CHAPTER VI

FORMALISTIC ASPECTS

It is being contended by modern critics that form and content are indistinguishable in a work of art. A poem, particularly, has language primarily as its medium and hence it derives its meaning and significance from its verbal organization. Structural and linguistic devices add to the meaning of the poem. According to Mark Schorer, it is technique that "evaluates" and "objectifies the materials of art". Technique "is not the secondary thing..., some external machination, a mechanical affair, but a deep and primary operation" and it not only "contains intellectual and moral implications, but... it discovers them" (464-65).

An examination of the formalistic aspects of the poetry of both Herbert and Nammazhvar reveals how elegance and effect are achieved in their poetry by the skilful blending of content and technique.

Metaphysical poetry is crowded with metaphors, similes and bold syntactical devices. The metaphysical poets translate into words an intense emotional state. There is deliberate disruption, an outrageous imagery, a broken rhyme etc. They indulge in word games and puns and resort to mind-boggling comparisons. Their poetry is dramatic, ingenious, colloquial, and argumentative. In Herbert's
poetry too there is a variety and excellence of technical skill.

He profited from Donne's style, but it was ingeniously adapted by him to suit his temperament. Herbert "simplified the inner logical pattern, following as a rule a single train of argument; he changed the metrical pattern into something less flexible, though still studying to relate sound to sense; he narrowed the range of diction and imagery while preserving their actuality" (Bennett 64). While reproducing the tone of the spoken word, Herbert prefers a conversational tone to Donne's breathlessness of excitement.

Bottrall comments on the "easy assurance" of Herbert's style which reminds us that "he had long been accustomed to 'trade in courtesies and wit'. His musicianship is everywhere apparent" (4). He writes as a priest or an individual Christian in moods of despair and ecstasy. He retains the attention of the reader by a battery of questions, unusual comparisons and raillery. While many poems are didactic and reflective, many others are poetic arguments. There are poems where a spiritual trauma is dramatized. The poet is an active participant in the drama and the other actors and the setting belong to the world of parables.
The stylistic aims of Herbert are set in the "Jordan" poems, where his intentions towards simplicity are made clear. His style incorporates simple, effective words and appropriate rhyme to reflect the mood.

Critics have often commented on the deceptive plainness of Herbert's style. The two "Jordan" poems "are his farewell to poetical fashions: to allegory, pastoral, verbal obliquity and complication. But with a difference; his method itself is oblique:" (Alvarez 71). Arnold Stein, writing on Herbert's art of plainness, observes: "Herbert has used art as a metaphor to express an experience of religious life" (259). He opines that in "The Forerunners" Herbert bids a "fictional farewell" to the sweet phrases, and lovely metaphors which he has rescued from the poetic brothels and ushered them into the Church. Stein sees this plainness as a rhetoric of sincerity, an art by which he may tell the truth to himself and God (264).

Herbert's apparent simplicity seems to be in many places cultivated and deliberate. According to Swardson, there is a contradiction between Herbert's theory and practice. While in the "Jordan" poems artistic poetry is regretted, in "The Forerunners" Herbert feels that the beauty of poetry may be utilised by the church as well. This is the conflict, whether fine language is a distraction
Herbert is an instrument fit to serve God. In his view, though Herbert "has been praised for manliness and simplicity, in practice, he did not follow this. He seldom says simply "My God, My King," and his plain intention is always curled with metaphors, even in the very poems that reject this strategy" (Swardson 73). His simplicity, therefore refers only to tone and diction. "Sunday" is crowded with metaphors. The simple declaration "Thou art still my God" in "The Forerunners" is couched in great elaboration; simple affirmation of faith is but dramatically shown in "The Collar". Thus it is seen that in Herbert's poems "the worth of artless devotion is, through art, dramatized in the complex earthly surroundings that give such devotion a special human meaning and value. By the fullest use of artistic device, Herbert contrives to make simplicity poignant, through the literary language pure devotion is placed in its most compelling context" (Swardson 77-78).

Herbert has a directness of style and is also gifted with the art of antithesis. His short epigrammatic lines illustrate his skilful craftsmanship.

Joan Bennett analyses the rise and fall structure of Herbert's poems and observes that Herbert begins on a low note, gradually and unostentatiously reaches the emotional climax in the middle of the poem and then relaxes the
tension completely at the end in utter simplicity. She illustrates this structure with "Love (III)" which begins with: "Love bade me welcome" and ends with "So I did sit and eat" and observes that "A graph might be made of the emotional plan of the poem in the shape of a pyramid; the two statements, 'Love bade me welcome; yet any soul draw back.' and 'I did sit and eat.' are the bases upon which it rests; at the apex is the cry of self-disgust" (69). The quiet note at the end seems almost matter of fact if the emotional turmoil which has occurred is not taken into account.

Of the three sections in The Temple, "The Church-Porch", "The Church" and "The Church Militant", the first and the third appear to be earlier creations. While "The Church Porch" is didactic, "The Church Militant" written in heroic couplets is satiric. Lay matters are kept to "The Church Porch" and the more sublime ideas reserved for the house of God soon to be entered in "The Church". The reader has to pause and sanctify himself at the threshold of the Church in "Superliminare". All is prepared for entry into the hallowed area. Once inside the church, the reader is led to "The Altar" from where "Sacrifice" naturally succeeds, which reminds the poet of our debt to God and leads to "Thanksgiving". The reader is taken on a tour round the church and shown "The Church-floor", "Church
Monuments*, "Church Music" and so on. Wishing to celebrate the Christian year, Herbert gives us poems on Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Whitsunday etc. (Bottrall 60-61). These poems deal with rituals, celebrations and other external aspects of the Church. But the value of "The Church" depends not on these but on the poet's pre-occupation with the crucifixion which arouses spiritual storms in his soul. The Church thus becomes in a way a battle ground where Herbert fights with several problems within himself and the conflict is finally resolved after richly contributing to poetry. The soul and poetry have gained by the poet's conflicts.

Several poems in The Temple are colloquies with God or with Herbert's own heart. Dialogues are used in "Love Unknown", which has several parentheses and is spiced up by comments of the second speaker. Snatches of conversation are overheard in poems like "The Quip" and "Peace". Sometimes his poems are in the form of a one-sided conversation. Herbert's verse is dramatic and its effect heightened by a volley of questions, exclamations and reprimands. About 20 poems begin with a question and his fondness of the interrogative can be seen in most of his poems.
There is variety in Herbert's poetry that dazzles the reader. As a poet Herbert caters not only to the intellect and poetic sensibility but also to the ear and eye of the reader. As Summers notes, "In The Temple there is one true anagram, one echo poem, one 'hidden acrostic', one poem based on the double interpretation of initials, one based on a syllabic pun and ... a pruning poem." (238).

In the pattern poem Herbert has only innovatively used traditional material. "The Altar" and "Easter-wings" are not exotic or frivolous oddities; they are the most obvious examples of Herbert's religious and poetic concern with what we may call the hieroglyph" (Summers 225). A hieroglyph is defined as "a figure, device or sign having some hidden meaning; a secret or enigmatical symbol; an emblem" (Summers 225). The death of Christ is generally accepted to be a hieroglyph as it reminds us to bear our cross similarly.

From the title of the poem "The Church-floore" we tend to assume that the floor is the hieroglyph of the church's foundation, which is based on theological virtues. But it is only with the last word of the poem, "heart" that we understand that the reference is to the human heart. Nearly always Herbert "presents the institutional as a hieroglyph of the personal rather than vice versa:... The artful 'Architect' has built within the individual heart, equally
indestructibly, the salvation of the individual and the foundation of His Church (Summers 227-228).

In the poem "The Bunch of Grapes", the title indicates the hieroglyph. It is used as the central image in a meditation on a personal experience. The bunch of grapes is a type of Christ and of the Christian's communion (Summers 229).

