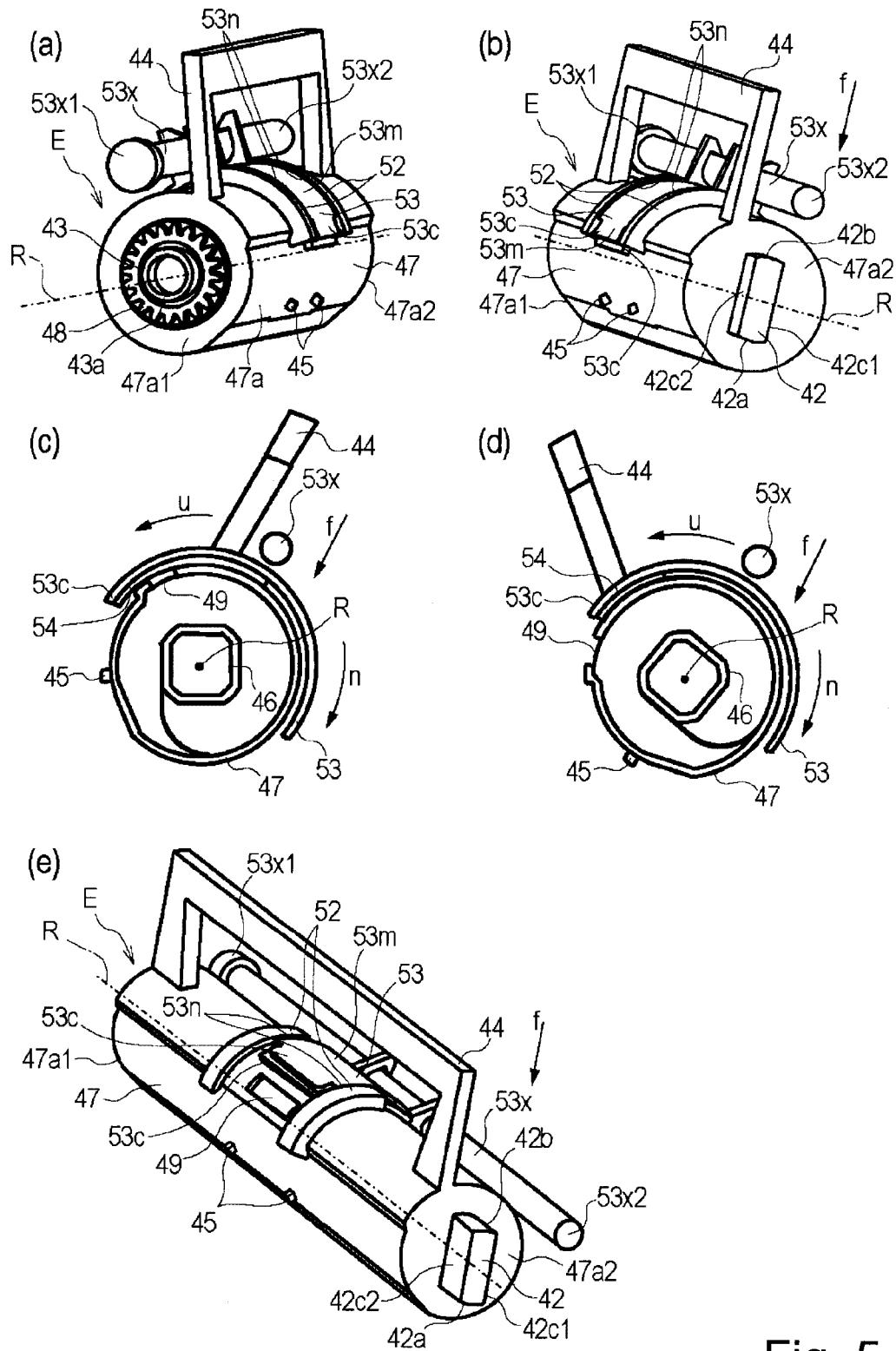
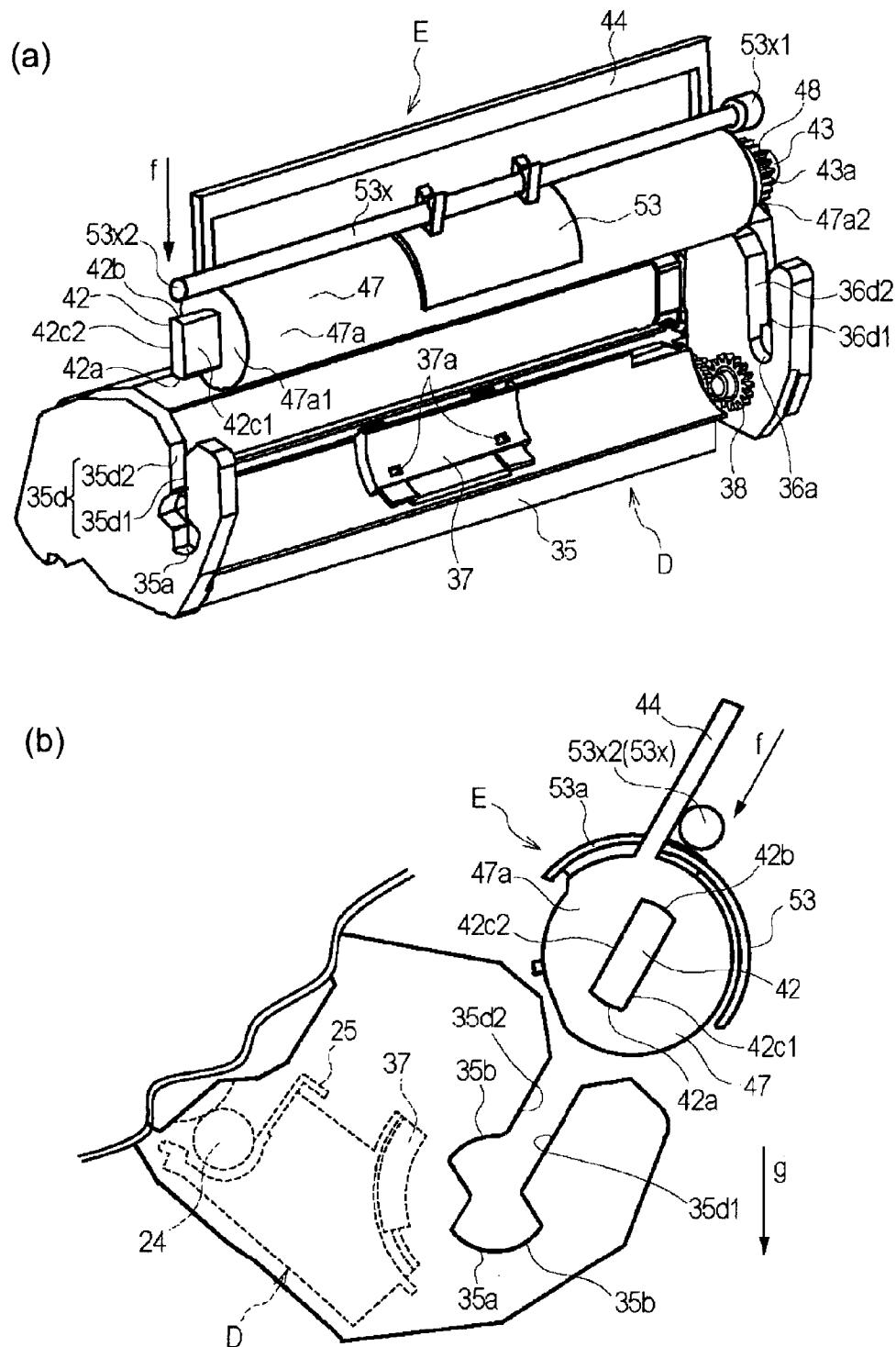


