

SAGACITY TO AVOID COITUS DURING MENSTRUATION

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Abstract: Islam is a religion of cleanliness and piety. In Islamic system of worship cleanliness is first and foremost requirement. Islam emphasizes on cleanliness in behavior, attitude and inclinations. This Islamic doctrine of cleanliness is in accordance with the human nature and also with the medical principles. Islamic dictate of hygiene incorporates into the human mind, a sense of purity, both internal and external. Internal decency brings man close to his Creator and external limpidness guarantees good health for him. Sagacity of Islamic teachings was remined before modern day research. With the progress of scientific knowledge, man is becoming aware of the importance of these principles for his health.

Coitus during menstruation is prohibited in Islām. If a person abstains from this, he will enjoy the pleasure of his Lord and will also benefit from this principle in the way that he will be saved from many diseases. In this article this has been depicted using the scientific data.

Man, like all sexually reproducing organisms has been provided with sexual hunch. Animals satisfy this lust according to their instinct. Likewise, man is also intrigued by this gut feeling. Among all these sexually reproducing animals, only primates and human beings face the phase of menstruation. Man, among all other living organisms is unique in this process. Besides menstruation, man has been provided with the disposition that his mate is always ready for mating, whereas in other living organisms, the female counterpart emits signals when she is ready for the process and when the process is complete, she does not allow its complement to copulate. Its opposite member remains restricted too when the mating partner is not ready for the process. In man, the situation is quite different. Male and female are ready to copulate whenever they desire. Sometimes the male is ready even at the time when the female perhaps is unwilling, On the other hand, both may have the lust during menstruation, before or after that

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process. Primates have no transcendental guidance with them, neither does exist any scientific or research based tradition in primates. The useful and unuseful acts are controlled simply by their instinctive behaviour. Man is free to choose right or wrong. His free will is the cause for his being answerable on the day of judgement. Religion is the problem of man. Besides this, man also judges his behaviour in the light of his available knowledge. Similar is the case with the act of intercourse during menstruation. Man, while in possession with sexual sense faces menstrual cycle in his counterpart. Historically, we discern man's nuisance on this issue. Since the very beginning of man's history, we may discern man's concern about this. At times, he considers it as an obnoxious and at others he cares not about it and is ready for coitus activity.

What is menstruation?

Menstruation is simply a process that occurs like all other processes of human body. In it egg formation occurs and then a time comes when unfertilized egg alongwith cellular debris is expelled out by the body. At that time the blood escapes from the female sex organ. This blood is not the simple one like the blood cells of the body. It occurs almost once in a month. Its duration may last from three days to ten days. If it surpasses the limit of ten days or follows the limit of three days, it can't be entitled as menstruation. According to the Muslim Jurists, the menstruation is defined as:

“The menstrua are made up of blood that emerges from the woman's vagina at other moments than childbirth. The blood that emerges from the anus is not menstrual. . . The menstrua are lawful if certain conditions are fulfilled. First, if they take place between the age of nine years to the age of fifty five. . . According to the greatest authorities, the blood that appears beyond that age does not constitute lawful menstruation. . . The blood must flow outside the vagina, even if that condition is fulfilled only by abstaining from the use of a cotton tampon. If this tampon prevents the menstrual blood from passing from the uterus into the vagina, there is no menstruation. If a pure woman observes on the tampon or on her underwear some trace of blood, she is said to have menstruated. A menstruating woman who does not see any trace of blood on the tampon is

said to have completed her menstrual period. . . Menstrual blood must be one of the six following colours: black, red, yellow, lemon yellow, green and grey-green. One considers the colour of the cotton at the very moment when it is removed, not when it has dried. . . The legal duration of the period is a minimum of three days and three nights. . . The period of purity between two menstrual periods must be at least fifteen days. (1)

This excerpt clarifies the fact that the menstrual blood will be that which has the following properties:

1. It must come from vagina, not from anus
2. It is not the blood of childbirth
3. The age of woman should be between nine years to fifty five years
4. Its duration should be between three to ten days