While the hieroglyph is used at times to define or resolve the central conflict in a poem as in "Joseph's Coat", all the hieroglyphic applications of monuments are drawn in "Church Monuments". Very often the poem itself is made into a hieroglyph as in "Deniall". The disorder felt in the heart and soul of the poet when God denies his requests is mirrored by the disorder in the rhyme scheme of the poem. Normalcy and perfection are restored only when God mends his broken heart and with it, the rhyme. The last line of every preceding stanza has an odd rhyme and it is perfected only in the last stanza.

"Trinitie Sunday", "Sinnes round" and "A Wreath" are also formal hieroglyphs. The very titles of "The Collar" and "The Pulley" are hieroglyphs which symbolize the idea of the poem for there is no mention of the collar or the pulley in the respective poems. "Paradise" is a 'pruning' poem, in which the typography becomes a formal element. The second
and third rhymes of each stanza are formed by paring off the first consonant of the preceding rhyme:

I bless thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit and order OW ...
Such sharpness shows the sweetest FREND:
Such cuttings rather heal then REND:
And such beginnings touch their END.

The poem implies that God's pruning of man alone will make His creation fruitful. It also implies clearing up the weeds of worldliness and "the final 'cutting away' of the body and the release of the soul at death" (Summers 239).

Coming to Herbert's handling of a visual hieroglyph, the structure of the poem leaps out of the pages to the eye of even a lay reader and therein Herbert tries to make the message obvious. The two visual hieroglyphs of Herbert "The Altar" and "Easter-wings" relate to his Christian belief. The Altar symbolises the human heart as the true altar, upon which Herbert's poems are offered. His heart is broken and therefore is fit to be offered as a sacrifice, as stated in Psalms 51. It is to be noted that in The Temple the poem succeeding "The Altar" immediately is "The Sacrifice". "The shape of Herbert's poem was intended to hieroglyph the
relevance of the old altar to the new Christian altar within the heart" observes Summers (241).

"Easter-wings" is a hieroglyph which implies that man can rise only by fall, for "Where Sinne abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom.V:20). Paradise was lost because of Adam's sin but the sinners brought the Son of God amidst them and He died for their redemption and they rose up with Him. This is the continual pattern of fall and rise, death and life. This pattern is projected through "Easter-wings". In this poem, we see not only the wing pattern but also how it is achieved by the process of thinning and expansion which makes flight possible (Summers 242).

While other poets of his age used hieroglyphs as the basis for their imagery, "Herbert's distinction lies in his successful development of the conception that the entire poem could be organised around a hieroglyph and that the poem itself could be constructed as a formal hieroglyph. The hieroglyph represented to Herbert a fusion of the spiritual and the material, of the rational and sensuous in the essential terms of formal relationships" (Summers 244).

Klawitter analyses "A Wreath" as a word-game poem. Its word convolutions send the readers round and round till they reach a finality, which is but a repetition of the poem's
opening idea. Just as a garland is made by braiding a new flower with the previous one, up to line 5 there is "end weaving" and in the repetitions, the words are reversed.

A Wreathed garland of deserved praise,
Of praise deserved, unto thee I give,
I give to thee, who knowest all my wayes
My crooked winding wayes, wherein I live,
Wherein I die, not live:...

(1-5)

In 1.5, the reader is jolted when he is confronted by death rather than life, which he was made to expect. This makes him aware of his 'crooked winding wayes" as all things worldly are devious. He can reach up to God in a straight line.

The poet's yearning for simplicity is reflected hereafter by the end weavings which are singular words instead of being multiple.

... for life is straight,
Straight as a line, and ever tends to thee,
To thee, who art more farre above deceit,
Then deceit seems above simplicitie.
Give me simplicitie, that I may live,
So live and like, that I may know, thy wayes,
Know them and practise them: then shall I give
For this poore wreath, give thee a crown of praise.

(5-12)

This first quatrain is repeated in the third quatrain but
the words occur in the reverse order exactly. The poem ends
where it began. Once aware of his waywardness, the poet
goes up 'to thee' and after that literally retraces his
steps to praise Him.

Circularity is once again seen in "Sinnes round". But
it is not 'end-weaving' from line to line, but the last line
of every stanza becomes exactly the first line of the next
stanza. Thus the concluding line of the poem is the very
same line as the opening line of the poem. This seems to be
not a mere word-game but a symbolic pattern most appropriate
to its subject since sin is a vicious cycle (Bottrall 104).
Significantly, these two poems are similar to the antati
form handled by Nammazhvar in his poems.

"Trinitie Sunday" reveals a divine numerology in its
pattern and thus is another formal hieroglyph. It is
composed of three stanzas, each with three lines and every
stanza has only one rhyme and provides "a hieroglyph of the
God who is simultaneously three persons in one" (Ormerod
27). In stanza one and two there is one entity per line:
Father who creates (1.1), the son who redeems (1.2), the Holy Spirit that sanctifies man (1.3), absolving sins of the past (1.4), of the present (1.5) and of the future (1.6).

In stanza three, each line has three entities: "Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me, / With faith, with hope, with charitie; / That I may runne, rise, rest with thee (7-9).

Thus the poem has nine lines and the third stanza has nine entities. Number nine is a circular number as it remains the same, multiplied by any number. This is the divine numerology for the mystical number nine is a reminder of the ever constant, unchanging aspect of God, who has neither a beginning nor an end. It is perhaps for this reason that Herbert employs circularity in some of his poems.

"Coloss. 3.3", has the message of the biblical text in the title. Besides this, the poem contains a hidden message in italicized words diagonally across the poem. The message is oblique literally and figuratively i.e. it is slanted and it moves from what is apparent to the real. The pattern could also mean descending in two senses: we must descend in order to ascend like Christ who descended to uplift man. Just as our eyes move to and fro across the poem, drop down and then swing back to the top to grasp the hidden message, we too should rise, run, sink, die and rise again with

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Christ. No treasure can be gained without our delving deep for it.

Herbert's two-line poem "Anagram" is an epigram in that there is so much said in so few words. The poem as it appears in the text:

MARY
Ana
gram
ARMY

How well her name an Army doth present,
In whom the Lord of Hosts did pitch his tent!

The poem says succinctly that the entire Christian army is huddled in one small tent, that is, in Virgin Mary who bore Christ, in whom every one dwells.

Thus we see Herbert using several methods to reach the reader. It has been generally accepted that he owes his simplicity and the general framework of his poems to the Bible. As the people of the age were familiar with the Bible, Herbert could be sure of his poems being well understood by his readers. The Bible provided him with conceits and most of his imagery was derived from it. His lively mind cleverly utilized the sacred material. His conceits have a homely directness for which Herbert might be indebted to the Emblem writers. His poems reflect the force and vigour of parables and at times he sounds like a pulpit.
Herbert's poetry gains from the Bible "its air of finality" and every dilemma or conflict is presented "within the context of an answer" (Alvarez 78). Herbert, the parson is seen in his poems, elucidating meaning with scriptural observations. He was able to christanize even classical allusions. The influence of the Emblem tradition can be seen in his bringing together the visual and the intellectual.

Herbert's indebtedness to the Bible is evident from the stark lucidity and impregnated understatements seen in his poems. The influence of the Psalms and the parables of the Bible is quite significant. He is fond of proverbs and his "Church-Porch" is a moral lesson in verse. The Book of Proverbs seems to be responsible for his highly concise and compressed phrasing. Herbert the poet was not merely impressed by the piety of the Psalms but by its peerless poetry. Some of his poems remind us of parables not only for the parabolic teaching in them as in "Redemption", "Love (III)" and "Peace" but because they concretise abstractions like parables and there is an inherent complexity behind the seeming simplicity in his poems.

His tonal range has also been inherited from the Bible. For example, the simple last line of "Redemption", "Who straight, Your suit is granted, said & died" reminds one of
Milton's line in "Paradise Regained IV", "Tempt not the Lord thy God: he said and stood" (61).