Fig. 5



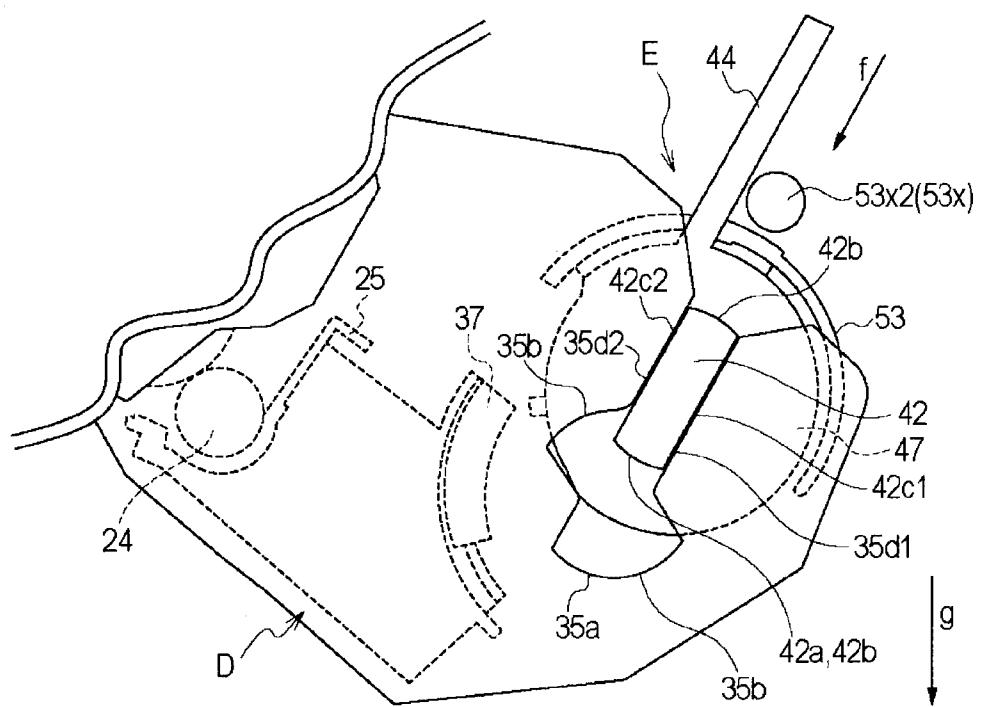


Fig. 7

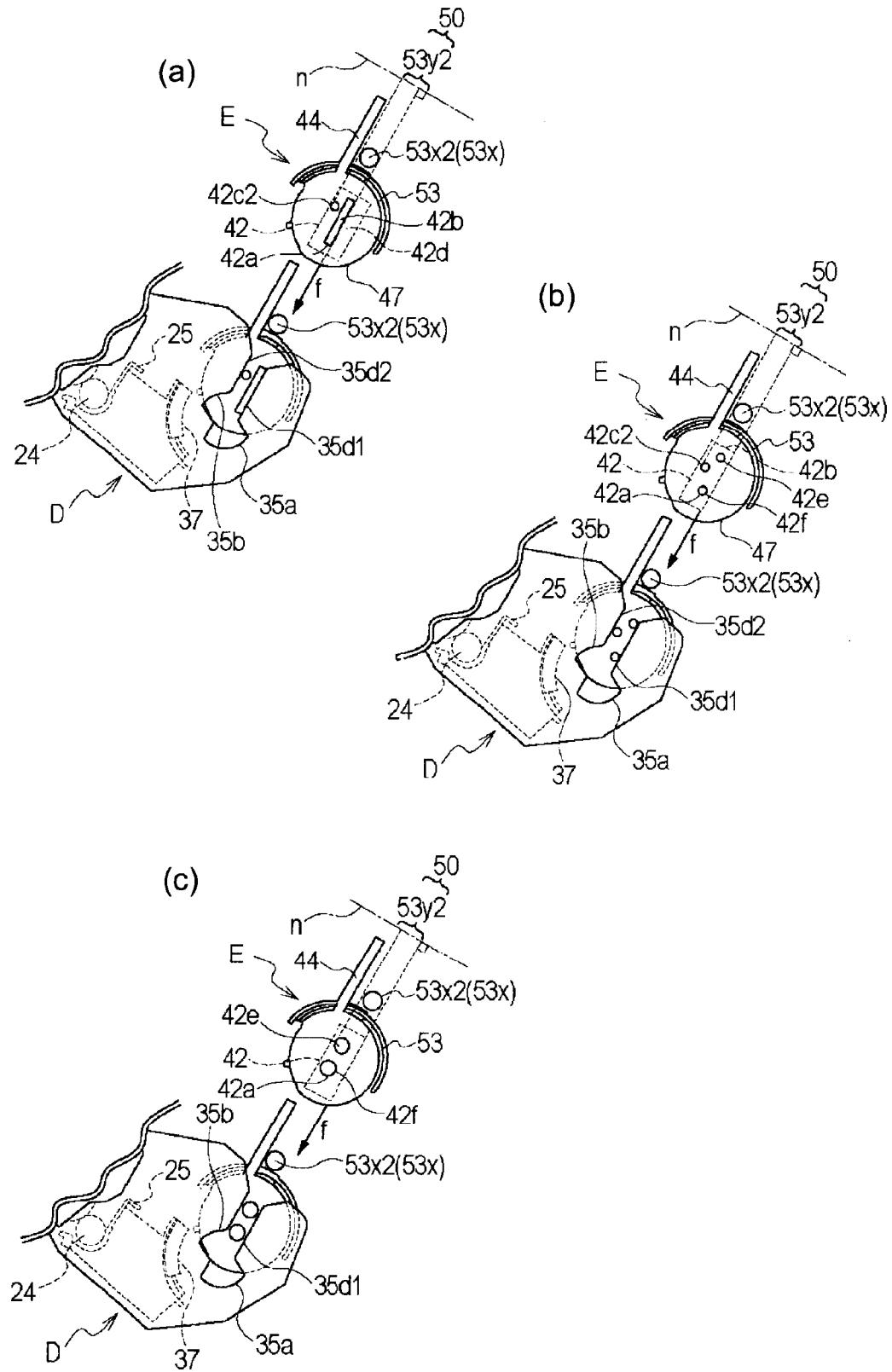