Menstruation is physiological process related to female. The question arises that should a male know about it or not? Normally in our society, it is assumed against piety if such matters are discussed by men. But it must be kept in mind that such matters have been discussed by the companions of the holy Prophet and elucidations are available in the books of Prophetic traditions. To spend a pious life, it is obligatory for a man to know well the issues of the like. Imam Ghazali has very rightly explicated:

“The seventh: that the married should know enough about the matter of menstruation to enable him to take necessary precautions; he also should teach his wife the rules of prayer: which prayers should be performed during menstruation and which should not. He has been commanded to safeguard her from the (Hell) Fire according to the words of Almighty, “Ward off from yourselves and your families a fire.” (al-Mumtahinah, 66:6). . . The husband should also teach her the precepts governing menstruation and irregular menstrual flow, and the taking of precautionary measures. The information on menstruation is lengthy, but what a woman must be taught are the prayers she should perform. . . Whenever a woman neglects one of the obligations imposed upon her by menstruation and irregular menstrual flow, and the husband does not teach her (concerning these matters), he too, becomes her partner in sin.”(2)

History of behaviour:

As concerned the history of attitude towards a menstruating women, there are different views about it.

Discussing the peril that may have to be faced from a menstruating woman, Pliny has given:

“Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seeds in the gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees fall off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fills the air; to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison. . . even that very tiny creature the ant is said to be sensitive to it and throws away any grains of corn that taste of it and does not touch them again.”(3)

At the time of advent of Islam, the Jews kept their menstruating women solitary and they could not touch anything.(4)

In some societies, the situation was so adverse that the menstruating women were kept separate from the rest of the society. For this purpose special huts were built outside the residential areas where such women had to spend the period.

Shedom H. Cherry commenting upon the behaviour towards such women elucidates the fact:

“The taboos and myths of menstruation are all too common in our culture. Menstruation has been termed the curse, unwell, and neutral words such as ‘visit from a friend’ have been used to describe this psychological event . . . For thousands of years menstruation has been a taboo subject. The menstrual huts of primitive societies are one example. To this day some religious cults consider the menstruating women as unclean.” (5)

Not only this but religions have also implemented some prohibitions against menstruating women.

“There have been religious prohibitions on menstruating women in many cultures.”(6)

Religious view point:

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In almost all religions, menstruating women are prohibited to copulate with. In Jewish tradition, such a woman is named Niddah and is prohibited to be assaulted sexually. (7)

According to Old Testament:

“And if a woman has an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean. . . In Genesis it has also been given about the Eve: ‘Multiply thy sorrow and thy conception.’ (3:13) In the ‘Book of the Prophet Micah’, ‘Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail’ (4:10)

“These excerpts of the Old Testament are anti feminine and despises her condition. Even these days they observe the tradition that copulation be avoided even after seven days after menstruation. They even replace the bride by a young girl if she is in the menstruation phase so that the couple may not cross the limits.” (8)

In Christianity, it is also condemned to have sexual relation with such a woman as is given in the Old Testament.

Islamic view point:

Islamic teachings also reveal that during menstruation, the women should be avoided. But to what extent this avoidance be kept? Here Islam differs from the rest. Islam does not teach to keep them in isolation. According to Islamic teachings only mating should is prohibited. In this situation, they may remain with other people. They can cook food, can take part in all the household activities. They are exempted from saying the prayer. The avoidance from women is given in the Holy Qur’an and its details are in the Prophetic traditions.

Qur’ānic teachings:

The holy Qur’an elucidates the fact:

ويستلونك عن الحيض . قل هو اذي فاعتزلوا النساء في الحيض ولا تقربوهن حتى يطهرن . فاذا تطهرن فاتوهن من حيث امركم الله . ان الله يحب التوابين ويحب المتطهرين

“They ask thee concerning women’s courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution: so keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they

have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah. For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” (al-Baqarah, 2 : 222)

Besides this menses have been quoted at two other occasions also. First, when the divorced woman is advised to wait for the next marriage, the counting of her duration depends upon menstruation.

