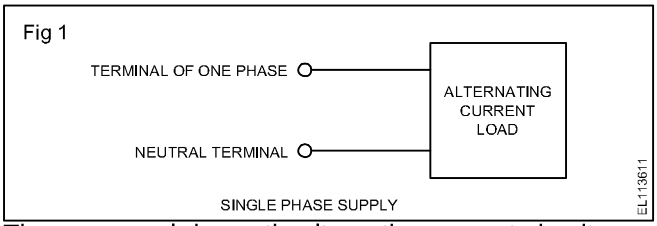
3-Phase AC fundamentals

Objectives: At the end of this lesson you shall be able to
- **state and describe the generation of 3-phase system with single loops**
- **state the advantages of the 3-phase system over a single phase system**
- **state and explain the 3-phase, 3-wire, and 4-wire system**
- **state and explain the relation between phase and line voltage.**

Introduction

When a piece of electrical equipment is plugged into the socket of a normal alternating current supply (e.g. a ring main circuit), it is connected between the terminal of one phase and the neutral wire. (Fig 1)

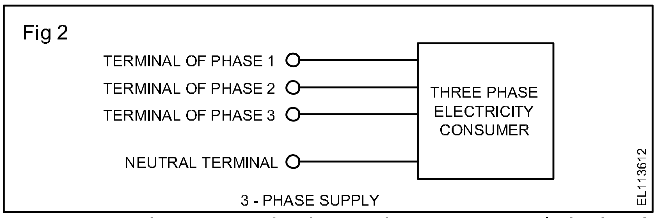
Fig 1



Thus a normal domestic alternating current circuit may also be described as a single-phase circuit.

Similarly, a three-phase power consumer is provided with the terminals of three phases. (Fig 2)

Fig 2



One great advantage of a three-phase AC supply is that it can produce a rotating magnetic field when a set of stationary three-phase coils is energized from the supply. This is the basic operating principle for most modern rotating machines and, in particular, the three-phase induction motor.

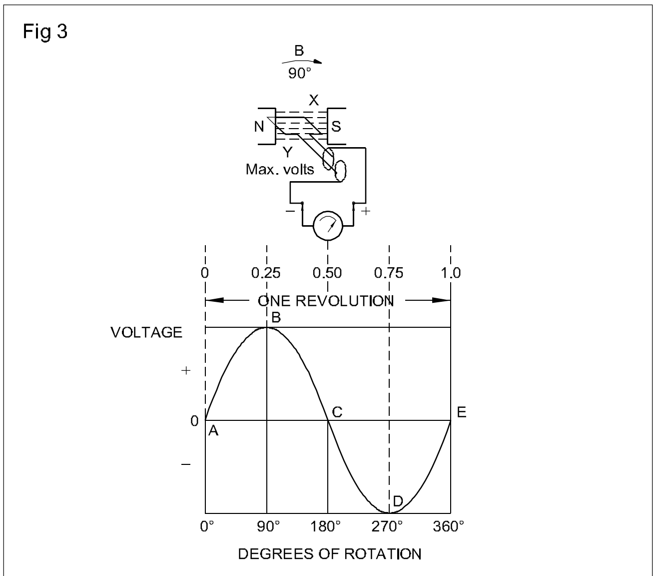
Further, lighting loads can be connected between any one of the three phases and neutral.

Review: Further to the above two advantages the following are the advantages of polyphase system over single phase system.

- 3-phase motors develop uniform torque whereas single phase motors produce pulsating torque only
- Most of the 3-phase motors are self starting whereas single phase motors are not
- Power factor of 3-phase motors are reasonably high when compared to single phase motors
- For a given size the power out put is high in 3-phase motors whereas in single phase motors the power output is low.
- Copper required for 3-phase transmission for a given power and distance is low when compared to single phase system.
- 3-phase motor like squirrel cage induction motor is robust in construction and more are less maintenance free.