Fig. 8

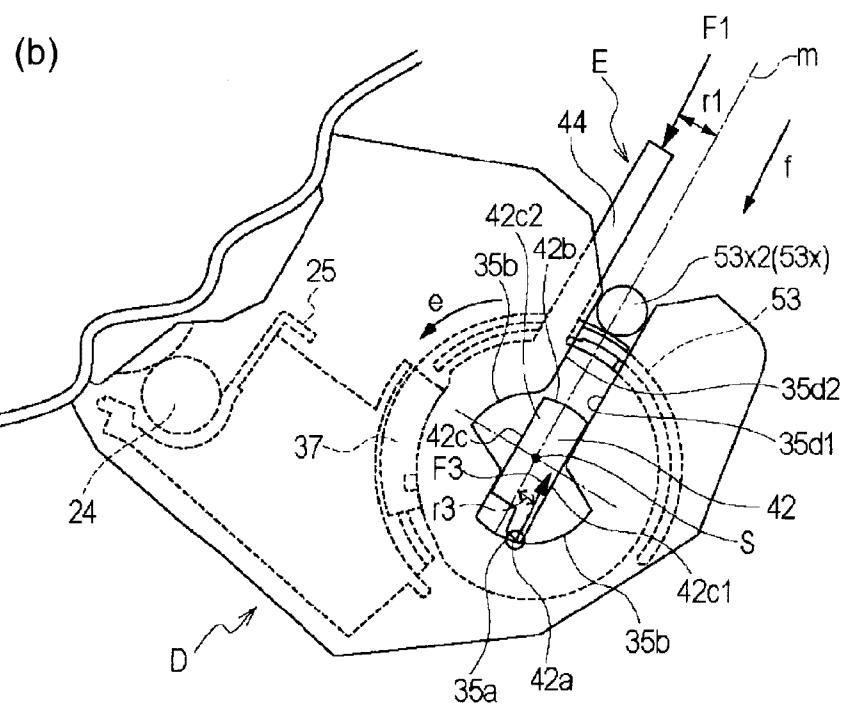
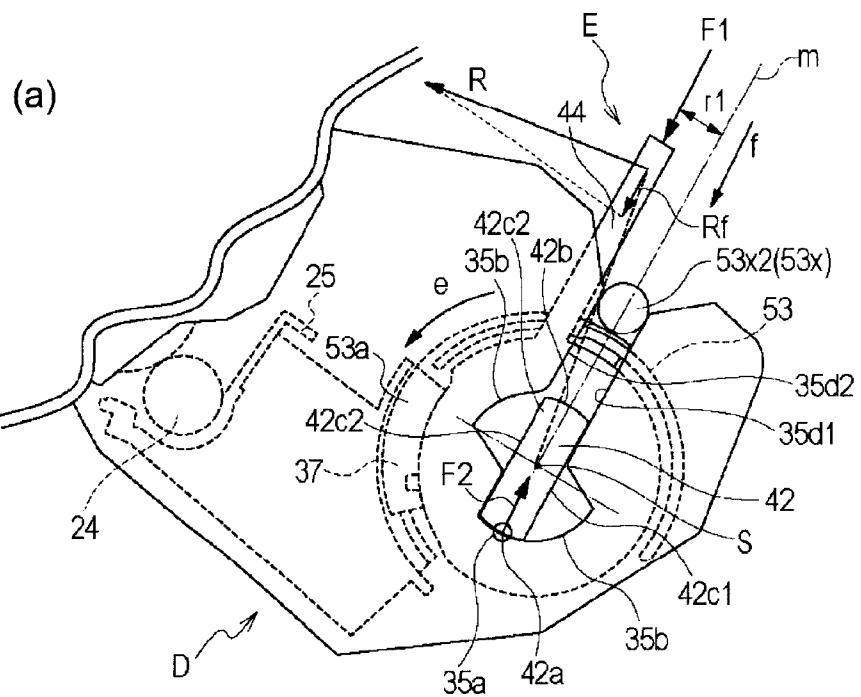