والمطلقت يتربصن بانفسهن ثلاثة قروء هـ

“Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods.”(al-Baqarah, 2 : 228)

Second, on the occasion where the limit for menopausal women is mentioned as three months.

والتي يئسن من المحيض من نساءكم ان ارتبتم فعدتهن ثلاثة اشهر والتي لم يحضن هـ

“Such of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses, for them the prescribed period, if ye have any doubts, is three months, and for those who have no courses (it is the same)”: (al-Talaq, 65 : 4)

Prophetic Teachings:

The holy Prophet’s(Peace and Greetings of Allah Be Upon Him) description about the process is such that it is binding upon the daughters of Adam(A.S) and according to some, it first started from the Israelites(9)

وقول النبي ﷺ هذا شئ كتبه الله تعالى على بنات آدم، وقال بعضهم: كان اول ما ارسل

الحيض على بنى اسرا يئيل، قال أبو عبدالله و حديث النبي أكثر

but Ibn Hajr pursuing the issue has underlined:

“The Prophet’s version includes all the daughters of Adam(A.S), so in it are incorporated all the women before and after the Israelites. According to Allama Dawudi there is no contradiction between Prophetic saying and of Ibn Mes`ud(R.A) as Israelite women are also Adam’s daughters. Ibn Hajr correlates it as, menstruation remained for a long time in Bani Israel and it was a torment upon them, nor it started from them. Hakim and Ibn Mundhir have narrated that menstruation started from the very transcendence of the Eve(A.S). So, the Eve’s daughters are also the daughters of Adam(A.S)” (10)

Prophetic teachings demonstrate the limits of relation with women during menstruation process. It has been narrated on the authority of Anas (R. A) :

عن أنس أن اليهود كانوا اذا حاضت المرأة لم يؤكلوها ولم يجامعوهن في البيوت ، فسأل أصحاب النبي ، فأُنزل الله (ويستلونك عن المحيض قل هو اذى فاعتزلوا النساء في المحيض) إلى اخره الاية، فقال رسول الله اصنعوا كل شئى الا النكاح ، فبلغ ذلك اليهود فقالوا: ما يريد هذا الرجل أن يدع من أمرنا شيئاً الا خالفنا فيه ، فجاء أسيد بن حضير وعباد بن بشير فقالا يارسول الله أن اليهود تقول كذا وكذا ، أفلا نجامعهن؟ فتغير وجه رسول الله حتى ظننا أن قد وجد علينا ، فخرجنا فاستقبلهما هدية من لبن ال النبي فأرسل في آثارهما ، فسقاهما فعرفا أن لم يجد عليهما.

“The Jews neither allowed their women to eat with them nor did they keep the women with them during this process. When the companions of the Holy Prophet asked him about it, this verse of the holy Qur’an was revealed and it was told by the holy Prophet (SAW) “Everything except copulation is lawful.” When the Jews knew this, they said, this man always opposes us. Quoting this saying of the Jews, ‘Usayd ibn Hudayr and `ibad Ibn Bashar asked permission for copulation during menses. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet (SAW) got angry till the companions thought, the holy Prophet has got angry with these people. When they were about to go, they were presented the milk by some one, then it was known that the anger is over.”(11)

This Prophetic tradition clearly demonstrates that except copulation everything is lawful. So, everything is allowed except copulation. In the Prophetic traditions, it is given that the Holy Prophet (SAW) used to keep relations with his wives except sexual intercourse.

عن عائشة أنها قالت: كنت اذا حضت نزلت عن المثال على الحصى فلم تقرب رسول الله ولم ندن منه حتى نظهر(12)

Ibn Jarir has also quoted a tradition elucidating the fact:

“Once Masruq came to A’ishah and said, “I want to inquire in to a matter but feel ashamed of, she replied, you may inquire into as I am your mother and you are like my son, you may ask whatever you like. He asked, “What is lawful for a man from his menstruating wife? She replied, “Everything is lawful except the sexual intercourse.” (13)

Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Hasan and `Ikramah are of the view that to lie, to sit and eating and drinking are lawful with a menstruating woman.