The basic principle used in generating an alternating voltage is that of rotating a wire loop at a constant angular speed in a uniform magnetic field. (Fig 3) The alternating voltage thus produced varies sinusoidally with time.

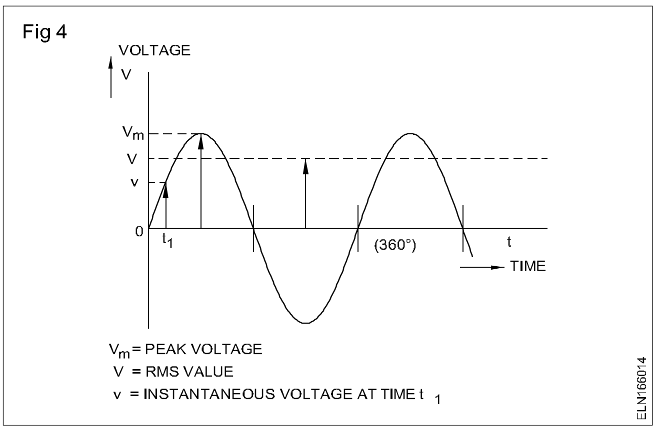
Fig 3



(AS THE LOOP ROTATES THROUGH THE MAGNETIC FIELD, THE MAGNITUDE AND DIRECTION OF THE VOLTAGE CHANGES.) GENERATION OF AN ALTERNATING VOLTAGE

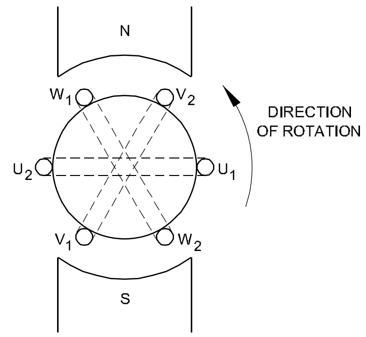
The effective (RMS) value is the same as that of a direct current that would produce the same heating effect, RMS voltage and frequency are usually quoted for a sinusoidal alternating voltage (Fig 4).

Fig 4



Three-phase generation: To generate three-phase voltages, a similar method to that used for generating single-phase voltages is employed but with the difference that, this time, three wire loops U_1, U_2, V_1, V_2 and W_1, W_2 rotate at a constant angular speed about the same axis in the uniform magnetic field. U_1, U_2, V_1, V_2 and W_1 , W_2, are displaced 120° in position with respect to each other, permanently. (Fig 5)

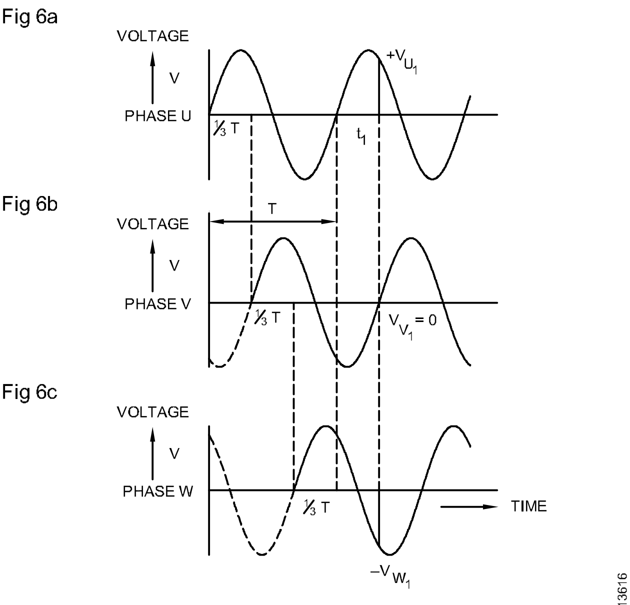
Fig 5



SIMPLIFIED THREE – PHASE ALTERNATOR

For each wire loop, the same result is obtained as for the alternating voltage generator. This means that an alternating voltage is induced in each wire loop. However, since the wire loops are displaced by 120° from each other, and a complete revolution (360°), takes one period, the three induced alternating voltages are delayed in time by a third of a period with respect to each other.

