DNA
DAILY NEWS & ANALYSIS

Made-in-Mumbai baby for Israeli gay couple

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Prakash Parsekar / DNA

Yonatan Gher & Omer (in red t-shirt) with their month-old son Evyatar on Monday

Yonatan and Omer flew back to Tel Aviv with their baby, delivered by a surrogate mum

MUMBAI: Yonatan Gher, 30, and his partner of seven years Omer, 31, can't take their eyes off their bundle of joy.

For the past month, the duo has been doing shifts taking care of their month-old baby — feeding him, burping him, changing him and singing him to sleep. The walls of their temporary residence in Santa Cruz are plastered with photographs of the baby.

Baby Evyatar may not know it yet, but he's special. His parents have made an over 4,000-km journey from Tel Aviv in Israel to Mumbai only so their dream to extend their family could be realised.

Yonatan and Omer are gay and Israel doesn't allow same-sex parents to legally adopt a baby or use the services of a surrogate mother.

However, with sperm from Yonatan, eggs from an anonymous donor and a hired womb, Evyatar came into the world on October 12.

"Evyatar's a name we chose from the Bible. It means 'more fathers' in Hebrew," explains Yonatan, executive director of Jerusalem Open House, Israel's biggest gay rights organisation. Omer works as a psychologist in Tel Aviv.

Once they had decided on having a baby, Yonatan got in touch with Dr Gautam Allahbadia, medical director of Rotunda which offers surrogacy services. He then came to Mumbai in January to donate his sperm.

Two weeks later, Yonatan got news of the surrogate mother's pregnancy via e-mail. "I ran to Omer's office a few blocks away and placed a single stemmed rose on his desk," he says. That was a code they'd decided on much earlier. "Since we did not know if we would have a single baby or more, we had planned that as soon as I got the news, I would keep as many roses on his desk as the number of babies,"' he says.

In September, when the surrogate mother was in the 37th week of pregnancy, the couple flew down to Mumbai. "We wanted to be there for the baby's first moments," says Omer, adding they have read every book on parenting.

The baby got a local birth certificate after which a DNA test was performed on him. "The results were sent to the Israeli consulate, which issued him a passport," says Yonatan. They couple, who flew back home on Monday, says they will be back next year, this time with Omer's sperm.