Herbert and Milton are masters whose verse can reflect the theme i.e. the inner conflicts are manifest in the verse form. These lines, which have such a simple open ending, can be interpreted, ironically, in various ways. All elaborations are suspended and the nominal simplicity astonishes us by being an understatement. It is this quality that has been inherited by Herbert and Milton from the Bible. Bottrall declares that Herbert, like Spenser, Milton and Blake, was "alive to [the Bible's] symbolism and quick to perceive analogies between the Jewish story and human experience, whether recorded or undergone in their own persons:" (92).

In her *A Reading of George Herbert*, Rosamond Tuve illustrates the influence of the Old Testament on Herbert's imagery. In several poems we see his affinity with the Old Testament. The 43rd Psalm in particular seems to be the moving influence for the quick and subtle changes of temper reflected by his poems. The Psalms seem to have gifted him with a sureness of tone and an easy familiarity with which he approaches God. The tenderness and playfulness found in his poetry is, of course, Herbert's own special contribution.
The Bible seems to have inspired Herbert's use of homely imagery. It names ordinary things like a plough and a hatchet "showing that things of ordinary use are not only to serve in the way of drudgery, but to be washed and cleaned, and serve for lights even of Heavenly Truths" (Works 257).

Herbert describes fire with biblical simplicity in "Content", "Mark how the fire in flints doth quiet lie, / Content and warm t'it self alone:" (9-10). He calls night an ebony box in which we are enclosed and rested ("Even-Song"), "Redemption" with its analogies of the tenant and the landlord, is like a parable, "The Pulley" uses the parable of Pandora's Box imaginatively. According to Bottrall, Herbert "never forgets the natural idioms and cadences of spoken English. His phrases are short and to the point ... The simplicity of his language is adequate to all demands, like the language of the Book of Common Prayer" (79).

Much of Herbert's imagery is derived from every day occupations like carpentry and gardening. There are several references to cabinets, boxes, chests, cupboards, screw etc. According to Joan Bennett "grief tortures a man as a carpenter tortures wood" in "Confession" (61). Man is often talked of as a flower, weed, tree and Herbert ushers in the
garden through these images. Agricultural images abound in "Home". Words such as office, exchange, hall ("Quidditie"), sale, rate, price, commoditty, ("The Pearl"), purchase, deed, buyer, and seller ("Obedience") reminding us of day to day commerce surprise us by their mundanity.

His poems are crowded with domestic imagery as well. We find household-stuff and furniture ("Affliction (I)"), bed and clock ("Even-song"), watch ("Hope"), pillow, ("Death"), furnace and cauldron ("Love Unknown"), handkerchief ("The Dawning") and several containers like bottle, buckets, glass, vial. The host-guest image and death sweeping the floor are also interesting images from daily life.

Herbert's imagery is not always on the mundane level. It does soar to unusual heights of fancy often: Day is "bridal of the earth and skie" ("Vertue"), death is a chair ("The Pilgrimage"), the hue of the rose is "angrie and brave" ("Vertue"), pleasure is "colour'd griefs" and "blushing woes" ("The Rose") and Christ leaving his grave-clothes as a handkerchief for us ("The Dawning"). God is an angler in "Affliction (V)". Herbert's use of imagery in "The Flower" reflecting the symbolism of seasons and the potter's clay in "The Priesthood" deserve mention. Well-defined his images certainly are; but they are not markedly
pictorial (Bottrall 112). There are very few visual descriptions and colours are rarely mentioned; only the symbolism of light and shade is often used: "Night draws the curtain which the sunne withdraws" ("Man"). But if Herbert lags behind in visual imagery, his sense of smell and taste is so sharp that it more than makes up for his lack of visual sensibility. In many poems ecstasy and joy is experienced as a sweet taste or as a whiff of fragrance.

Just as Christ, while telling his parables, resorted to the familiar things of everyday life, Herbert too refers to moon and stars, boxes and containers, furnaces and gardens, sheep, fish and dog, houses, floors, doors, windows, keys, bread, water, wine etc. in his poems. While the activity of nature provides a cluster of images in some poems, in certain others, images are derived from warfare ("Artillerie"), architecture ("The Church floore"), legal activities ("Redemption") and commerce ("The H. Communion").

It is said next to God and religion, it was music that moved Herbert most. While several of his poems were meant to be sung, the musical imagery found in his poems is a testimony to his love of music. He compares the sinews of God to the strings of a musical instrument: "His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key / Is best to celebrate this most high day" ("Easter" 11-12).
Such is the mercy of Christ that He teaches us the music of joy and makes Himself the instrument from which emanates divine music. In "Temper (I)" he prays: "Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter: This is but tuning of my breast, To make the musick better" (22-24).

The Temple is strewn with Eucharist imagery. "The Superliminare" rightly invites us to "approach, and taste". Several words stand proof to the Eucharist being the fountainhead of Herbert's poetic sensibility e.g. altar, board, banquet, taste, eat, meat, bread, wine etc. The collection of poems which began with an invitation to a mystical feast rightly ends with the poet saying "So I did sit and eat". The Eucharist is thus the invisible cord which ties up the entire collection of poems from beginning to end. Paradoxically, what we call the invisible cord is said to be the visible manifestation of invisible grace.

On the whole, in many poems of Herbert an analogy is merely suggested; symbolism is exquisitely controlled, descriptions scarce and imagery unobtrusive and sustained. His playfulness goes unnoticed and is never a guffaw. All this is because, the whole mattered to him more than the parts and he did not want any poetic device to be so elaborate as to focus attention on itself rather than on the truth embedded in the poem.
Herbert's architectonic skill is evidenced by the harmonious blend of thought and imagery. He seems to be a master of concise, contained, comprehensive expression. The same five rhyme words repeated in "Aaron", repetitive imagery, sparse description, sustained symbolism and overwhelming passion bottled up in a single word or phrase bear testimony to Herbert's economy of expression. This also denotes his conscious effort to divest his style of frills and strive for stark simplicity. "Thine", "Mine", "More", and "Restore" are the only four rhyme words in a poem of twenty lines ("Clasping of hands").

Herbert's economy of expression was to a great extent achieved through sudden swings and abrupt transitions. "The Collar" portrays his rebellious mood forcefully. This is Herbert's speciality, his capacity to invent a metrical form to suit every situation portrayed. The poem is colloquial in tone, impetuous, unruly, has a sense of urgency, is filled with staccato phrases and angry enquiry, has childish reiterations, incoherence due to anger and grief, irregular metre, lines of uneven length—all subdued and put in place by one word from the Voice. The reader cannot believe that there can be such leashed power in one word, which can quell the civil war within the poet (Willy 92). The poem abruptly takes us from rude uncouth behaviour to calm courtesy. One is reminded of an intransigent child howling.
and banging the table when suddenly the strict and loving parent with one word is able to make the child swallow its sob and hiccup. The title is symbolic, for Herbert has all along been behaving like a wild beast needing a collar.

Douglas Brown defines three shocks depicted in the poem—one, of action in striking the "board"; two, of the verbal shock of the blasphemy and three, the personal lapse in manners, which is un-Herbertian (127). The poem uses contrast to drive home its point. The Voice waits for the poet's outburst to come to a lull, for He is too dignified to interrupt in between. This contrasts the boorish behaviour of the poet. All is chaos, literally and figuratively till the Voice takes over. There are five consecutive unrhymed lines, as symbolically, Herbert's poetry also seems to break free from restraint. What results then is not poetic, seeming to imply that nothing good will result from his mutiny against God. When the final submission comes, Herbert has left behind his childish tantrums and has become courteous. The sense of control in him is reflected in the verse as well. It is now that the poem has enacted the "growing up" of Herbert (Brown 129).

Transition from spiritual aridity due to alienation from God to the fertility of reconciliation is brought out in "The Flower". A similar transition takes place in "The
Crosse", where the poet accepts all pain and suffering with a sudden submissiveness.

