TWO-FACED BABIES

DIPROSOPUS - A RARE FORM OF

CRANIOFACIAL ABNORMALITIES

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In 2008, Lali Singh was born in a village near Delhi, India bearing two mouths, two noses, four eyes – but only two ears – on a single head as a result of the condition known as diprosopus. Also known as craniofacial duplication, diprosopus (from the Greek “two faced”) is an extremely rare congenital disorder that usually produces a still born child. But Lali lived for two months until her death from nutritional challenges as a result of a cleft palate.

In 1939, Isadore Brodsky provides a wonderfully detailed description of a white, female fetus weighing 5lbs 14oz, or as he calls it, an “uncommon monstrosity”.

![Image of Lali Singh](image_url)
The image is entitled “an anterior view of the monster” and there is an evidence of anencephaly. An examination of the internal cavities revealed the presence of a common pharynx and single oesophagus with a variety of organ malformations including lobular abnormalities of the lungs and cardiomegaly.

Okazaki et al (1987) describe diploroposus as a rare form of symmetric conjoined twins consisting of a single neck and body with varied degrees of structure duplication. Mild forms may see duplication of only the nose up to severe forms with two complete faces. In a case study of a 27 year old female at 28 weeks gestation it was noted that while observation of facial features was at first difficult due to fetal activity, it was possible to make out facial duplication as well as two pairs of lateral ventricles, ruling out an earlier diagnosis of hydrocephalus. A tetrophthalmos is a term applied to a fetus with four eyes and the two median eyes may be fused, share an orbit, or occupy separate orbits.

Lali with separate orbits.
Pakistani boy born September 2011 with median eyes in a shared orbit.

Imaging studies of another case, a one day old female neonate, were detailed in the American Journal of Roentgenology revealed the following duplications of the prosencephalon, rhombencephalon, and basal ganglia.
Hahnfel et al also defined diprosopus as one of the rarest craniofacial malformations characterized by the presence of two faces on a single head and trunk that has been accepted as a subgroup of conjoined twinning which is classified according to the affected site and the degree of malformation. The earliest representation of diprosopus is the double-headed god found in a Turkish shrine from 6500 BC. This anomaly is a rare in humans but is common in cattle, cats, and pigs – it is seen in less than 1% of conjoined twins with an incidence reported to be one in 180,000-15 million births. The cause of diprosopus is unknown but among the proposed causes are genetic mutations and environmental factors that affect the embryo between the 13th and 21st days of gestation. The extent of craniofacial duplication may depend on the degree and the timing of the division of neural folds.
REFERENCES


