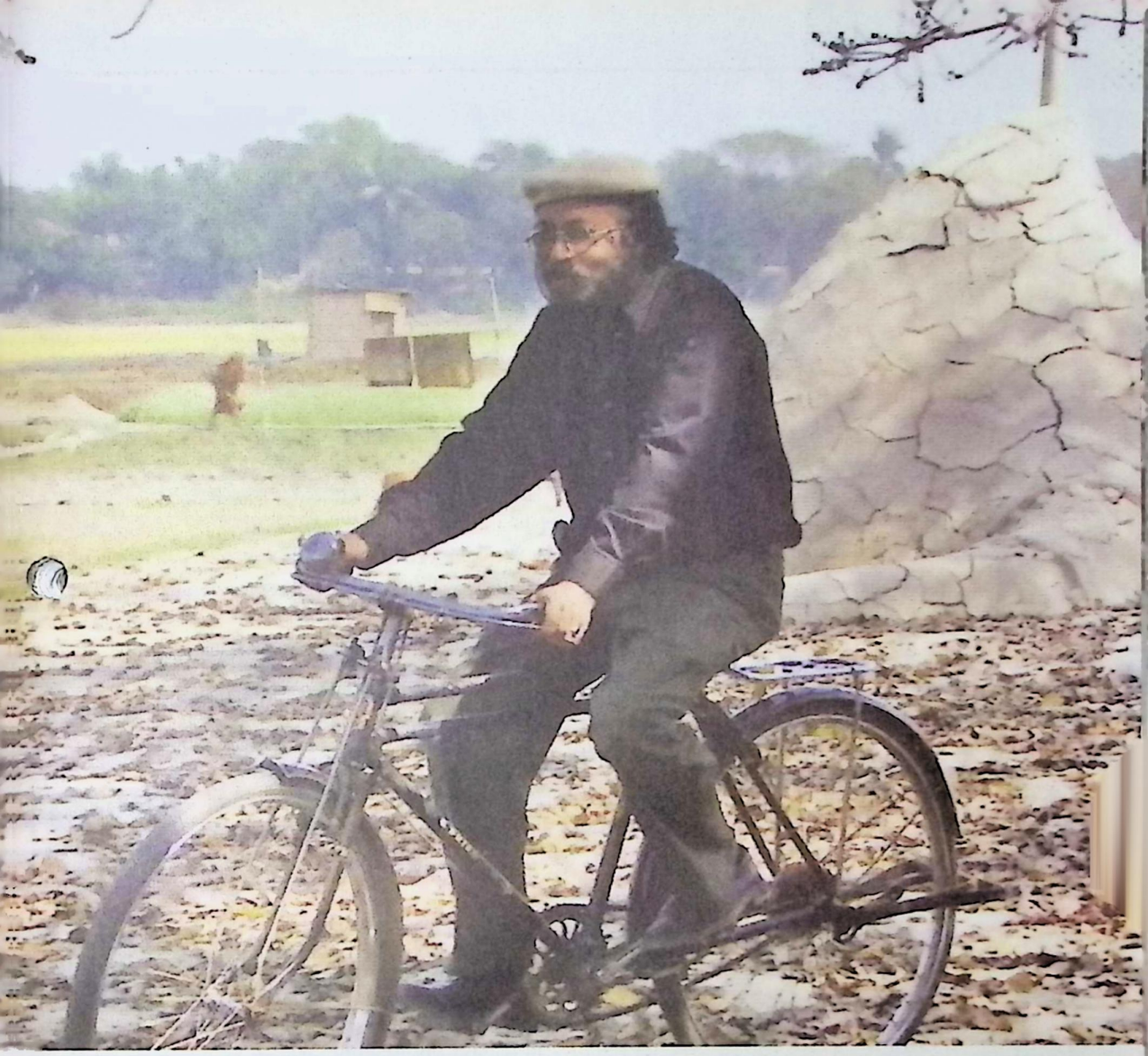


My father, Rafique Siddiqui.

to love the people around us and to see the good in them.

Baba's belly laugh and rough-housing skills makes him a favourite to all the kids in our extended family, neighbourhood and to the kids we don't really know. He makes my cousins' children call him Black Bearded Grandpa, (given that they have another grandfather with a white beard). Baba's stock is super limited, yet he uses them over and over again. He knows only a couple of jokes and two to three magic tricks which he likes to exhibit given the slightest opportunity. Be it a picnic, a birthday party or just a family gathering, Baba would be inevitably found in a corner surrounded by kids showing his the same old magic tricks. Every time he does the same match stick magic trick, I look at my overzealous and childlike father and think how happy he is, always. Did I mention that just as he finishes his magic he expects everyone to clap and cheer for him?

I can write all day about Baba's activities. Let me finish with this one. Last year, during a wedding in my family, a troupe of my friends and cousins were staying over at our place. In the middle of the night, Baba appeared, standing hesitatingly at the doorway. I thought we were way too loud and might have disturbed him, but to our surprise he was there because he wanted to crack his jokes and show us his magic tricks! My father is everyone's favourite, so the crowd left the stage at once for his performance. While Baba was telling his old jokes, waving his hands up and down with twinkling eyes, I was looking at everyone else's face. No one was bothered with his interruption; everyone was laughing their hearts out, partly because the joke was funny, mostly at his effort and innocence.

That day I realized, his children might have grown up but Baba has not. He remains the same black bearded man with the same magic tricks. ■