Because of the spatial displacement of the three wire loops by 120°, three alternating phase voltages result, which are displaced by one third of a period, T, with respect to each other. (Fig 6)



PHASE DISPLACEMENT OF 3 - PHASE

To distinguish between the three phases, it is a common practice in (heavy current) electrical engineering to designate them by the capital letters U,V and W or by a colour code red, yellow and blue. At a time 0, U is passing through zero volts with positively increasing voltage. (Fig 6a) V follows with its zero crossing 1/3 of the period later (Fig 6b), and the same applies to W with respect to V. (Fig 6c)

In three-phase networks, the following statements can be made about the three-phase voltages.

- The three-phase voltages have the same frequency.
- The three-phase voltages have the same peak value.
- The three-phase voltages are displaced by one third of a period in time with respect to each other.
- At every instant in time, the instantaneous sum of the three voltages

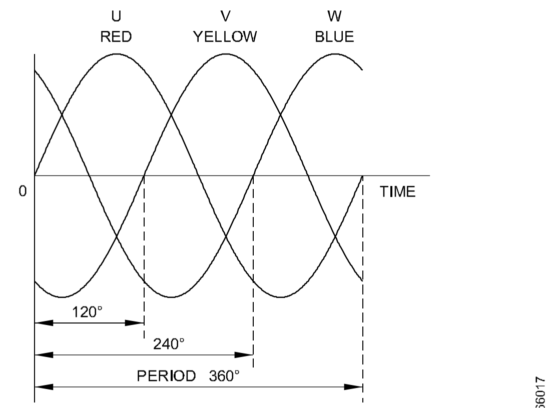
$$V_U + V_V + V_W = 0.$$

The fact that the sum of the instantaneous voltages is zero is illustrated in Fig 6. At time t_1, U has the instantaneous value V_U. At the same time, $V_V = 0$, and the instantaneous value for W is $-V_W$. Because V_U and V_W have the same value but are opposite in sign, it follows that

$$V_{U1} + V_{V1} + V_{W1} = 0.$$

The three voltages of the same amplitude and frequency are shown together in Fig 7.

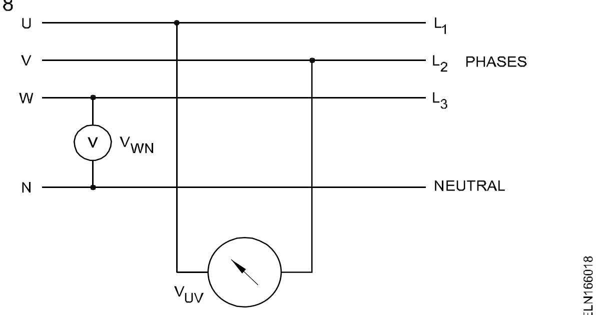
Fig 7



COMBINED WAVE - FORMS OF THREE PHASE SUPPLY

Three-phase network: A three-phase network consists of three lines or phases. In Fig 8, these are indicated by the capital letters U, V and W.

Fig 8

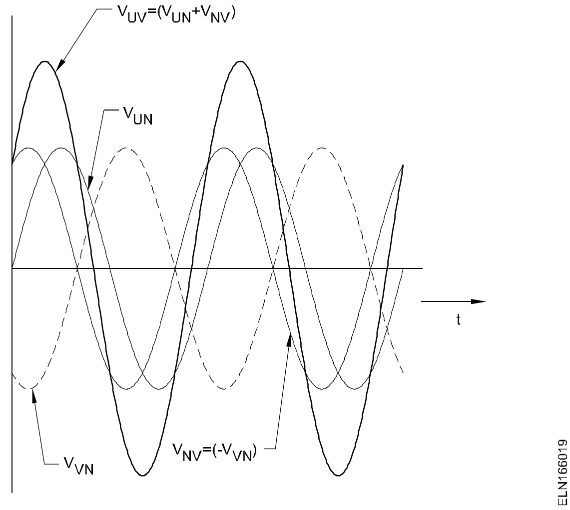


The return lead of the individual phases consists of a common neutral conductor N, which is described later in more detail. Voltmeters are connected between each of the lines U, V and W, and the neutral line N. They indicate the RMS (effective) values of the voltages between each of the three phases and neutral.