Fig. 9

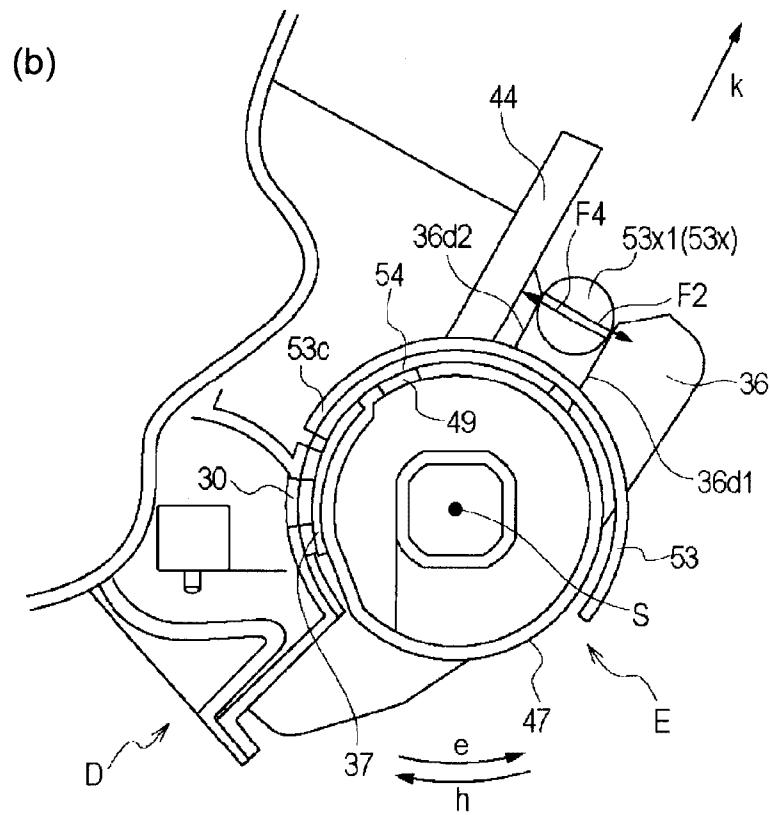
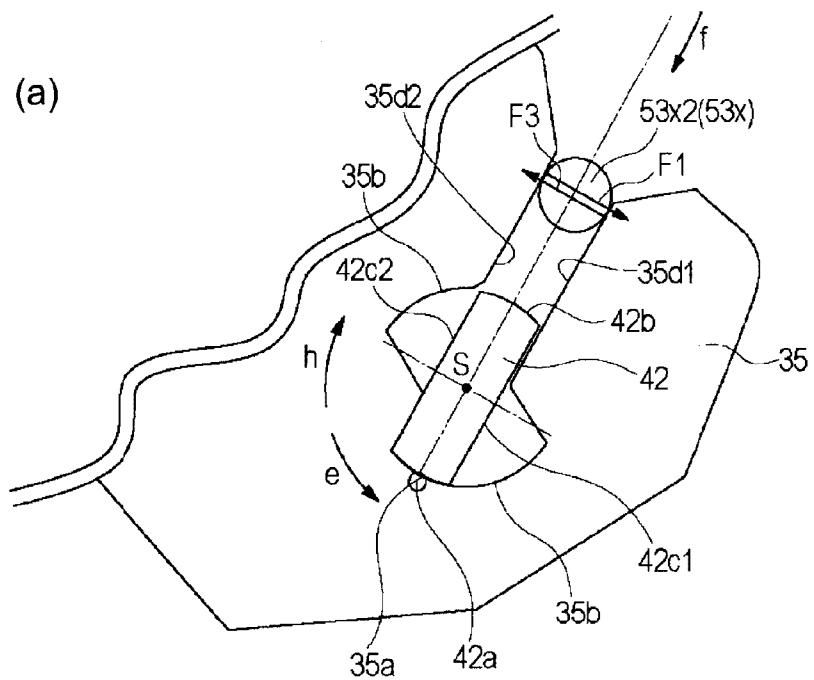


