

Maiden film on ‘The Collaborator’ to be produced by New York Production and Development Shingle Mulberry Films.

The book ‘shattered and shred me to bits emotionally’, says Mulberry Films Producer Gopi Sait.

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SRINAGAR: “I read ‘The Collaborator’ which was given to me by a friend in Mumbai as a gift. On the flight back to New York, I read it entirely in one sitting and it completely moved, shattered and shred me to bits emotionally,” says Mulberry Films producer Gopi Sait who has decided to make a maiden film on the critically acclaimed novel by Kashmiri journalist Mirza Waheed. Mulberry Films, a New York-based independent film company, has acquired exclusive motion picture rights to ‘The Collaborator’ for the big screen.

Mulberry Films is a development and production company for independent film and media projects and is headquartered in New York and Mumbai. It announced the adaptation of ‘The Collaborator’ into a film on May 15. “I have been seeking to find a story about Kashmir that's poignant, relevant and completely told without prejudice to the either side. Before reading ‘The Collaborator’, I read many pieces on Kashmir and had seen some Indian films on the Kashmir issue. But I was quite disappointed that in all that melodramatic nonsense the rich meaning of a story like this was being lost,” Gopi told Kashmir Reader. “I re-read ‘The Collaborator’ again over a period of month, slowly taking in the ideas and larger context of the story. I was left speechless with what Mirza has achieved and brought to life with such honesty and integrity,” Gopi said. “I felt that this was important on so many levels. Mirza had done something extraordinary, something so special here with this book that I was

compelled to ask him if we could possibly tackle this book into a feature film adaptation of his beloved work.

”The Collaborator’ is set against the backdrop of an anti-India armed insurgency in the early ‘90s in Kashmir. ‘The Collaborator’ in the book is an unnamed Kashmiri boy in his late teens, who is the protagonist and the son of the village Sarpanch, living in a close-knit community of families in a Gujjar village near the Line of Control. The protagonist watches in dismay as his friends disappear one by one from the village to join the militancy, and eventually most of Nowgam’s residents flee the ensuing conflict. He is amongst the very few who remain, and soon finds himself roped in by a Captain of the Indian Army to help keep track of the soldiers’ kill. “The completion of the film will take 14-18 months and will be launched in one of the prestigious festivals around the world.

The film will also be screened in India and in Kashmir. The film will be shot in India, and based on director’s call, locals will be also work in the movie,” Gopi said. “The film will be shot in English and local dialects, but pre-dominantly it will be in English since the book is also available in English. We want to reach out to as far as the littlest corner around the earth with this film, so English makes more sense.”

“The first objective is to bring onboard a really high caliber screenwriter to help us decode this really beautiful and complex piece of work into finding that cinematic voice and expression before we get into any discussions about principal photography,” Gopi said.

Gopi hopes that like Mirza's book, the film will also appeal to a really wide range of reading audiences everywhere. “Make a brilliant dynamic and emotionally hard hitting film, and the rest we will leave it to the audiences around the world and how they would like to perceive and receive it for themselves,” he said.

Gopi sees Mirza's book not in the context of Kashmiri issue alone, but in the much larger and a broader context worldwide. “All the conflicts around the world stem from the same issues that each of us know and understand so well. If you look at Israel, Palestine, Chechnya... it is all the same everywhere outfitted in a different cloak, so I think that this is a brilliant opportunity to tell a really special story that could be very relevant and beyond anything that religion, language, culture, identity or anything else would try to limit us in grasping a little of what this kind of war and conflict does and affect each and every one of us around the world.”