These voltages are designated as phase voltages V_{UN}, V_{VN} and V_{WN}.

The individual, phase voltages all have the same magnitude. They are simply displaced from each other by one third of a period in time. (Fig 9)

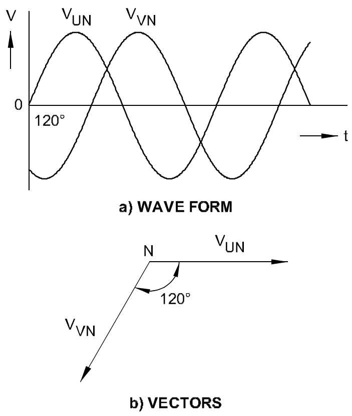
Fig 9



The individual instantaneous, peak and RMS values are the same as for a single-phase alternating voltage.

Line and phase voltage: If a voltmeter is connected directly between line U and line V (Fig 10), the RMS value of the voltage V_{UV} is measured, and this is different from any of the three phase voltages.

Fig 10



Its magnitude is directly proportional to the phase voltage. The relationship is shown in Fig 9, where the time-variation wave- forms of V_{UV} and the phase voltages V_{UN} and V_{VN} are drawn.

V_{UV} has a sinusoidal wave-form and the same frequency as the phase voltages. However, V_{uv} has a higher peak value since it is computed from the phase voltages V_{UN} and V_{VN}. The varying positive and negative instantaneous values of V_{UN} and V_{VN} at a particular time produce the instantaneous value of V_{UV}. V_{UV} is the phasor sum of the two phase voltages V_{UN} and V_{NV}.

This combination of phase-displaced alternating voltages is called phasor addition.

The voltage across phase-to-phase is called the line voltage.

Relationship between line and phase voltage: The possibility of combining pairs of phases in a generator is a basic property of three-phase electricity. The understanding of this relationship will be enhanced by studying the following illustrative example which explains the concept of phase difference in a very simple way.

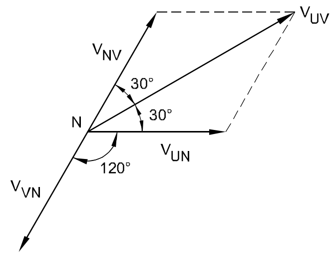
The phase voltages V_{UN} and V_{VN} are separated in phase by one third of a period, or 120º between the two phasors. (Fig 10)

The phasor sum of the two phase voltages V_{UN} and V_{NV} can be obtained geometrically, and the resultant phasor so obtained is the line voltage V_{UV} through the relation $V_{UV} = V_{UN} + V_{NV}$.

Note that to obtain the line voltage V_{UV} the measurement is made from the U terminal through the common point N to the V terminal, for a star connection.

This fact is illustrated in Fig 11. Starting with the phasors V_{UN} and V_{VN} (Fig 10), the phasor $-V_{VN} = V_{NV}$ is produced from the point N. The diagonal of the parallelogram with sides V_{UN} and V_{NV} is the phasor representing the resulting line voltage V_{UV}.

Fig 11



It can be concluded, therefore, that in a generator the line voltage V_L is related to the phase voltage V_P by a multiplying factor. This factor can be shown to be $\sqrt{3}$, so that $V_L = \sqrt{3} \times V_P$

In a three-phase generating system, the line voltage is always $\sqrt{3}$ times the phase-to-neutral voltage. The factor relating the line voltage to the phase voltage is $\sqrt{3}$.