This has also been quoted in Hadith literature. As is in the Hadith of A`ishah(R.A)

عن عائشة قالت كنت اتعرق العظم وانا حائض فاعطيه النبي فيضع فمه في موضع الذي فيه وضعته واشرب الشراب فاناوله فيضع فمه في الموضع الذي كنت اشرب منه

A’ishah (R.A) says that she used to suck from the bone and the holy Prophet(SAW) too sucked that bone from the same place. I used to drink water and then give the bowl to him, he used to drink water from the same corner from where I had taken though I were menstruating at that very time. (14)

Similar is in the Tradition of Maimoona(R.A)

عن كريب ، مولى ابن عباس قال سمعت ميمونة زوج النبي قالت كان رسول الله ينضج معي وانا حائض ، وبيني وبينه ثوب.

It is quoted on the authority of Syeda Maimoona (R.A) that the holy Prophet(SAW), in the start of her menses used to sleep with her in a single bed. He washed his cloth if it got dirty; he washed his body if something got touched with his clothes. He used to say the prayer with same clothes. (15)

In Bukhari, it is given, if the holy Prophet wanted to meet with his mentruating wife, he asked her to tie Tehband.

حدثنا عبدالله بن شداد قال سمعت ميمونة تقول كان رسول الله اذا اراد ان يياشر امرأة من نسائه امرها فاتزرت وهي حائض (16)

There are so many Prophetic traditions on the subject of menstruation. (Each book of Hadith has a complete book on menses named as Kitab al-Hayd)

Views of the Jurists:

During menstruation, the prohibition of copulation is prohibited is a unanimous view. But whether the committer will have to pay the penitence or not. There are two views;

a). Compensation is due

In Tirmadhi, it is given; if the blood is red, the compensation is one Dinar, if yellow, then half.

عن أبي هريرة وإنما معنى هذا عند أهل العلم على التغليب وقد روي عن النبي قال من أتى حائضاً فليصدق
بدينار فلو كان أتى الحائض كفراً لم يؤمر فيه بالكفارة. (17)

In Abu Dawud, it is given; if the blood has vanished and she has not taken the bath then the compensation is half Dinar, otherwise one.

عن ابن عباس قال إذا أصابها في أول الدم فدينار وإذا أصابها في انقطاع الدم فنصف دينار ، عن ابن عباس
عن النبي قال؟ إذا كان دماً أحمر فدينار وإذا كان دماً أصفر فنصف دينار (18)

b). There is no punishment and, only repentance is required

The person who performs coitus activity during menses considering it lawful is heretic and the one who commits it unknowingly(menses or the commandment) has committed a sinful act but will have to pay no penalty and a person committing it knowingly has done a prohibited act and he has to beg repentance. Most of the scholars agree to this and according to the scholars of hadith the tradition of penalty is a weaker one.(19)

Biology of menses:

Before studying the biological sagacity, first we should have a look on the menstruation process. What is the biology and what changes occur at the time of menstruation. The changes that occur during menstruation are:

“Although endometrial regression(20) is initiated by withdrawal of the sustaining influences of estrogen(21) and progesteron(22) following deterioration of the corpus luteum, the subsequent complex chain of events in the endometrium that causes it to break down is still incompletely understood. The following factors are involved:

1. Fluctuation in ovarian and pituitary hormone levels
2. Characteristics of the endometrium(Phase, receptivity to hormones)
3. Activity of autonomic nervous system

4. Vascular changes(Stasis, Spasm dilation)
5. Enzymes and prostaglandins
6. Other factors such as nutritional and emotional ones (23)

Reproductive tract changes during menstruation cycle are:

1. Cervical changes: The cervical glands increase in size and secretory activity during the preovulatory phase of the cycle, paralleling the estrogen rise. It controls the secretion of cervical mucus.

2. Vaginal changes: Examination of daily vaginal smears shows a progressive increase in the growth of the vaginal epithelium as the menstrual cycle progresses.

3. Breast changes: Though the mammary glands normally does not secrete until lactation, it undergoes cyclic changes synchronous with the ovarian cycle throughout reproductive life. During menstruation, the ducts acini(24) and interstitial(25) tissues of the breasts undergo regression and pre menstrual engorgement disappears.(26)

This illustrates that body of woman especially the reproductive tract passes through the changes at the moment. As a result of these changes woman feels some disturbance. Due to this disturbance temperament may also become affected.