The Temple is built with a variety of rhyme patterns and stanza forms. Herbert is not a conventional sonneteer. Critics have analysed Herbert's variations on the conventional Shakespearean rhyme-scheme. Ottenhoff remarks: "Herbert the craftsman exploits the conventions of the sonnet in diverse ways: by introducing unexpected groupings of the rhyme and syntax, by using enjambment freely and expressively and by altering his essentially smooth iambic pentameter verse to emphasize these individual uses" (Ottenhoff 3).

Of the fifteen sonnets in The Temple, all except "The Redemption" are written in the regular Shakespearean scheme of alternating rhyme in the third quatrains, though with minor deviations. Seven sonnets have an inverted "ef ef" rhyme in the third quatrain, the exception being "Sinne (1)", which has "ef ef" rhyme.

"Prayer (1)" with no finite verb, "The H. Scriptures (1)" with a syntactic turn at the seventh line and "Sinne (1)" with an opening statement followed by eleven syntactically related lines, illustrate Herbert's penchant for "stretching" the sonnet form (Ottenhoff 4). While the
narrative sonnets are written in a lighter metre with unexpected lexical stress and unstressed syllables, the meditative sonnets have a heavier metre and are more irregular due to the number of stressed syllables out of position. "Prayer (I)" is a good example for the latter and "The Holdfast" illustrates the former type. In short Herbert's sonnets are not mere sonnets in the conservative sense but complex interesting poems - an old form employed in a new service.

It is interesting to note that 116 out of the 169 poems in *The Temple* are written in metres not repeated. Herbert was gifted with the capacity to invent for every situation an appropriate rhythm and setting (Bottrall 106). The rebellious mood depicted in "The Collar" is expressed appropriately by an unparagraphed run of free verse. The verse thus symbolises Herbert's wish to be free from restraint. A gentle quatrain is used in "Submission" and thus his very poetic mode is an external manifestation of the mood of the poet.

Herbert's rhyme scheme and metrical patterns themselves portray the mood of the poems. In "Longing" for instance, "each stanza comes to rest in a two foot line which reflects the moment of exhaustion after stress" (Bennett 61). One can almost hear Herbert panting in exhaustion in this poem.
A similar effect is created in "The Pilgrimage". According to L.C. Knights, the fourth verse, with its "skillful use of the varied lengths of line and of the slight end-of-line pauses, reproduces the sensations of the traveller, as expectation - rather out of breath, but eager and confident - gives way abruptly to flat disappointment" (177).

It is generally seen in Herbert's poems that the various stages of an emotional problem and their final resolution keep pace with the stanza form that communicates them (Bennett 61-62). For example, in "Denial" the metre and rhyme scheme reveal the disorder and agitation in Herbert's heart when he cannot gain God's grace. The unruly verse pattern of "The Collar" has already been discussed.

It is interesting to note that in "Home", the rhyme scheme changes in order to echo Herbert's prayer to the Lord requesting Him to come and not stay away from him. He explains in the poem that by "ryme and reason", the rhyming word should have been "stay" but he has substituted it with "come", unmindful of the broken rhyme scheme. All he wants is for his dearest Lord to come, and his verse prays along with the poet.

To take the example of "Denial" again, the third line of each verse is as prolonged as complaints and agony usually are. The denial of the final rhyme is significant.
as it is a parallel to God's refusal, denial of joy etc. The absence of rhyme in the last line of every stanza agitates the ear and nerves till it is mended into harmony in the final stanza (Brown 115-17).

Thus we see in Herbert's poetry a rationality in rhyme-scheme, a method and meaning in metre, a sense in sound patterns and, in diction, a direction towards the achievement of the ultimate meaning.

Herbert's use of paradox is expressed in a nutshell in his poem, "Bitter-Sweet":

Ah my deare angrie Lord,
Since thou dost love, yet strike;
Cast down, yet help afford;
Sure I will do the like.

I will complain, yet praise;
I will bewail, approve:
And all my sowre-sweet dayes
I will lament, and love.

Paradox being one of the chief tools of the metaphysical poets, it is no wonder that Herbert takes to paradox as fish takes to water.
Herbert, however, seems to have learned his paradoxes from the inexplicable, paradoxical nature of God's ways. God is his "night at noon" and also at night, his noon ("The Discharge"). Such is God's greatness that "ev'n eternitie is too short to extoll" Him, ("Praise (II)"). A man who does not pray "maketh two nights to ev'ryday" ("Charms and knots"); Herbert pleads with God: "Kill me not ev'ry day" ("Affliction (II)"). In "Confession" while speaking of afflictions, Herbert remarks: "Onely an open breast / Doth shut them out, so that they cannot enter" (19-20).

In "The Search" the poet describes the great distance between him and God; in comparison with it, other distances are nothing: "East and West touch, the poles do kisse / And parallels meet" (43-44).

In "Affliction (I)" Herbert thinks that God sends him more afflictions in the fear that otherwise he would learn to adjust himself to regular afflictions and even become happy with them: "Yet lest perchance I should too happie be / In my unhappinesse," (49-50).

The poem ends with another paradox, illustrating the poet's repugnance of hypocrisy: "Let me not love thee, if I love thee not" (65-66)
"Justice (1)" brings out the paradoxical ways of God and the poet's. God creates him and then wounds him; having wounded him He relieves him. The poet continues in the same vein: "Lord, thou relievest, yet by thee: / Lord, thou dost kill me, yet thou dost reprieve me" (4-5).

In "Charms and Knots" Herbert uses a paradox to warn man against stinginess and make him more charitable: "Who shuts his hand, hath lost his gold: / Who opens it, hath it twice told" (5-6).

One of the most striking features of metaphysical poetry is its fondness for conceits. A conceit may be defined as "a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or at least, is more immediately striking. All comparisons discover likeness in things unlike: a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness" (Gardner "Metaphysical" 36). Metaphysical poets frequently make use of their learning in their comparisons. But Herbert differs from them considerably. He does not draw his images from scientific or scholastic learning, as Donne very often does, but from familiar everyday sources. Herbert too surprises the reader by his comparison but here it is the contrast between the dignity of his subject matter and the familiarity of the image that
is striking as in "Affliction (I)": "Fractures well cur'd make us more strong" (36).

Similarly unusual is the conceit in "Conscience" where the cross is compared to a sword and a physick. The cross pricks his conscience and makes it bleed by reminding him of Christ's dying for his sins. The same cross becomes his physician as it purges him of sin just as cures were effected by bleeding.

The very titles of the poems "The Pulley" and "The Collar" are conceits. The pulley or the collar does not appear in the poems but the message of the poems is implied in these conceits.

Herbert's use of hyperbole is also seen in "The Search": "My knees pierce th' earth, mine eies the skie:" (5).

Before sin came and spoilt it all, it was as easy for man to go to heaven as moving "from one room to another" and "A fervent sigh might well have blown / Our innocent earth to heaven", ("The H. Communion" 31-22).

Coming to the use of pun by Herbert, it is quite deliberate in "The Sonne": "How neatly doe we give one onely name / To parents issue and the sunnes bright starre!" (5-6). It is cleverly done in "Grief", where he
tells his verse: "give up your feet and running to mine eyes," (15).

In "The Collar" there is a pun involving "Cordial fruit". The word "cordial" means "from the heart" or "bloody". The forbidden fruit stolen by Adam can be called "bloody" because of the death and pain which it caused. In another sense, Christ is the fruit dripping blood on a tree. He is the "cordial fruit" that will redeem man. It is an irony that "fruit" is responsible for both the fall and the redemption of man.

Herbert often refers to himself metaphorically as "dust" and "clay". There are several such metaphors in "Sunday" and "Prayer (I)". In "Affliction (V)" he says philosophically:

"We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more," (20). In "Miserie" man is talked of as first being a "box of jewels", a "shop of verities", a "garden" till sin made him "a lump of flesh without a fast or wing" and a "sick toss'd vessel". While man is a "Judas - Jew" in "Self-Condemnation", he is a flower in "The Flower".