Fig. 10

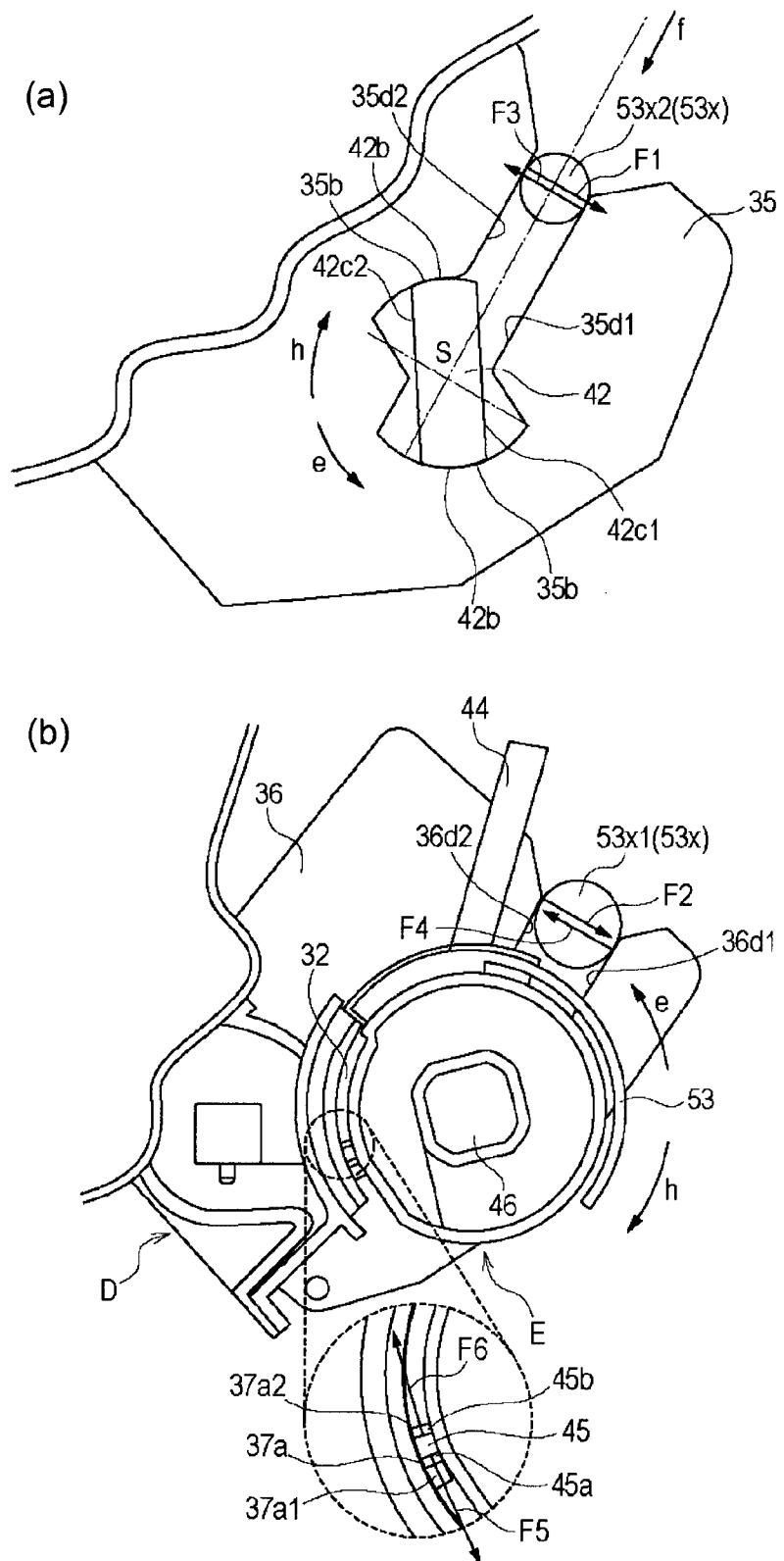


Fig. 11

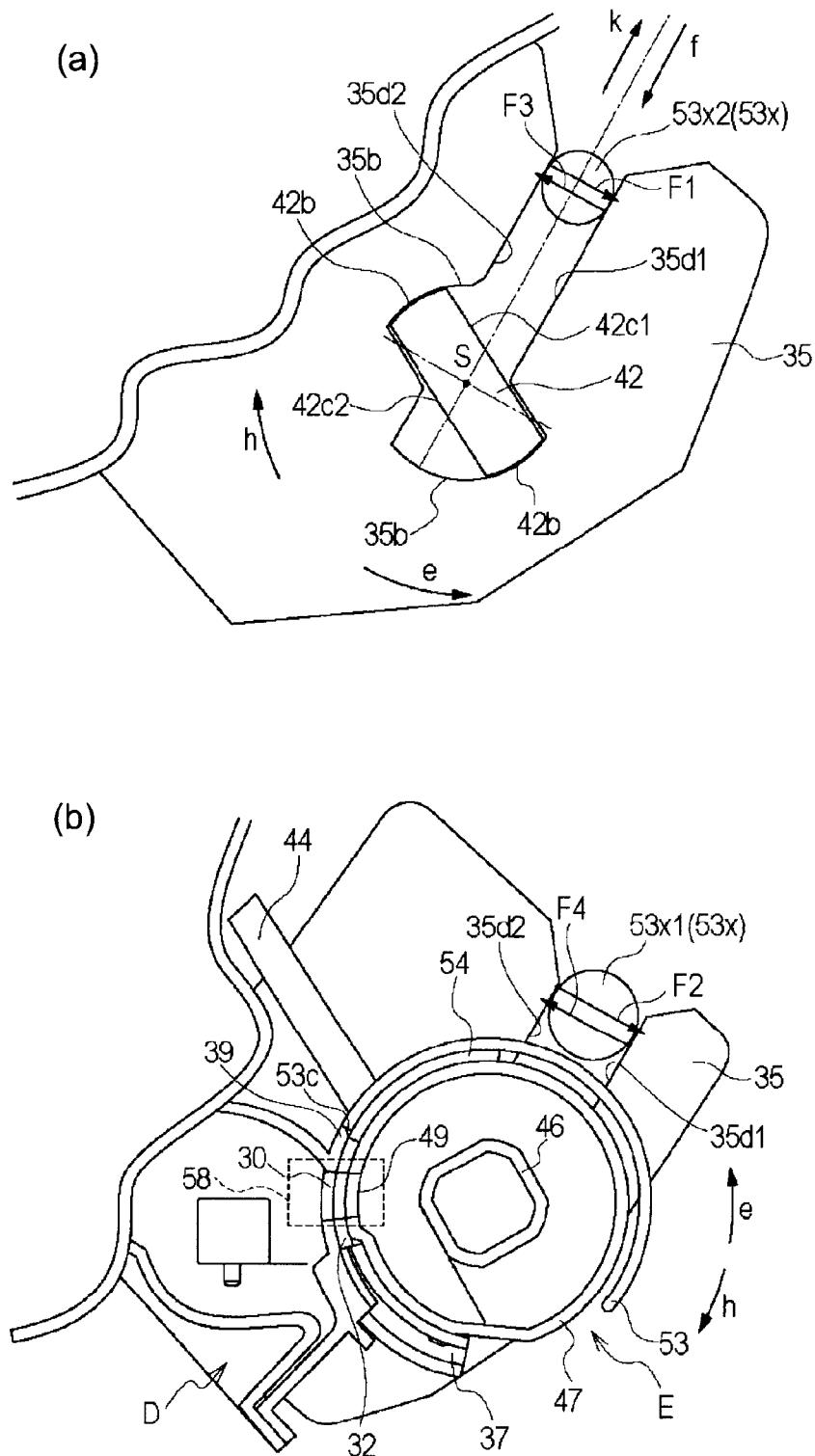


Fig. 12