Sheldon H. Cherry elucidates the fact saying:

“Many women will complain of an increase in irritability, nervousness, fatigue and some depression as well as an increase in appetite, some weakness, some lower abdominal pain and bloating, swelling of the breasts and nausea prior to the menstrual cycle.” (27)

Commenting on this facet, Georgeanna Seegar Jones and Anne Colston Wentz have tinted the point:

“Some discomfort normally accompanies ovulatory menstruation. This varies with the woman and may be manifested as lower abdominal cramping, backache, and aching of the thighs, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headach and anorexia are not uncommon.” (28)

Such are the discomforts which are very common among the menstruating women. These are not because of some external factor. The internal changes are the cause of these disturbances. Due these discomforts,

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women may feel a great change in her mood. Alan H. De Cherney pointing to this fact has given:

“Other symptoms commonly included in PMS (Pre Menstrual Symptoms) are abdominal discomfort, clumsiness, lack of energy, sleep changes and mood swings. Behaviour changes include social withdrawal, altered daily activities, marked changes in appetite, increased crying and changes in sexual desire. In all, more than 150 symptoms have been related to PMS. Thus the symptom complex of PMS has not been clearly defined.” (29)

It must be kept in mind that all these symptoms are not much prior to menses but these occur when the menses are to start, about one or two days before.

Sagacity to avoid women during this period:

Islam is a religion of purity and cleanliness. In the Qur’ānic injunctions where it is prohibited to have sexual contact with menstruating women, it is given ‘till they are clean’ means Islam abhors uncleanness. Look, the bleeding situation alongwith cellular debris, perhaps every prudent will stay away. So, the first reason is its uncleanness. Besides this uncleanness, there are other complications which may arise. In western society there is some echo in favour of sexual contact during this phase. (30)

Similarly, Masters and Johnson have opined:

“Frequently it has been presumed that coital activity during menstruation will lead to acute physical distress on the woman’s part. During the past ten years no clinical evidence to support this concept has been established. In short, from a purely physiological point of view, there is no contra-indication to coition or auto-manipulation during menstruation.” (31)

Martin and Long have also explicated:

“There is to be no established reason to abstain from coitus during the menses on patho-physiological grounds.” (32)

Menstruation is a natural process but it (because of its removal of blood and cellular debris which were at one time part of the body) brings some changes which may cause some nuisance for the menstruating women. The trickling of blood is itself a cause of great disturbance. Menstruation brings blood alongwith the breakage of corpus luteum, a cellular organ formed inside the placental region. This cellular debris provides the best medium for

the propagation of microorganism. Elucidating the detrimental effects of coitus during menses Walter R. Wilson and Merle A. Sande explicate:

“During menses, blood raises the vaginal PH, which is more suitable for trichonomal replication.”(33)

As the menstrual blood is a good medium for microorganisms and there are many diseases which are sexually transmitted, so the chances of transmission enhances greatly.

The chemistry of menstrual blood is not the same as that of the normal blood. That’s the reason it provides the best medium for microorganisms to thrive. The best medium for bacterial growth is always unsafe for human health. Elucidating the fact Dr. M.A. Anees makes the point as:

“From the biochemical view point, menstrual blood is different from the ordinary human blood. The former contains long-chain fatty acids that cause uterine contractions with the resultant discharge of menstrual blood. One of the female sex harmones, estrogen, is also known to increase during menstruation with a rise in the mucopolysaccharide level. On the other hand, there is some evidence that a menstruating woman may influence living tissues.” (34)

Imam Ghazali warning about the bad effects of sexual intercourse has given:

“It has been said that it would engender leprosy in the ofafspring.” (35)

Besides this there are many diseases which are sexually transmitted. For those the sexual contact is too crucial. In such circumstances the intercourse during a period when the medium is apt for the growth of microorganisms may result in the propagation of such diseases. Lee Goldman pointing to the reason of their propagation with sexual contact has given:

“These microorganisms depend on sexual contact for transmission because

1. Many of these microorganisms, such as *Treponema pallidum* and *Trichonomas vaginalis*, have limited environmental survival and are susceptible to drying.