We come across several similes in Herbert. "Grief melts away / Like snow in May," ("The Flower" 5-6) and a good soul is "like season'd timber" ("Vertue"), to quote a
few. But compared to the sparkling, dazzling mastery of Herbert's style in rhyme, diction, metre etc. the metaphors and similes do not have a niche for themselves in his poetry. This may be attributed to Herbert's tendency of not giving overt importance to descriptions.

Moreover, metaphors, similes and to a certain extent all poetic devices are but man-made and mere corridors leading us to the threshold of the mystic. They can only transport us upto the brink of truth, give us but a tantalizing peep into the mysterious, silent world of God. Entry into this realm may be gained by intuition and not by linguistic means alone. The world of spirituality cannot be fully understood. No wonder, Herbert concludes "Prayer (I)" with "something understood" (Pruss 22).

Herbert was "capable of clear thought in conjunction with vehement feeling" (Bennett 59) and his poetry was gifted with "intellectual bite, acute and varied interest, a wide and stored experience of man and affairs, introspective astuteness and an unusual power of quizzical half-humorous self-regard" (Brown 114). He is "God's courtier" and his language is ever gentlemanly and courteous. If at all he is rude, it is only to focus attention on his own shortcomings. Another aspect which lends interest to his poems is the presence of a voice in his poems. Many poems have more than
one voice and even when there is only one, it is endowed with several nuances and insinuations. Herbert's ability to reproduce the actual tone of the human voice is what gives an immediacy and actuality to his poems. The reader is often jolted from poetry to drama when a voice suddenly interrupts in a poem (Brown 115). The dramatic effect of the other voice in "Redemption", "The Collar" and "Dialogue" is a testimony to Herbert's command and manipulation of poetic language.

The poetic devices join hands with the thoughts and feelings and enact the entire poem. To quote Douglas Brown, "Each poem is a small drama and each facet of workmanship is an actor with some distinct role necessary for the whole. Rhymes, for instance, will constantly be found ... joining two reluctant partners, opposing concealed adversaries to one another, establishing relationships across the lines" (115).

While some have taken exception to the "palpable design" in Herbert's poetry, it should be remembered that even the palpable design is so aesthetically woven that the reader is already drunk deep with the heady wine of poetry before he reaches it.
Above all, Herbert the poet is an artist, who whimsically provides a resting place for God after line 14 in "Christmas", and whose rhyme is broken along with his heart and both mended together in "Deniall", whose rhyme is as unruly as the rebel in "The Collar", whose rhyme too prays for God's vision in "Home", whose language breaks down almost to a whisper overwhelmed by God's greatness in "Dialogue" and "Thanksgiving" and who conveys meaning by juggling with grammatical terms in "Artillerie". His fancy and devices join hands and leap up to unbelievable heights in his poetry. In short, Herbert uses his poetic art to explore the realms of his mind, heart, soul and of religious truths.

When we turn our attention to Nammazhvar's poetry we see that various poetic devices have been handled skillfully by him also. He makes poetic techniques and forms serve his purpose of exploring religious truths. All the four works of Nammazhvar have the prefix Tiru which means good, divine or auspicious. Tiruviruttam and Tiruvasiriyam are so named after the kind of verses in which they are written namely, viruttam and asiriyam. Peria in Peria Tiruvantati means "great" and antati is a kind of Tamil verse. Vaymozhi in Tiruvaymozhi means "word that is uttered". Tiruvaymozhi thus means "divine utterance".
**Tiruviruttam** is a poem of a hundred stanzas, all of them four lined, in Kattalai-Kalitturai metre in which each line has five feet. The rhyme occurs at the beginning of the lines, unlike in English. This metre was also known as Viruttam and any work having this metre was called a Viruttam. Viruttam also meant a "message" or an "event" and the poem may be taken as describing the event of the Azhvar falling in love with God.

**Tiruvasiriyam** is a poem of 71 lines divided into seven unequal sections. The first section has fifteen lines, the second, third, fourth and seventh have nine lines each and the fifth and sixth have ten lines each. The metre used is called asiriyappa and hence the name given to the work.

**Peria Tiruvantati** consists of 87 stanzas of four lines each, set in Venpa metre. It has a rhyme scheme in which the second line rhymes with the first and the fourth with the third, both rhymes being initial.

**Tiruvaymozhi** consists of 1102 stanzas in nine different types of metres. Following a long Tamil tradition the verses are arranged in 100 decades which are divided into ten sections called pattu ("ten"). Each pattu has ten tiruvaymozhis and each tiruvaymozh has eleven verses called pasurams. The eleventh verse is a signature and a meta-poem called a phalastuti (a recital of results) describing the
merits of the ten verses of the *tiruvaymozhi*. One *tiruvaymozhi* has thirteen *pasurams* instead of the usual eleven and hence the total 1102.

A.K. Ramanujan observes that in *Tiruvaymozhi*, "single verses have an existence of their own; they are quoted and recited as complete poems. Each group of ten is unified by meter, theme and diction, but the transition from each group to the next is not always clear; commentators offer various schemes" (Introduction xv).

One common feature about the works of Nammazhvar is that all of them are in the *antati* form. In this device the final letter, syllable or foot of a stanza is used as the first letter, syllable or foot of the first line of the next stanza. The last unit of the work corresponds to its first unit. This device makes the whole work a "garland of verses" dedicated to God.

For example, the first word of *Tiruviruttam*, *pōyninra* corresponds to the last word of the poem *poynilattē*. *Tiruvaymozhi* begins with *uyarvāra* and ends with *uyarnē*. The first verse of *Tiruvaymozhi* ends with *mananē* and the second starts with *manan-akam*. Such a link is maintained throughout the work.
This kind of a verse is described "as a tailadhara, a stream of flowing oil from vessel to vessel, from verse to verse, from mind to mind, from god to devotee" (Ramanujan 168).

Although the antati form has been adopted by many poets, Tiruvaymozhi has the distinction of being the longest poem in Tamil literature to follow this scheme.

Apart from this linking device, the poems of Nammazhvar do not have any literary unity and very often they are rambling. The sets of ten stanzas of Tiruvaymozhi have "a kind of internal unity, but seldom is there a unity among the sets. The division of the decades into hundred seems rather mechanical and there is no apparent thematic basis for the division" (Kaylor and Venkatachari 13). It is argued that there is an overall theme, that of praising God and longing for union with Him. But that is not systematically developed, with various moods intervening in between and with no proper clue as to "what gives rise to those particular moods, or how one leads to another" (Kaylor and Venkatachari 13). About Tiruvaymozhi the authors remark that "there is an appropriate beginning of sorts, with a rather philosophical flavour and there is an appropriate sort of ending with an account of a final vision of entering heaven, but in between there is no really logical
development, although there have been attempts in the traditional interpretation to derive such a developmental scheme from the random poems" (Kaylor and Venkatachari 14).

A.K. Ramanujan calls the Azhvar poetry "a poetry of connections, of continuities. It connects god, gods, and all creation; the god of myth, the god of philosophy, the god in the temple and the god within; speaker, subject, listener; good and evil, hell and heaven, mythic then and poetic now, opposites and contraries" (166-67). According to him, this expresses itself poetically in the form of antati.

It is quite interesting to see how Nammazhvar handles the antati form in his poems and the variations that it undergoes in his hands to suit his purpose.

The last word/foot or syllable of a verse being used to begin the following verse is the main type that one finds in Nammazhvar:

Tiruviruttam 7 ends with Kānkinravē and verse 8 begins with Kānkinranakalum

Tiruvaғiriyam 4 ends with māmatal atiyē and verse 5 begins with māmatal atippōtu

Peria Tiruvantati 21 ends with kāl and verse 22 begins with kāle

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In these examples, the pairs of words have the same meaning. But \textit{Vîte} with which \textit{TVM 1.1.11} ends and \textit{Vitumin} with which \textit{1.2.1} begins do not have the same meaning though there is a correspondence of sounds. While \textit{vîte} means salvation, \textit{vitumin} means "give up".

\textit{TVM 2.2.1} has \textit{kannē} as the last word and the next verse begins with \textit{ē pavam}. There is only the correspondence of the sound "ē" in the two words.