It was shown that the line voltage is greater than the phase voltage. Here is a numerical example.

The RMS phase voltage in a three-phase system is 240V. Since the ratio of line voltage to phase voltage is $\sqrt{3}$ the RMS line voltage is

$$V_L = \sqrt{3} \times V_P = \sqrt{3} \times 240$$

$$= 415.68V$$

or rounded down, $V_L = 415V$.

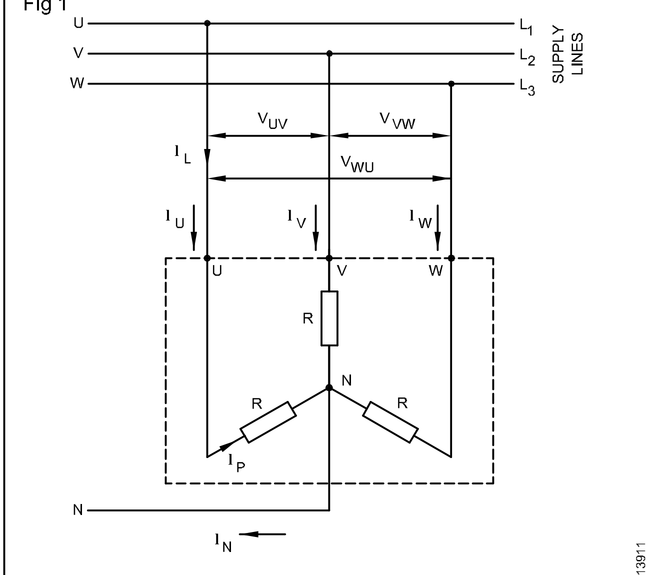
Systems of connection in 3-phase AC

Objectives: At the end of this lesson you shall be able to
- **explain the star and delta systems of connection**
- **state phase relationship between line and phase voltages and current in a star connection delta connection**
- **state the relationship between phase and the voltage and current in star and delta connection**

Methods of 3-phase connection: If a three-phase load is connected to a three-phase network, there are two basic possible configurations. One is `star connection' (symbol Y) and the other is `delta connection' (symbol Δ).

Star connection: In Fig 1 the three-phase load is shown as three equal magnitude resistances. From each phase, at any given time, there is a path to the terminal points U, V, W of the equipment, and then through the individual elements of the load resistance. All the elements are connected to one point N: the `star point'. This star point is connected to the neutral conductor N. The phase currents i_U, i_V, and i_W flow through the individual elements, and the same current flows through the supply lines, i.e. in a star connected system, the supply line current (I_L) = phase current (I_P).

Fig 1



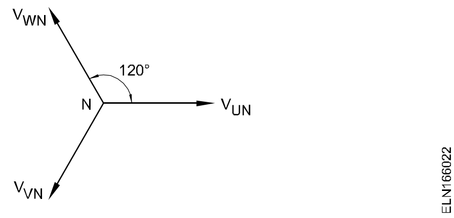
STAR CONNECTION

The potential difference for each phase, i.e. from a line to the star point, is called the phase voltage and designated as V_P. The potential difference across any two lines is called the line voltage V_L. Therefore, the voltage across each impedance of a star connection is the phase voltage V_P. The line voltage V_L appears across the load terminals U-V, V-W and W-U and designated as V_{UV}, V_{VW} and V_{WU} in the Fig 1. The line voltage in a star-connected system will be equal to the phasor sum of the positive value of one phase voltage and the negative value of the other phase voltage that exist across the two lines (Fig 2).