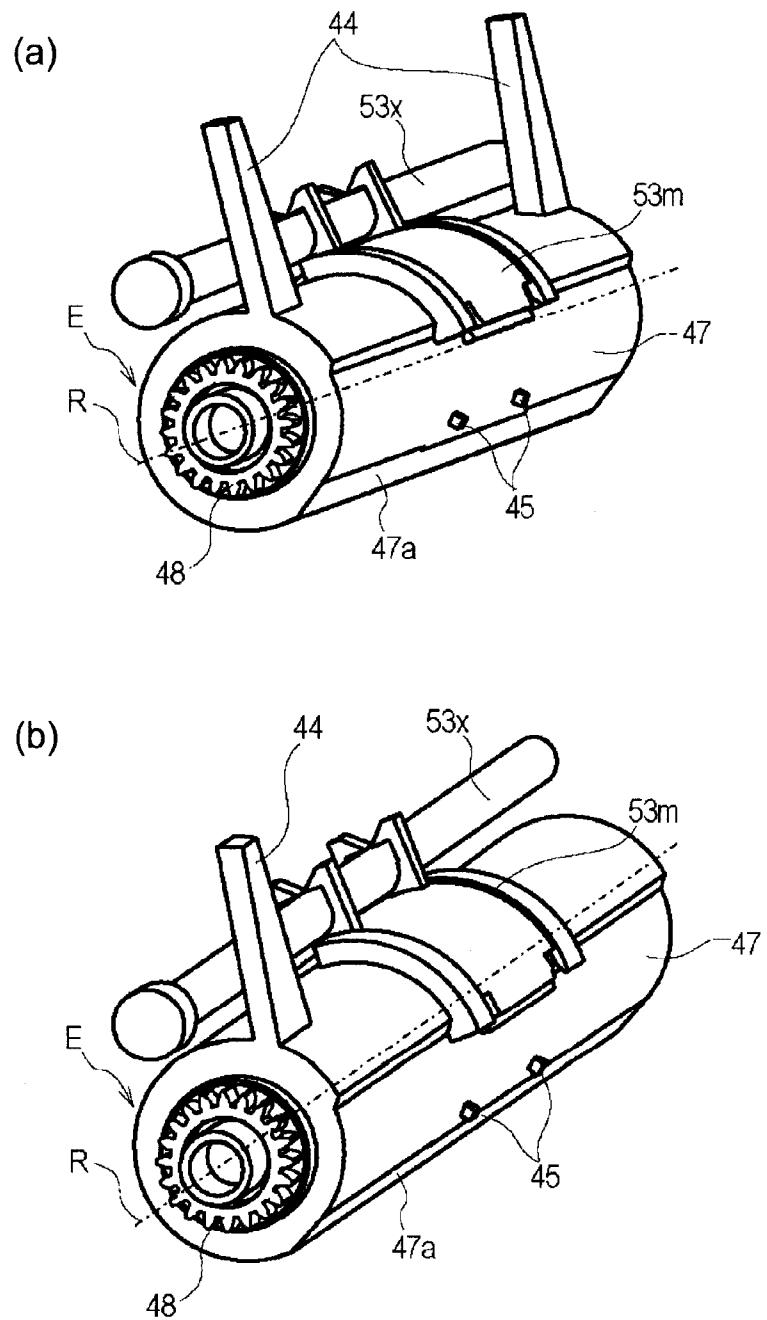


Fig. 13

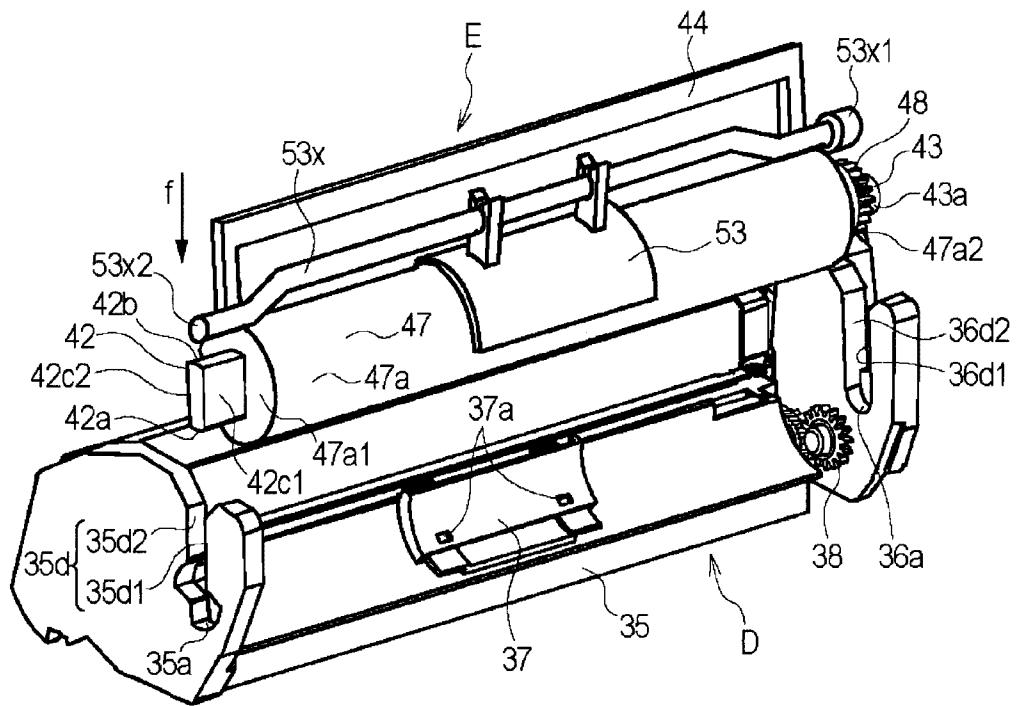


Fig. 14

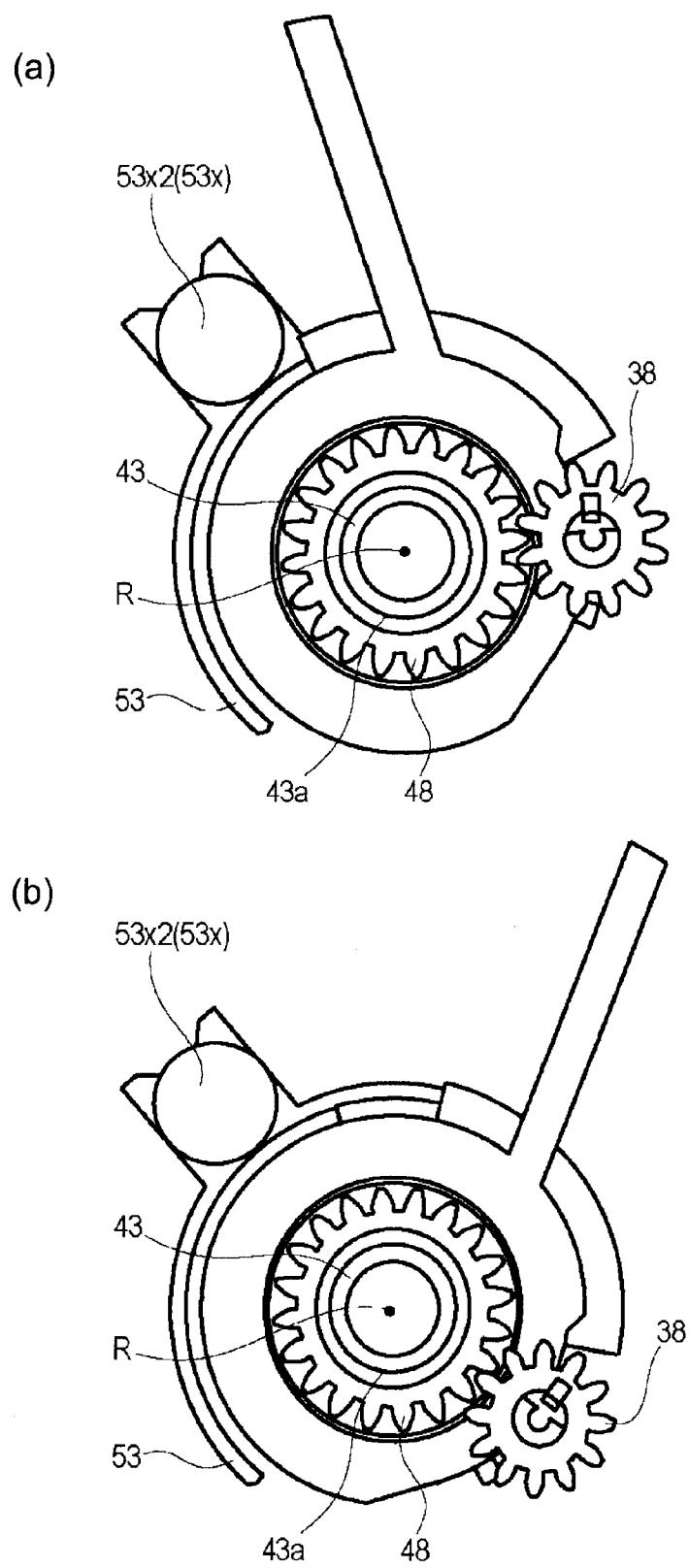