Sometimes the penultimate foot of a verse forms the \textit{antati} as in 2.2.3 and 2.2.4: \textit{Tēvumulatē} and \textit{Tēvumepporulum}. In certain verses, three or four feet form the \textit{antati} (e.g. \textit{TVM 8.4.6} & 8.4.7; 10.3.5 & 10.3.6).

A significant deviation in the \textit{antati} scheme can be seen in \textit{TVM 1.6.1} which ends with \textit{pūve} (flower). The next verse begins with \textit{matuvār} (honey). The relationship between the flower and honey makes the poet use the latter word. This is a kind of figure of speech called \textit{Akupeyar Antati}. This again lends charm to the structure of the work.

As pointed out earlier, the sequence between the last verse and the opening verse is also kept up in \textit{Tiruvaymozhi}, so that the whole work is like a garland. The \textit{Azhvar} himself calls it \textit{Tamizhmalai} (5.6.11), garland of Tamil verse or \textit{icaimalai} (3.2.11) garland of musical hymns. While
some call the whole work a big garland, some others consider each verse a garland so that Tiruvaymozhi becomes a storehouse containing a thousand garlands (Damodaran 232).

Since these works are in the form of an antati the order in which the verses were written originally remains over the centuries, unaltered. And in spite of the rambling nature of the works, it is still possible to find a steady progression from the first work to the last.

The first work of Nammazhvar Tiruviruttam speaks about the relationship between the Supreme Being, who is considered to be the Only Male and the human soul, which is the female principle. The reactions of the soul caught up by the Lord's bewitching beauty and charm and yearning to merge with the Lord are revealed in the poem.

The second work Tiruvagiriyan deals with the nature of Reality, the means and the goal of human endeavour and also the obstacles that one has to meet with on the way. Having described the greatness of the Lord and set forth the goal for the human soul, Nammazhvar proceeds to instruct his mind to worship the Lord, in his third work Peria Tiruvantati. He tells his mind of the various ways of worshiping the Lord, the most effective of them being loving Surrender to Him.
These various themes are dealt with in greater detail in *Tiruvaymozhi*, the last work of the Azhvar. The excellences of the Lord are talked about in the opening stanza of this work. God is characterised as one with all perfections, full of love and grace. The Azhvar addresses his heart and then his fellow beings and advises them to seek only Him and not the worldly masters. What follows is a graphic account of the various mystic experiences of the poet, the alternating phases of the joy of union and the pangs of separation. The Azhvar's love for God grows to supra-cosmic proportions but, says the poet, God's love for him is far-more intense. In the concluding stanza of the work the Azhvar declares that he has reached the ultimate destination of his life's journey. Thus there is a perfect accord not only between the first verse which talks about the ultimate reality and the last one where the Reality is reached, but also between the first verse of *Tiruviruttam* which talks about the falsehood of the world (*Poy ninra jnālam*) and the last verse of *Tiruvaymozhi* which stands for exaltation (*Uyarnte*).

In his painstaking study of *Tiruvaymozhi*, Damodaran observes that the beginning and the end of this poem "are in perfect accord even to the minutest detail" (131). He points out that the first decad of his work sets forth everything that is essential about the Ultimate Reality,
which is also the goal of human endeavour. The second decad (1.2) refers to bhakti as the means of attaining that goal. The third decad (1.3) teaches that to the devout soul, the Lord is easy of attainment. These same ideas are again referred to in 10.4 and 10.5 thus establishing a link between these decades. Significantly the same metre, Vançitturai, is used in both 1.2 and 10.5. The author also points out how up to this point (10.5) the Azhvar pursued the Lord and from now on, it is the Lord who pursues the Azhvar. In fact the Azhvar started pursuing the Lord in his first work Tiruviruttam itself and it continues through the other two works and concludes in TVM 10.5. The work ends with the Azhvar reaching the blessed feet of the Lord, the goal he had set for himself in the first verse of Tiruvaymozhi.

The characteristic mark of a great work of literature is that it treats of a hero. All the incidents and characters centre round him. The hero of Tiruvaymozhi is the Lord Himself and the Azhvar is the heroine. Quite unlike the other heroes, this Hero does not speak at all although He is the most talked about in the work.

Story is another requisite for a great work. Tiruvaymozhi tells the story of the soul on a pilgrimage to its true home in 100 decades; however, the story element is not its strong point.
In Nammazhvar's poetry we see philosophical ideas expounded in simple language and exquisite melody. Following the Akapporul tradition, he uses the language of symbolism and introduces appropriate imagery, figures of speech, metres and rhyme, all these being related to the central theme. It will be quite a fruitful exercise to study the various features of Nammazhvar's poetry such as diction, style, narration and so on.

Just as one finds many deviations in Nammazhvar's handling of the Antati scheme, there are other deviations such as the repetition of sound, inversion of the word order, construction of involved hierarchies etc. all of them intended to serve some aesthetic function.

The very first verse of Tiruvaymozhi is a departure from the usual grammatical structure in Tamil. Instead of saying "Let my mind worship the blessed feet of the Lord, who has all the excellences ..." the Azhvar changes the order and says "He who is possessed of the excellences ..., let the mind worship Him." The Azhvar first states that which captivates his mind - the Lord's glorious attributes - and then asks his mind to worship such a Lord. This approach not only sounds logical but enables the reader/listener to understand the idea easily.
The same kind of logically developing an idea is seen in 1.6.8:

Kazhimin  tondirkāl!  Kazhittuttozhumin;  
avainaittozhutāl .... Oh you servants of the Lord!  Sever all worldly contacts. Sever thus and serve the Lord; if you serve the Lord ...

Here, the phrase ends with a finite verb Kazhimin and Tozhumin; a finite participle of the verb is used next, thus establishing a link - Kazhittu and tozhutāl respectively.

The structure of the verses 9.3.6 and 7.3.9 is quite novel. Each line of 9.3.6 begins with a verb and the rest of the line completes the idea. Each line is a complete sentence with subject and verb altered: That which my Lord embraces is Goddess Lakshmi's bosom. / Those whom He fights against are the evil ones, etc.

TVM 7.3.9 begins with: "Reach will I..." and ends with "the city of Tiruppereyil." There are many such verses which begin with a verb, thus employing an unusual style of poetry in Tamil.

Another method that the Azhvar adopts is the repetition of words as in TVM 3.4 where the word enkō is repeated 53 times in about thirty lines. The word has a sonorous effect on the ear. Far from being merely repetitive, it is highly
effective. It conveys the idea that the Azhvar discerns the Lord in every little thing and therefore there is nothing that the poet can dismiss as being disagreeable. In the first eight stanzas of the decad, the Azhvar wonders how to address the Lord and hence the question, enkö? In the ninth verse, he himself answers that the Lord is present in every thing.

In the same way, when the mother of the girl-in-love talks about her love-lorn daughter, she says that the girl sees the Lord in everything (TVM 4.4). Here the Azhvar uses the word ennum repeatedly. In TVM 5.6., the words Yāne ennum are repeated 41 times in the 10 verses. Moreover, we see that the same initial word/words is repeated in almost every line of a stanza. This is the pattern in all the verses of the decad. Thus, all the eight lines of the first verse begin with Kataljñālam, of the second verse with Karkum kalvi, of the third with Kānkīnra and so on.

Kataljñālam ceytēnum yāne ennum;
Kataljñālam āvēnum yāne ennum;
Kataljñālam kontēnum yāne ennum;
Kataljñālam kintēnum yāne ennum; (5.6.1 1-4)

Such repetitions befit the anxious mother of a girl who is madly in love with the Lord and who has identified herself
with Him completely. The sentiments of the mother are beautifully brought out in these verses.