Thus

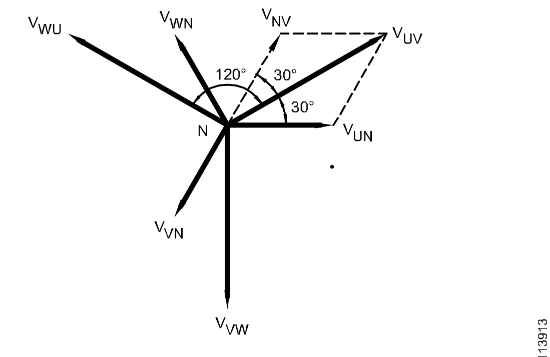
$$V_L = V_{UV} = (\text{phasor } V_{UN}) - (\text{phasor } V_{VN})$$
$$= \text{phasor } V_{UN} + V_{VN}.$$

Fig 2



In the phasor diagram (Fig 3)

Fig 3



PHASOR DIAGRAM

$$V_L = V_{UV} = V_{UN}\cos 30^o + V_{NV}\cos 30^o$$

But $\cos 30^o = \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}$.

Thus as $V_{UN} = V_{VN} = V_P$

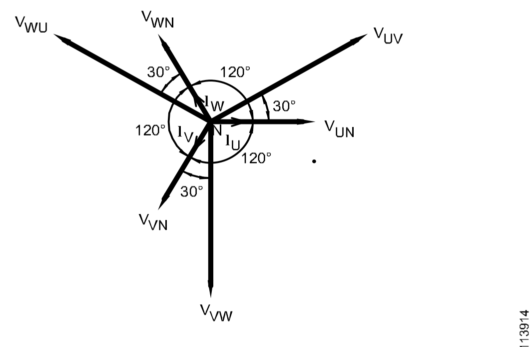
$$V_L = \sqrt{3}\, V_P.$$

This same relationship is applied to V_{UV}, V_{VW} and V_{WU}.

In a three-phase star connection, the line voltage is always $\sqrt{3}$ times the phase-to-neutral voltage. The factor relating the line voltage to the phase voltage is $\sqrt{3}$ (Fig 3).

The voltage and current relationship in a star connection is shown in the phasor diagrams. (Fig 4) The phase

Fig 4



PHASOR DIAGRAM OF STAR CONNECTION

voltages are displaced 120º in phase with respect to each other.

Derived from these are the corresponding line voltages. The line voltages are displaced 120^0 in phase with respect to each other. Since the loads in our example are provided by purely resistive impedances, the phase currents I_P (I_U, I_V, I_W) are in phase with the phase voltages V_P (V_{UN}, V_{VN} and V_{WN}). In a star connection, each phase current is determined by the ratio of the phase voltage to the load resistance R.

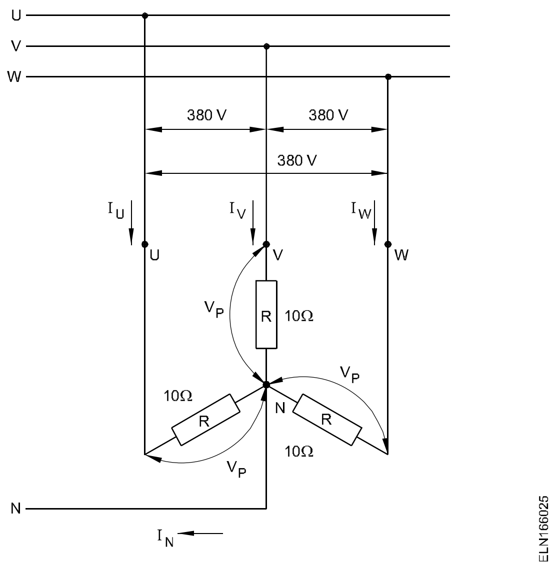
Example 1*:* What is the line voltage for a three-phase, balanced star-connected system, having a phase voltage of 240V?

$$V_L = \sqrt{3}V_P = \sqrt{3} \text{ x } 240$$

$$= 415.7\text{V}$$

Example 2*:* What is the magnitude of each of the supply line currents for the circuit shown in Fig 5?

