
Success! Life-saving surgery on toddler with eight limbs goes 'very well'

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Doctors in India have successfully operated on a 2-year-old girl born with four arms, four legs and extra internal organs, doctors said today.

A team of around 30 medics removed what amounted to Lakshmi Tatma's headless identical twin sister who was joined at the pelvis and who did not develop and separate properly in the womb - an extremely rare case.

"It went very well," said Mamta Patil, a doctor involved in the surgery at Sparsh Hospital in Bangalore in south India. "She'll be in intensive care for the next 48 hours."

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Torment: Lakshmi can not walk or crawl and is unlikely to survive her teens without surgery

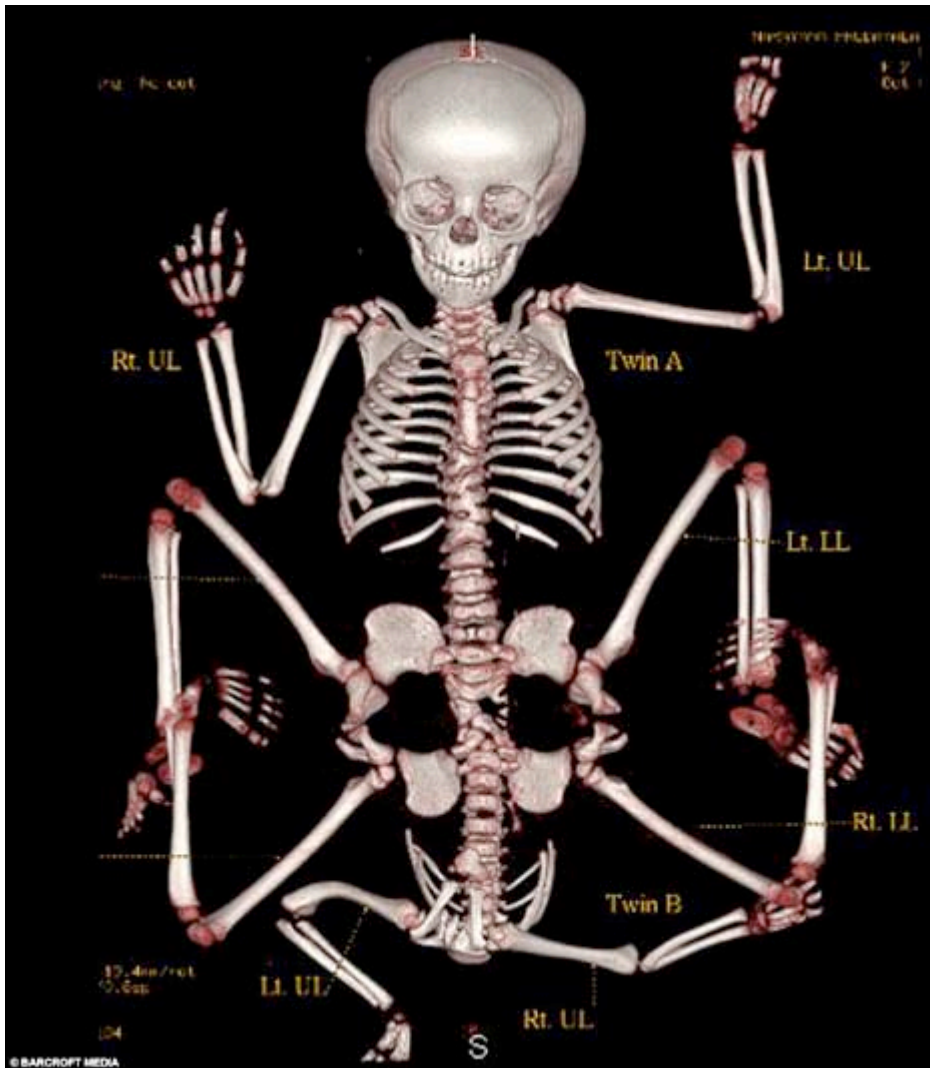
The risky operation began yesterday. Lakshmi, named after the four-armed Hindu goddess of wealth, was expected to be in the operating theatre for 40 hours, but the surgery was over after 27.

But doctors said the surgery was worth the risk, saying that Lakshmi, who could not walk on her deformed limbs, would not otherwise have much chance of living past adolescence.

"We have been told that she can lead a normal life after the operation. I am just praying for her," Poonam, Lakshmi's mother, told reporters.

The headless "twin" was joined to Lakshmi at the pelvis and has its own spinal column and kidney.

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Fused: Lakshmi's body is joined with the parasitical twin which is attached to her body at her pelvis

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The extraordinary eight-limbed baby was born in a poverty-stricken region of Bihar, India - on the day devoted to the celebration of the four-armed Hindu deity Vishnu.

Her mother Poonam Tatma said she believed her daughter was "a miracle, a reincarnation" of Vishnu.



The Hindu god Vishnu is the preserver and protector of creation

Dr Sharan Patil, who led the surgery at the country's Narayana Health City, in Bangalore, said:
"Fortunately, Lakshmi has one complete body with a near perfect set of organs.

"Her skeletal system involves two bodies which are fused together at the level of the pelvis.

"The operation itself, although presents several challenges, is not the most complex in the world. What is highly unusual in Lakshmi's case is precisely how her bodies are fused, almost mirroring each other."

Parents Poonam Devi and Shambu Das, who earn about 50p a day as casual labourers, were turned away from several hospitals before her plight was taken up by Dr Patil.

The operation was expected to cost about £100,000 - but the hospital said it was covering the cost of the surgery.

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Hope: Lakshmi and mother Poonam prepare for the operation

Poonam, who gave birth to Lakshmi on the celebration day of the four-armed Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity after whom the new born was named, said: "She is a miracle, a special blessing from God. But she is my daughter and she cannot live like this."

Lakshmi is the subject of a Channel 4 documentary as part of the Bodyshocks series.

Besides the removal of the extra limbs, Lakshmi's deformed pelvis and spine were corrected, and redundant extra organs removed, doctors said.