In TVM 6.6. there is an elaborate enumeration, by the mother of the girl, of what her daughter has lost after falling in love with the Lord. Every verse talks about one quality which she has lost - beauty, complexion, learning, femininity etc. Incidentally, these are the qualities which, the Azhvar says, are not worth possessing at all if the Lord does not like them (TVM 4.8). Thus the poet establishes a connection between these two decades. Moreover, every verse refers to God by a set of three phrases as per the convention followed in verses in venpa metre. For example, in 6.6.4. the Lord is described as the One who created Brahma, the Lord of Creation who spanned the Earth (in His Incarnation as Vamana); and who went as the Messenger on behalf of the Pandavas (in His Incarnation as Krishna).

Damodaran refers to certain rare usages of words that one comes across in Nammazhvar (149): Kirpan killēñ (3.2.6); Nallanakāl (6.7.9); Cuntāyam (7.8.7); Kātu and Kūtai (9.1.9); Kollai and Cillai (6.7.4). Certain changes in the word forms have also been effected by the poet: e.g. VItumin (1.2.1) instead of Vitumin; Viyavāy (7.8.4). The Azhvar also makes certain changes in the use of words to suit the
dialectical requirements. An interesting example of this type can be found in TVM 10.2.1. In this decad the poet talks about the Lord at Tiruvanantapuram, a place where Malayalam is spoken today. The word arccikkinru in 10.2.6, though not in usage in Tamil is appropriately used by the Azhvar as it conforms to the place described. A similar dialectical influence can be seen in TVM 9.8 in the use of the word kurukkum while talking about the pilgrim centre, Tirunavay (Damodaran 149-50).

We come across a number of Sanskrit words and Tamilised forms of Sanskrit words in the poems of Nammazhvar. Sometimes he coins new Tamil words from Sanskrit words. For example, from the Sanskrit niscaya, he forms the verb niccittu irunten.

Nammazhvar's poetry abounds in similes, metaphors and other figures of speech, although he does not use as many of these as other Tamil poets do. In addition to the traditional similes he fashions certain new ones himself and they are not only ornamental but descriptive as well. As Nammazhvar very often describes God or talks about His exploits, some of the common place similes are found to be inadequate. So he resorts to things not of this world for comparison (called ilporul uvamai).
Four kinds of similes can be noticed in Nammazhvar: vina (action), payan (effect), mey (form) and uru (colour); of these vina similes are not very frequent (Damodaran 158).

In TVM 3.9, Nammazhvar addresses his fellow poets and tells them that it is futile to sing about the short-lived glories of men. He advises them to sing only about God. In verse 7, he says he will not be indulging in falsehood by comparing a useless weakling to the generosity of the clouds or the majesty of the mountains. Nammazhvar does not want the poets to indulge in uncalled-for and out of place superlatives. He himself has different sets of similes to describe man and God.

Nammazhvar's favourite God is Vishnu, in His various forms and Incarnations. Vishnu is traditionally described as dark-blue in complexion. So the Azhvar compares Him to the cloud or the sky or the sea or certain flowers: Nīla mukil vannan (1.4.4), Katalin mēnippiran (6.1.4), pūvaikal pōl nirattan (6.8.7) etc.

When he describes the physical features of the Lord, the Azhvar invariably resorts to certain set similes: eyes like red lotus flowers, lips like corals, teeth like pearls and so on. The poet is fond of imagining the various parts of the Lord's body as being red: Red eyes, lips, feet.
palms, navel, chest, dress and crown (TVM 8.4.6). In Tiruviruttam 42 also, the Lord's eyes, hands and feet are compared to red lotus flowers. The poet imagines that he was a witness to the Lord growing enormously in size when He spanned the three worlds (in His incarnation as Vamana). Just then His side glance fell on the Azhvar. The poet compares it to the cluster of lotus flowers in a pond being tossed completely to one side of the pond by a strong breeze. The simile is thus consistent and appropriate.

Although the Azhvar compares the Lord's eyes, feet and hands to the lotus flower, he is at the same time aware of the inadequacy of such comparisons. He has chosen the red lotus for comparison for want of a better, worldly object. He himself points out in TVM 3.1.2 that the lotus cannot be an apt comparison to describe the Lord's eyes, feet and hands; the shining gold cannot compete with His splendrous form. In fact any object of the world will not only be a poor comparison but it will amount to denigrating the Lord whose beauty and splendour are indescribable.

As Nammazhvar is not satisfied with these ordinary similes he resorts to using epithets to qualify them and similes from outside this world. The Lord's feet are like two rising suns of unparalleled brightness and glory (8.5.5). Not only are the Lord's feet like the sun, His
very form is like the sun, a black sun, at that! (8.5.2 and 8.5.7). The Lord is radiant like the sun no doubt; but the dark colour of His body makes the poet compare Him to an unimaginable black sun.

An interesting example of this out-of-the-world simile can be seen in Tiruvagiriyanam 1: The Lord reclining on the ocean looks like a glowing red-veined emerald hill resting on the waves of the sea. His clothes look like bright red cloud; the crown on His head is like the bright and fiery sun; His necklace is like the cool moon adorning the hill; the jewels that the Lord is wearing twinkle like the stars; the eyes and the lips are red and the green body, outshines everything else.

In TVM 10.10.7 the Azhvar describes the Lord in His incarnation as the Boar (Varaha): When the Earth was submerged under deep waters during the deluge, the Lord in the form of a Boar pulled it out of the waters. The Boar with two protruding bright tusks rising from beneath the waters holding the Earth is compared to a sapphire mountain rising up, holding two moons. While the Lord is compared to the mountain and His tusks to two moons, there is no mention of the Earth. This is perhaps deliberately intended by the Azhvar to signify that in the brightness of the sapphire mountain and the moons, the Earth faded out of sight.
The Azhvar thus uses various kinds of similes in his poems and we notice that many of them are from nature. And, when the Azhvar describes the beauty of the Lord, he intends to appreciate His excellence as well. At times he uses homely similes to describe the Lord's qualities. The Lord who is the Indweller of all things, of even the five elements, remains invisible, just as ghee is invisibly present in milk (TVM 8.5.10). This simile expresses a great philosophic idea succinctly.

Like children seeing different shapes and figures in the clouds Nammazhvar imagines the dark clouds to be a herd of elephants (Tiruviruttam 40). In this verse he compares the setting sun also to an elephant disappearing behind the mountains. In other words, one elephant seemed to disappear yielding place to many others.

Another simple simile to bring out a great idea can be seen in TVM 10.10.5. The Lord is said to have consumed the Azhvar's soul completely even as the red-hot iron sucks all the water sprinkled on it.

In a few verses Nammazhvar compares his tender heart to the melting wax kept near fire (5.10.5, 6.9.6). When the Azhvar contemplates on the various incarnations of the Lord, he melts like wax. In His incarnation as Narasimha, the Lord killed the demon Hiranya. The Azhvar imagines that
He was like a huge lion sitting atop a mountain and splitting it into two.

The Azhvar employs a very interesting simile in TVM 4.6.7. The girl in love is in a state of extreme desolation on account of separation from the Lord. The elders think she is possessed and are trying to propitiate inferior deities with customary offerings such as meat, liquor and dance. Chiding the elders for this foolery, the girl's companion remarks that this is like appreciating the beauty of a donkey eating paddy and getting lost in its lip movements, forgetting the loss of paddy that it entails. This kind of simile is called etuttukkattu uvamai in Tamil poetics (Damodaran 156).

In the description of the Lord, His various exploits and his relationship with Him, the poet uses a number of metaphors. Some of the simple metaphors used often by the Azhvar are pāta pankayam (lotus feet), tirukkan tāmarai (lotus eyes), painilā muttam (pearl teeth) etc. Life is often compared to a sea, Piravikkatal.

A peculiar type of metaphor is noticed when the Azhvar addresses the Lord as tūya amutu (pure nectar), ārā amutu (non-satiate nectar), delicious fruit, candy, honey, cane juice and nectar (3.5.6), coral mountain etc. God is
referred to as the "divine bee" (9.9.4) as He has sucked the essence out of the Azhvar and disappeared even as a bee sucks the nectar from a flower and goes away.