Fig. 15

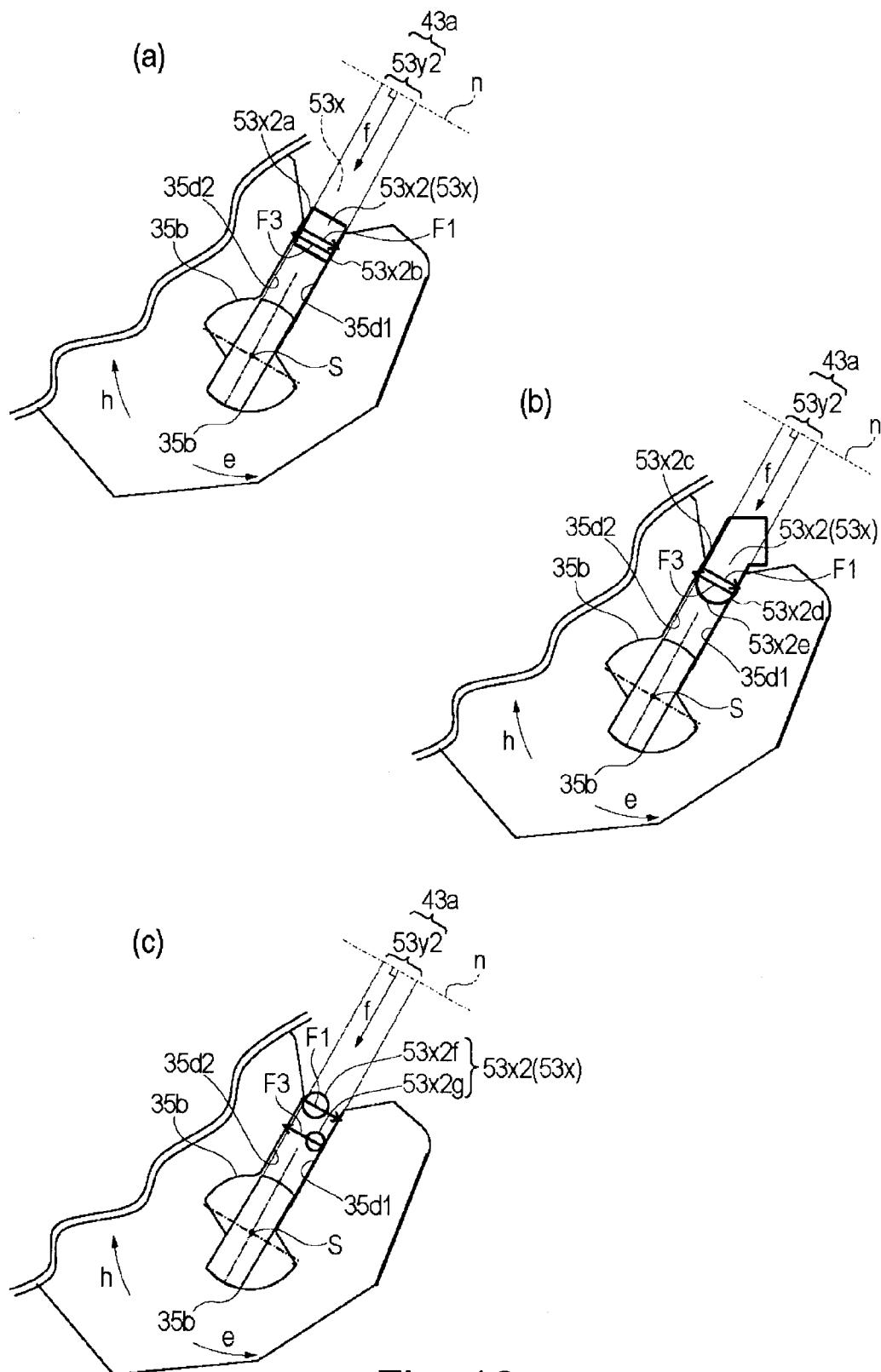
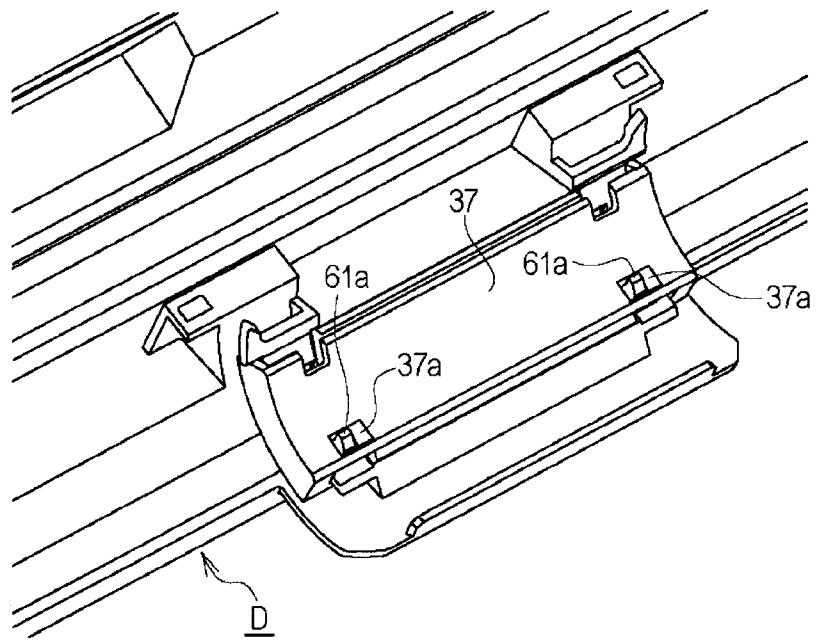


Fig. 16

(a)



(b)