Fig 5



Because of the arrangements of a star connection there is a voltage

$$V_P = \frac{380}{173} = 220 \text{ V}$$

across each of the purely resistive loads R.

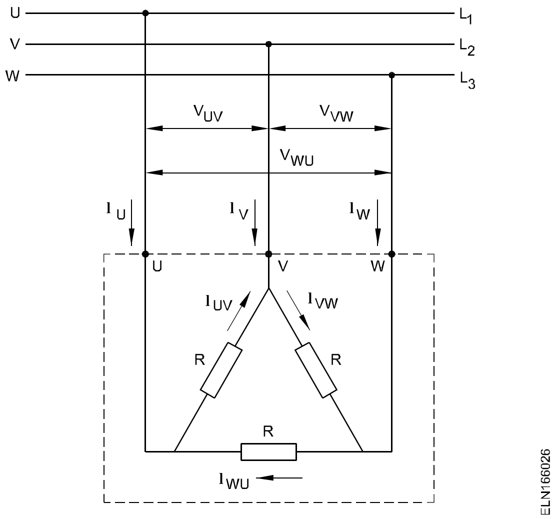
The three-supply line currents have the same magnitude since the star-connected load is balanced, and they are given by

$$I_U = I_V = I_W = \frac{V_P}{R} = \frac{220}{10} = 22\text{A} = I_L = I_P$$

Delta connection: There is a second possible arrangement for connecting a three-phase load in a three-phase network. This is the delta or mesh connection (Δ).(Fig 6)

The load impedances form the sides of a triangle. The terminals U, V and W are connected to the supply lines of the L_1, L_2 and L_3.

Fig 6



In contrast to a star connection, in a delta connection the line voltage appears across each of the load phases.

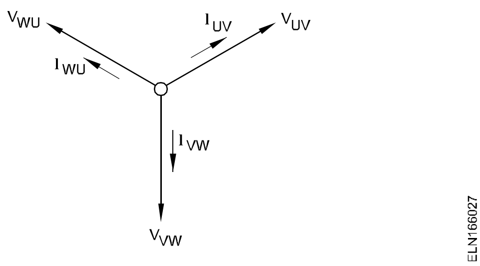
The voltages, with symbols V_{UV}, V_{VW} and V_{WU} are, therefore, the line voltages.

The phase currents through the elements in a delta arrangement are composed of I_{UV}, I_{VW} and I_{WU}. The currents from the supply lines are I_U, I_V and I_W, and one line current divides at the point of connection to produce two phase currents.

The voltage and current relationships of the delta connection can be explained with the aid of an illustration. The line voltages V_{UV}, V_{VW} and V_{WU} are directly across the load resistors, and in this case, the phase voltage is the same as the line voltage. The phasors V_{UV}, V_{VW} and V_{WU} are the line voltages. This arrangement has already been seen in relation to the star connection.

Because of the purely resistive load, the corresponding phase currents are in phase with the line voltages. (Fig 7)

Fig 7



Their magnitudes are determined by the ratio of the line voltage to the resistance R.

On the other hand, the line currents I_U, I_V and I_W are now compounded from the phase currents. A line current is always given by the phasor sum of the appropriate phase currents. This is shown in Fig 8. The line current I_U is the phasor sum of the phase currents I_{UV} and I_{UW}. (See also Fig 8)

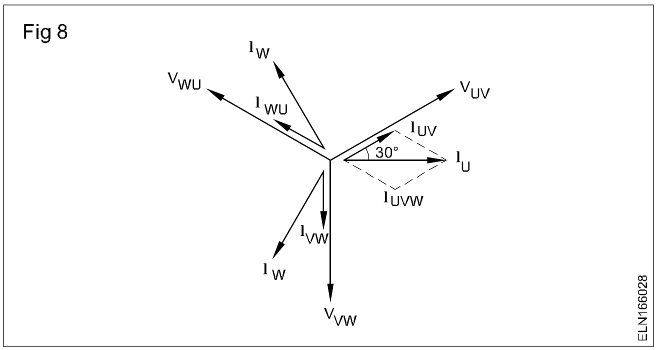


Fig 8

Hence, $I_U = I_{UV} \cos 30^o + I_{UW} \cos 30^o$

But $\cos 30^o = \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}$.

