

Scriptwriting legend Balakumaran breathes his last

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Chennai: Naan oru thadava sonna, nooru thadava sonna madhura (saying it once is equal to my saying it a hundred times). Superstar Rajinikanth's punch dialogue in the 1995 film Baasha is the stuff of legend. And on Tuesday, the film industry bid farewell to the legend behind those words — Tamil writer Balakumaran.

The 71-year-old died in a private hospital here after a brief illness. He is survived by

his wife and son. A native of a village near Thanjavur, Balakumaran wrote dialogues for such blockbusters as Baasha, Nayakan (1997), Guna (1991) and Kadhalan (1994) besides directing the movie Idhu Namma Aahu (1998), in which he appeared in a cameo.

Balakumaran wrote more 150 novels and short stories, including Mercury Pookal (a serialized novel that brought him to the spotlight) and Irumbu Kudirai. His words were enriching, says lyricist



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and friend Piraisoodan, adding that he led a simple life. "He lived in a small flat in My-

lapore, he drove a small car. More than ten years ago, he left the world of cinema to seek a more spiritual life," says the lyricist.

A devotee of Tiruvannamalai-based Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Balakumaran credited the saint who helped him quit smoking and lead a simple spiritual life. His writing in later years was influenced by the saint, who had passed on in 2001.

"Like several writers, Balakumaran was never enamo-

ured by the film industry," says writer V Mariappan. "It was in his novels that he truly shone," adds Mariappan. Balakumaran shattered several myths about the "purity" of life in Indian villages, says Mariappan.

Over the span of his career, Balakumaran won several awards, including the Tamil Nadu government's Kalaimamani. His short stories appeared in popular magazines like Ananda Vikatan, Kalki and Kumudam.