

## PREFACE

The power of evil has been, and still is an enigma to me. That is perhaps one of the reasons why I chose the study of the short stories of Roald Dahl for my Ph.D. In every character of Dahl I tried to probe into, I found evil hidden in his deep recesses. The quantity and quality of evil may vary from character to character, from situation to situation, but it is there, definitely there. I have also begun to decipher the same code behind every man, who resorts to evil in the fight for power, for selfish ends and for survival. No man is genuinely bold at heart; he is often afraid of a straight and honest fight; so he has recourse to evil through sly means. However, he does not admit that he is overcome by evil. Moreover as his status in society is dependent upon his forbearance of evil, he prefers to hit the enemy from behind.

I had voraciously read Dahl during my college days, but I could not comprehend the concept of evil lavishly strewn on those pages. Years later, I read the stories again, and I liked them in a different way, because I had had a glimpse of the dark caverns of the human mind. I also found the stories amazingly true to life. Dahl has given shape to a thought-content I had experienced, but could not put down. One of my articles on Dahl entitled “Legendary Stories from Dahl” discussing the same approach towards evil, was published by *The Hindu* on 23 November 2007. My talk “Evil in the Stories of Roald Dahl” focussing on how Dahl’s characters stand helpless before evil, was broadcast by the AIR. As I read Dahl’s stories, his characters came close to my heart and I could fathom their whisper and whimper. I could not disagree with their evil doings. On the contrary, I lived with them and admired their light-hearted view of evil on a par with Dahl’s casual approach to life. They are menacing indeed; and as my dissertation asserts, they are born to be bewitched.