Thus $I_L = \sqrt{3}\, I_{ph}$

Thus, for a balanced delta connection, the ratio of the line current to the phase current is $\sqrt{3}$.

Thus, line current = $\sqrt{3}$ x phase current.

Example 3: What are the values of the line currents, I_U, I_V and I_W in the above example? (Fig 9)

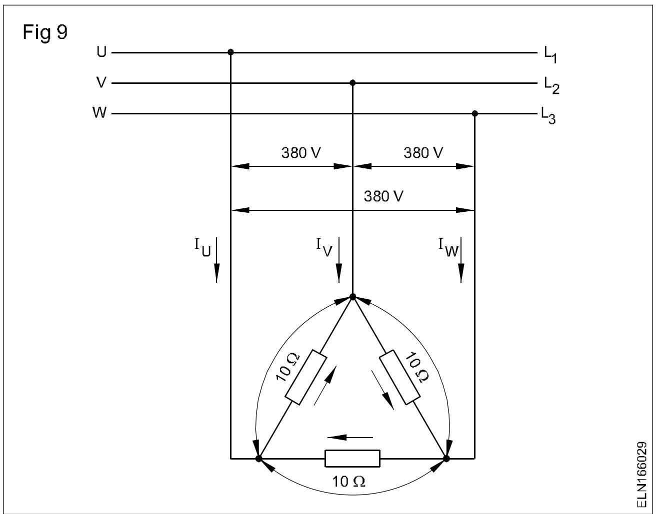


Fig 9

Solution

Since the load is balanced (i.e. the resistance of each phase is the same), the phase currents are of equal magnitude, and are given by the ratio of the line voltage to the load phase resistance

$$I_{UV} = I_{VW} = I_{WU} = \frac{V_P}{R} = \frac{V_L}{R} = \frac{380}{10} = 38A.$$

Thus, the phase current in the case of delta is 38A. Expressed in words:

$$\text{Phase current} = \frac{\text{line or phase voltage}}{\text{phase resistance}}$$

The line current is $\sqrt{3}$ times the phase current.

Therefore the line current is

$$I_U = I_V = I_W = \sqrt{3} \times 38A = 1.73 \times 38A = 66A.$$

***Example 4**:* Three identical coils, each of resistance 10 ohms and inductance 20mH is delta connected across a 400-V, 50Hz, three-phase supply. Calculate the line current.

For a coil,

$$\text{reactance } X_L = 2\pi fL = 2 \times 3.142 \times 50 \times \frac{20}{1000} = 6.3 \text{ ohms.}$$

Impedance of a coil is thus given by

$$Z = \sqrt{(R^2 + X^2} = \sqrt{(10^2 + 6.3^2)} = 11.8 \text{ ohms.}$$

For a delta connected system, according to equation

$V_L = V_P$.

Thus $V_P = 400V$.

Hence the phase current is given by

$$I_P = \frac{V_P}{Z} = \frac{400}{118} = 33.9 \text{ A.}$$

But for a delta connected system, according to equation,

$$I_L = \sqrt{3} I_P = \sqrt{3} \times 33.9 = 58.7A.$$

Application of star and delta connection with balanced loads

An important application is the `star-delta change over switch' or star-delta starter.

For a particular three-phase load, the line current in a delta connection is three times as great as for a star connection for a given line voltage, i.e. for the same three-phase load (D line current) = 3 (Y - line current).

This fact is used to reduce the high starting current of a 3-phase motor with a star-delta change over switch.

Application of star connection: Alternators and secondoary of distribution transformers, have their three, single-phase coils interconnected in star.