There is a description of the valour of Krishna who killed the elephant, "Kuvalayapitam". The elephant is compared to a mountain, with its two huge tusks resembling twin peaks (TVM 8.4.1).

When the Lord, in His incarnation as Rama invaded Lanka, the demons fled from there like horses running away from the Dinosaur or a fox from the lion, howling all the way to the Underworld. The Lord killed all the demons and made a mountain out of the dead bodies (7.6.8).

In TVM 7.7. there is a long drawn metaphor. The verses describe the eyes, nose, mouth, eyelids, teeth, ears and forehead of the Lord. His eyes which are like fresh lotus flowers also appear to be cruel, like the death-dealing Yama; the bewitching eyes torment her (1). He wonders whether the Lord's nose is the creeper or a tender leaf of a Karpaka tree (2) The Lord's lips are coral-like and nectarean (3). His eye lids are like the enticing amorous bow of the god of love (4). The Lord's teeth are pearls that shine like lightning (5). The Lord's ears make the poet wonder whether they are fish-shaped leaves (6). The forehead of the Lord is compared to the waxing moon (7).
In the eighth verse of the decad, all these are reflected in the charming face of the Lord. In the ninth verse, the Azhvar compares the beautiful strands of black hair to the pitch darkness enveloping the whole world during the Deluge, compressed into dark-blue thread, neatly packed and rolled.

In one verse the Azhvar describes the Lord, using the metaphor of the imaginary fruit of an imaginary tree: Akkārakkaniye (TVM 2.9.8).

In talking about his relationship with God, the Azhvar uses several metaphors. A predominant one is the familial metaphor of father-son. God as Father also expresses the idea of the Lord's superiority and love and the poet's sense of obedience, his dependence on Him as well as his love. The Lord who protected the worlds during the Deluge is always the Father-figure.

The economic metaphor of master and slave is also frequently used, stressing the Azhvar's dependence on and obedience to the Lord. The poet wants to do loving service to the Lord and never does he grudge it. And he wants to serve not even the Lord - he will be content to serve the lowliest of His devotees! That this relationship is not an ordinary one can be seen in TVM 5.1.10: When I said "He has become my master", that cloud-coloured One became my very
self. It is this kind of an identification that this metaphor tries to establish. Almost similar to this is the owner-property metaphor in TVM 5.7.10 where the Azhvar declares that even his soul belongs to the Lord and there is nothing really belonging to him that he can offer to the Lord.

The most significant metaphor in Nammazhvar is that of nayaka-nayaki or Lover-beloved. In Tiruviruttam and Tiruvaymozhi there are several verses where this metaphor is employed. This also indicates the notions of love, service and dependence. In TVM 9.2.10 the Azhvar expresses his desire to serve the Lord in a wifely fashion. This metaphor conveys the idea that the human self should be given over to dutiful service to God. It should be noted that the typical Indian wife considered herself subservient to and entirely dependent on her husband.

We come across the soul-body metaphor also quite often in Nammazhvar. The Lord is the Indweller or the Soul of the body of the universe. He is present in everything as its soul.

Mention must be made here to two other types of comparison occurring in Tamil poetry, referred to as Ullurai and Iraicci. They are used mainly in love lyrics of the Cankam age. In objective poetry one comes across what is
called Kurippu. All these terms refer to deeper or suggested meanings underlying the explicit meanings in a poem. Ullurai is an implicit comparison. Unlike a metaphor, it is a structural feature with the poem. It integrates the various elements of the poem and gives shape to its message.

Nammazhvar's handling of kurippu lends charm to his poetry. Very many verses in Nammazhvar lend themselves to such a treatment.

In Tiruviruttam 7 the girl in love is obsessed by the coming of the rainy season, when her Lord has promised to come. Her companion tells her that the fierce fight of the bull appears like dark clouds dashing against each other, making her believe it is rainy season. She does not know whether it is really rainy season. The deeper meaning found in this verse is this: The worldly life is like the rainy season. False knowledge hides the truth just as the rain clouds make it impossible for one to see the way. Like the rainy season, worldly life also causes several hardships. When the Lord promises to come during the rainy season, it means that when men become confused and get defeated by worldly passions, the Lord will appear and redeem them.
When the Lord is described as the one who killed the elephant "Kuvalayapitam" (1.9.2), it is suggested that the Azhvar's senses which are as fierce as the elephant have been destroyed or controlled by the Lord.

In TVM 2.4.2. the mother of the girl addresses the Lord and asks Him why He who cut asunder the thousand hands of the demon, Vanasura cannot appear before the girl. The reference to the killing of the demon is not to bring out the valour of the Lord but to remind Him that He did it in order to bring two lovers, Aniruddha and Usha, together. The poet expects the Lord to help him in the same way.

In certain verses the Azhvar uses words to convey the opposite meanings. In 2.1.6 for example, he imagines that the moon is suffering on account of separation from the Lord, like the Azhvar himself. So he asks the moon whether it also believed the "true words" of the Lord, implying that He spoke falsehood.

In TVM 9.10.4 when the poet describes the temple walls of Tirukkannapuram as touching the sky, it is no doubt an exaggeration. The intended meaning is that just as the walls protect the Lord, He also protects His devotees.

Another illustration of this kind of usage is seen TVM 5.9.2 where the girl in love describes the Lord in terms of
the south wind. Just as the wind takes away the sweet fragrancel of the flowers and does not give back anything to them, the Lord does not give back anything to her. Thus the wind passing through that place, Tiruvallavazh, and the Lord of the place share a common characteristic according to the girl.

There are a number of poems where the Azhvar employs a few other figures of speech such as hyperbole, transferred epithet, oxymoron and paradox, symbolism, imagery etc.

In 9.10.4 and 9.2.8 the temple walls are described as reaching the sky/moon. The exact purpose of this hyperbole has been discussed above.

In Tiruviruttam 52, the mythological Milky Ocean is referred to as "black", since the dark complexioned Lord is resting on its waves. Other examples of transferred epithet can be seen in verses 47 and 49 where the moon is described as terribly hot and darkness is said to be extremely painful for the girl in love.

The nature of God or of Reality is expressed through paradoxes in many verses. He is poverty and wealth, hell and heaven, foe and friend, poison and ambrosia, joy and sorrow, confusion and clarity, heat and shade, virtue and sin, remembrance and forgetfulness, youth and age, old and
new, littleness and greatness etc. Finally, He is all and not of all. (TVM 6.3).

The Azhvar resorts to a number of symbols, many of them traditional. The tulaci leaves always associated with Lord Vishnu, symbolise chastity. The Garuda or Eagle, Serpent, Wheel, Conch, Club, Bow are some of the major symbols associated with Vishnu. The Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, generally symbolises the Veda with its twofold course of learning and discipline. The eagle, which is supposed to be the destroyer of serpents has to co-exist with it, as the Lord reclines on the thousand-headed serpent. As the Lord is always at war with the evil, symbolised as demons, He hurls His wheel and uses His club against them. When He blows His conch, the enemies are filled with terror. He also has a bow called Saranga for this purpose. The sea is a figure for worldly life and also the cycle of births and deaths.

Nammazhvar refers to a number of stories from the mythology, the incidents of which are cleverly woven into the texture of his poetry. His aim seems to be to lead the reader from the realms of the known to the unknown.

It is not easy to fully compare the formalistic aspects of the two poets, belonging to two different ages and linguistic backgrounds. But an attempt has nevertheless
been made in this chapter to find similarities in style and in their handling of poetic devices. One striking resemblance discerned is the remarkable economy of expression found in their poetry. They both draw their imagery and symbols mainly from their respective religious texts and mythologies. But imagery from day-to-day life abounds more in Herbert's poetry than in Nammazhvar's. It is found that descriptive passages are more in Nammazhvar's poetry and hence his profuse use of similes and metaphors. In the matter of rhyme and metre, while Herbert juggles and experiments with them to make the rhyme suit the situation, Nammazhvar is rather conventional. Regarding form, there is a wider variety in Herbert than in Nammazhvar.