CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

In the history of philosophy, philosophers of religion right from the times of St. Anselms and St. Aquinas have shown strong interests in defending faith by giving rational proofs. Both St. Anselm and St. Aquinas gave rational proofs for the existence of God. These proofs had been challenged in the times that followed. Hume, Kant and Kierkegaard rejected these proofs claiming that they are not only inadequate but also incapable of validating the basic tenets of Christianity. They rejected the reason’s role in this field. For example, Kant had to make room for faith in his rational system while saying that though we cannot prove the existence of God, we cannot disprove it either. And Kierkegaard strongly rejected any attempt to bring faith under any system or in other words, he revolted against systematisation of faith.

This debate on religious beliefs has been carried forward to twentieth century even more vigorously. The questions started having different imports. For example, the questions about the existence of God are no more in fashion, rather such questions are taken as absurd. And, it is the questions relating to meaningfulness of religious beliefs that have replaced the questions related to the existence of God etc. Logical positivists contributed a great deal to this debate. They rejected the metaphysical questions in particular as non-sensical.
In a more direct way, I shall say that logical positivists devised a criterion of verifiability according to which only scientific statements are meaningful. This view has been considered by the contemporary thinkers as untenable because the nature of moral and religious statements is such that they cannot be judged from the scientific angle, and also at the same time cannot be disposed of as meaningless.

Consequently, the question of their meaningfulness arises. Wittgenstein through his general philosophy of the nature of language and its bearing on what he calls “forms of life” seems to restore the independence and meaningfulness of religious beliefs in a way which does not either amounts to ‘proof’ or their truths or their acceptance on mere faith, that is, he achieves a kind of justification without taking recourse to the traditional demand for ‘objectivity’. However, since his generally theory of meaning and language is being criticised by post modern thinkers, it remains doubtful whether Wittgenstein’s philosophy has actually succeeded in restoring the dignity of faith.

The major part of my thesis, apart from discussion of traditional arguments for the existence of God and their defence and refutation, will consist of the discussion of religious language as discussed by thinkers labeled as positivists and their contemporaries in the field.
The concluding part of my thesis will be an evaluation of Wittgenstein's theory of language games, and the criticisms of his theory by contemporary thinkers. I shall make an endeavour to show that even the most celebrated interpreters of Wittgenstein have fallen short of presenting the clear view of Wittgensteinian understanding of religion through language games.