

Show on surrogacy and Western spirituality

It was presented by a German artiste duo recently

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German artists Magdalena Emmerig and Yana Thönnies presented their show 'AshramMommies,' at WeWork, Church Street recently. The show revolved around their five-week research into commercial surrogacy and Western spiritual tourism in India.

The idea of AshramMommies was born when the duo read the famous book, 'The Handmaid's Tale,' by Canadian Author Margaret Atwood. Their experiences with Indian surrogate mothers inspired them further. One such significant experience is from the Akanksha Fertility Clinic in Gujarat where they spoke to a woman who was formerly a



Yana and Magdalena.

bodyguard and is now a surrogate mother. The duo found it extremely fascinating that one can go from protecting someone externally to protecting someone internally.

"It was interesting to see how

women in India are treating this as a full time job as they live in 'surrogacy homes'. Here they are properly taken care of, given special food and the medical attention they require. They are not allowed to see their hus-



The audience had many questions to ask about surrogacy and everything to do with it. DH PHOTO- SNEHA SENGUPTA

bands for the whole duration of the pregnancy. The women who become surrogates are usually from rural backgrounds and always carry the babies of the higher castes or white couples," says Yana.

Magdalena comments that it is something that is so private to an individual that people do not want to talk about it. "Admitting you need a surrogate in a way is admitting that there is

something wrong with your body and that you are infertile," she says. This makes the issue a taboo topic, which could lead to surrogacy going under ground. "If it does happen the conditions that surrogate mother have to live in and face will become extremely pathetic," says Magdalena

On the topic of spiritual tourism in India, Yana says, "People think they can buy and commercialise spirituality which I find to be a very strange concept. I do not understand how spending only 10 days in any ashram can provide sudden enlightenment."



Yana, Deepika and Magdalena.

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