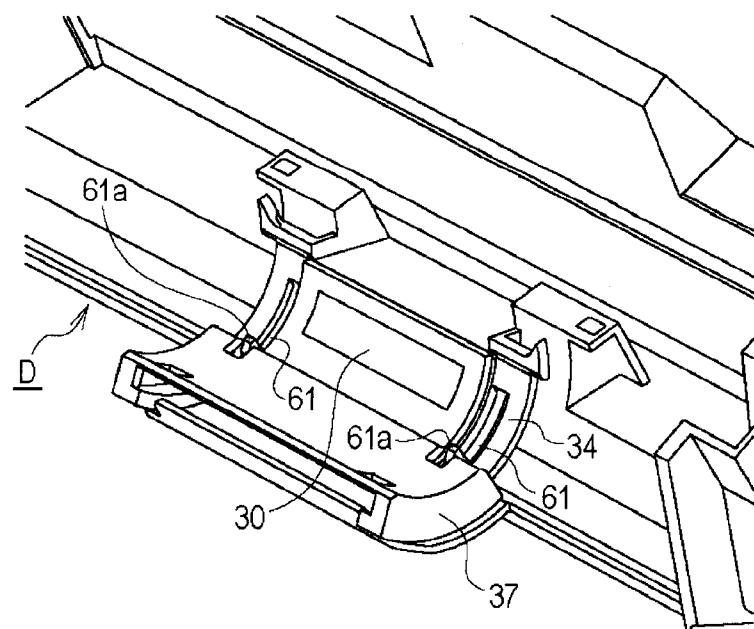


Fig. 17

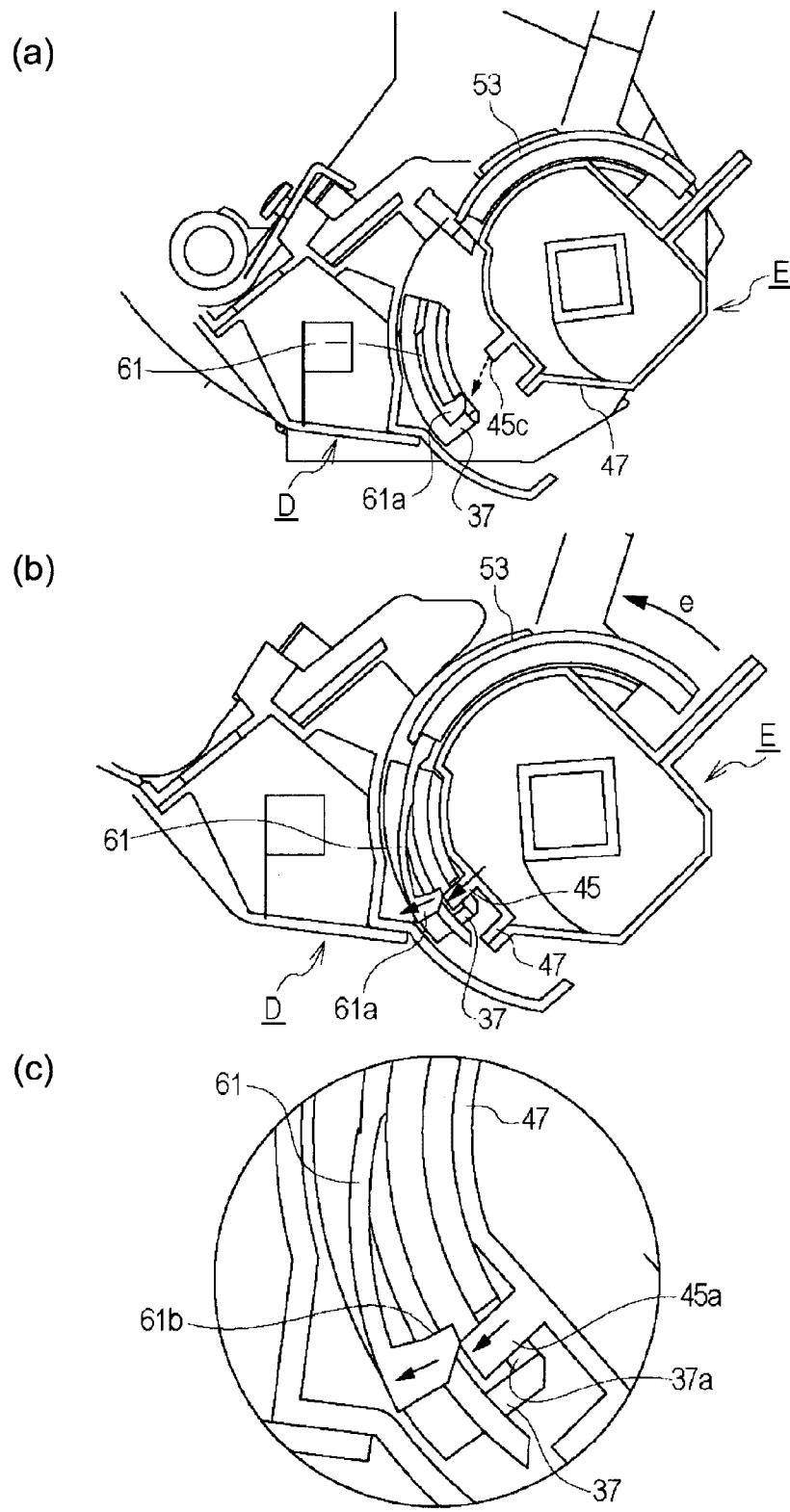


Fig. 18

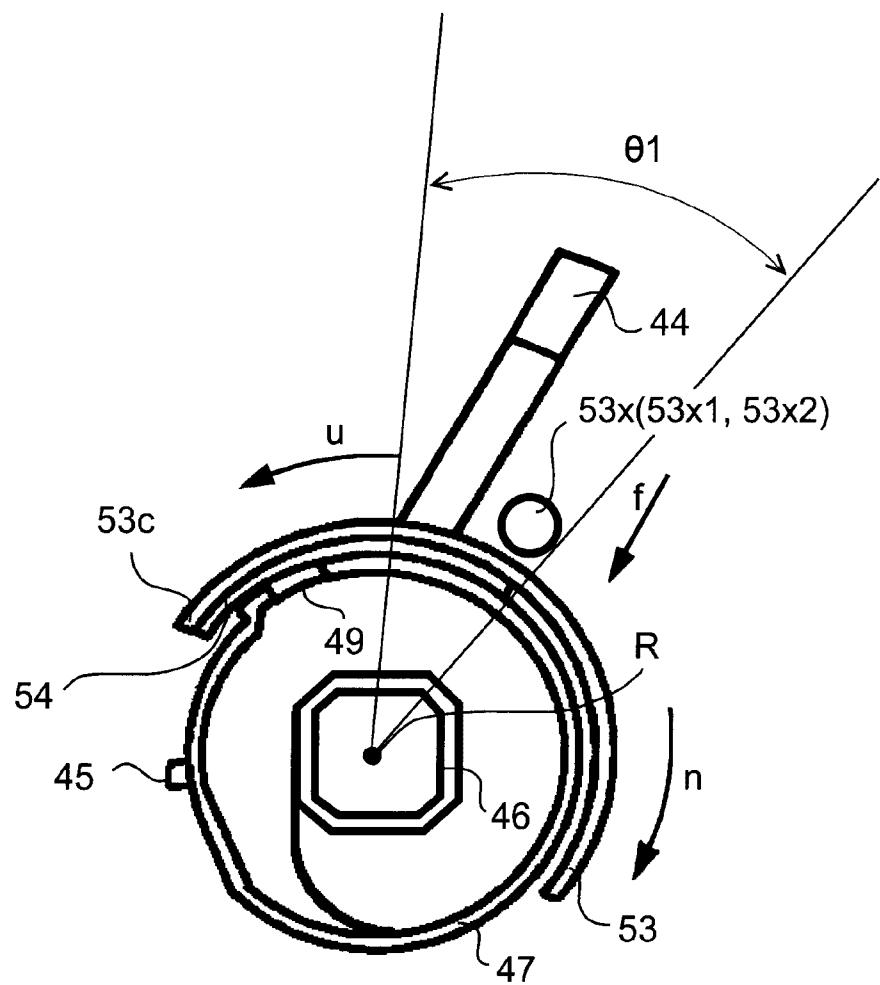


Fig. 19