2. Only limited sites can be infected by some of these agents(e.g. *Neisseria gonorrhoea* and *Chlamydia trachomatis* can produce primary

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infection at only certain mucosal surfaces in the adult. Urethra, endocervix, rectum, pharynx and conjunctivae)

3. Lesion containing microorganisms in numbers adequate to transmit disease frequently occur at those anatomic sites used for sexual contact. (36)

Conclusion:

Islam is a religion of cleanliness and piety. Islamic teachings are to keep people tidy and healthy. The Prophetic teachings and the Qur'ānic injunctions are all to avoid sexual intercourse during menstruation. If a person does not avoid, it is not only against Islamic teachings but also against the clinical principles. The higher value of PH in the blood may harm the committer. This high value of PH, a good medium for germs' germination may contain germs, destroying the sexual health of the male partner. There may be some germs that are transmitted sexually; the chances of their transfer are enhanced to maximum when the medium is quite favorable for the growth of microbes. So, to avoid copulation during menses is not only a duty towards Almighty Allah, it is also a blessing in disguise. It does not only raise man near to God by obeying His directive but is also necessary to remain safe, healthy and to live a vigorous life. So, as a Muslim we should be thankful to God who has made the arrangement to save our health.

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20. The endometrium consists of a single layer of columnar epithelium resting on the [stroma](#), a layer of [connective tissue](#) that varies in thickness according to [hormonal](#) influences. Simple tubular uterine [glands](#) reach from the endometrial surface through to the base of the stroma, which also carries a rich blood supply of [spiral arteries](#). In a woman of reproductive age, two layers of endometrium can be distinguished. These two layers occur only in endometrium lining the cavity of the uterus, not in the lining of the Fallopian tubes. The *functional layer* is adjacent to the uterine cavity. This layer is built up after the end of menstruation during the first part of the previous menstrual cycle. Proliferation is induced by estrogen (follicular phase of menstrual cycle), and later changes in this layer are engendered by progesterone from the corpus luteum (luteal phase). It is adapted to provide an optimum environment for the implantation and growth of the [embryo](#). This layer is completely shed during menstruation. The *basal layer*, adjacent to the [myometrium](#) and below the functional layer, is not shed at any time during the menstrual cycle, and from it the functional layer develops. In the absence of progesterone, the arteries supplying blood to the functional layer constrict, so that cells in that layer become [ischaemic](#) and die, leading to [menstruation](#). It is possible to identify the phase of the menstrual cycle by observing histological differences at each phase:
21. **Oestrogens** or **estrogens** (spellings in British English and American English usage respectively), are a group of compounds named for their importance in both menstrual and estrous reproductive cycles. They are the primary female sex hormones. Natural estrogens are steroid hormones, while some synthetic

ones are non-steroidal. The name comes from the Greek *οἶστρος* (oistros), literally meaning "gadfly" but figuratively sexual passion or desire, and the suffix *-gen*, meaning "producer of".

Estrogens are synthesized in all vertebrates as well as some insects. Their presence in both vertebrates and insects suggests that estrogenic sex hormones have an ancient evolutionary history.

Estrogens are used as part of some oral contraceptives, in estrogen replacement therapy for postmenopausal women, and in hormone replacement therapy for trans women.

Like all steroid hormones, estrogens readily diffuse across the cell membrane. Once inside the cell, they bind to and activate estrogen receptors which in turn modulate the expression of many genes

22. **Progesterone** also known as **P4** (pregn-4-ene-3,20-dione) is a C-21 steroid hormone involved in the female menstrual cycle, pregnancy (supports *gestation*) and embryogenesis of humans and other species. Progesterone belongs to a class of hormones called progestogens, and is the major naturally occurring human progestogen.

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24. The ducts in the mammary glands

25. Relating to or situated in the small, narrow spaces between tissues or parts of an organ

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