



Female Development Across Ages: An Ayurvedic Review with Contemporary Correlations

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DOI:10.21760/jaims.10.4.31

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Background: The age classification system employed in Ayurveda for females offers a methodical way to comprehend physical, physiological, and social transitions across life stages. Texts such as the Charaka Samhita, Harita Samhita, and Parasara Smṛti categorise female development according to mental maturity, reproductive milestones, and dosha predominance.

Aim and Objectives: This study focuses on the Ayurvedic classification of female age and contrasts it with contemporary developmental models, such as Erikson's psychosocial phases, Freud's psychosexual theory and Tanner's puberty classification. The goal is to integrate contemporary and traditional perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of female development.

Methods: This study methodically gathers information from traditional Ayurvedic texts, peer-reviewed scientific publications, contemporary textbooks, and reliable websites. Selection is based on authenticity, relevance, and credibility, while extraction involves theme categorization and interpretation. For an in-depth analysis, the synthesis integrates modern scientific insights with ancient Ayurvedic wisdom.

Results: Ayurvedic classifications align with contemporary models, indicating that while there are universal patterns of growth and maturity, there are also variations brought about by genetic, environmental, and cultural influences.

Discussion and Conclusion: A comprehensive, preventative approach to female health is provided by Ayurvedic classification. By combining Ayurvedic and contemporary frameworks, a holistic model for lifetime well-being can be fostered to improve disease prevention, reproductive management, and personalized healthcare.

Keywords: Female age classification, Ayurveda, Erikson's Psychosocial Stage, Freud's psychosexual stages, Tanner's classification

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How to Cite this Article

Tomar P, Lal SK, Rawat S, Palariya N, Female Development Across Ages: An Ayurvedic Review with Contemporary Correlations. J Ayu Int Med Sci. 2025;10(4):208-213.
Available From
<https://jaims.in/jaims/article/view/4246/>

To Browse



Manuscript Received
2025-03-08

Review Round 1
2025-03-24

Review Round 2
2025-04-04

Review Round 3
2025-04-14

Accepted
2025-04-24

Conflict of Interest
None

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Not required

Plagiarism X-checker
11.36

Note



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Introduction

Age is a complex concept that goes beyond the number of years someone has lived. It can be viewed through various dimensions, including chronological age, biological age, psychological age, social age and functional age.[1] *Ayurvedic* age classification encompasses all these types of age and reflects a holistic view on human development across different stages of life. In particular, Female age classification in *Ayurveda* is significant because it reveals the condition of the reproductive hormones and their influence on the reproductive phase, and overall well-being. These stages have a clinical perspective, especially in managing various health concerns specific to women. This classification helps in addressing various conditions such as menstrual irregularities, reproductive challenges, menopausal symptoms, and age-related degenerative disorders.

Ayurveda serves as a guide for personalized preventive healthcare by acknowledging the dynamic nature of female anatomy and physiology. A more comprehensive approach to health in *Ayurveda* is based on the balance of the three *Doshas*—*Vata*, *Pitta*,

And *Kapha*- ensuring optimal wellness across childhood, reproductive years, and old age. A deeper understanding of these classifications, allows practitioners to help patients sustain their health and vitality for longer periods. The purpose of this article is to examine the clinical significance of the classification of women by age in *Ayurveda* and its scope in practicality in medicine.

Aim of the Study

To review the clinical significance of female age classification in *Ayurveda* along with its practical applications in healthcare, highlighting the incorporation of various age types in a holistic approach to well-being.

Materials and Methods

This article is based on a review of *Ayurvedic* texts, Materials related to age classification, *Vaya*, and other relevant topics have been collected. *Ayurvedic* texts that are mainly used for this study are *Charaka Samhita*, *Harita Samhita*, *Parasara Smriti*, and the available commentaries on these. Along with contemporary research articles and genuine websites.

Table 1: Acharya Charaka classification of age.[2]

Stage of Life	Sub Category	Age Range	Dominant Dasha	Characteristics
Balya Avastha (Childhood)		0-16 years	Kapha	Rapid growth, tenderness (Sukumarta), absence of full strength (Bala).
	Aparipakva Dhatu (Immature Tissues)	0-16 years	Kapha	Bodily tissues (Dhatu) are not fully developed.
	Paripurna Dhatu (Matured Tissues)	16-30 years	Pitta	Beginning of Dhatu maturation, increasing physical and mental stability, yet a wavering mind.
Madhyama Avastha (Adolescence to Middle Age)		16-60 years	Pitta	Bala, Veerya, Paurusha, and Parakrama are well-developed. Grahana, Dharana, Smarana, and Vachana Shakti are optimal. All Dhatus are fully matured, mindfulness is established.
Jeerna Avastha (Old Age)		60+ years	Vata	Progressive decline in physical strength, complexion, and overall vitality is observed.

Acharya Charaka's classification of age closely aligns with Erikson's stages of development, as both emphasize lifelong growth and the role of social relationships in shaping personality.

Table 2: Correlation Between Erikson's Stages of Development and Acharya Charaka's Age Classification

Charaka's Age Classification	Age Range	Characteristics	Erikson's Psychosocial Stage[3]	Correlation
Balya Avastha	0-16 years	Kapha predominance, Rapid growth, tenderness (Sukumarta), absence of full strength (Bala), low resilience to distress (Kleshahishuntha).	Trust vs. Mistrust (0-1 yr) & Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt (1-3 yrs)	Early childhood focuses on trust-building, autonomy, and basic motor skills
			Initiative vs. Guilt (3-6 yrs) & Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12 yrs)	Development of curiosity, creativity, and social confidence aligns with childhood growth

Charaka's Age Classification	Age Range	Characteristics	Erikson's Psychosocial Stage[3]	Correlation
Aparipakva	0-16 years	Incomplete Dhatu formation, lack of full strength (Bala)	Identity vs. Role Confusion (12-18 yrs)	Adolescents struggle with self-identity, similar to Acharya Charaka's mention of an immature state
Paripakva Dhatu Avastha	16-30 years	Pitta predominance, Beginning of Dhatu maturation, increasing physical and mental stability, yet a wavering mind (Asthir chitta).	Identity vs. Role Confusion (12-18 yrs) & Intimacy vs. Isolation (18-40 yrs)	Teenage and early adulthood phases focus on self-exploration, relationships, and stability
Madhyama Avastha	16-60 years	Fully developed Dhatus, Bala, intellectual and emotional stability	Generativity vs. Stagnation (40-65 yrs)	This phase involves career, family responsibilities, and contributions to society
Jeerna Avastha	60+ years	Vata predominance, degeneration, wisdom, physical decline	Integrity vs. Despair (65+ yrs)	Aging leads to reflection on life, wisdom, or regret, mirroring Acharya Charaka's description of old age.

In *Charaka Samhita* the age classification is applied to both males and females. However, in females, due to the more complex physiology and significant hormonal changes, Some *Acharyas* has provide a distinct age classification for women. This specialized classification acknowledges the unique physiological transitions that females undergo, such as menarche, pregnancy, menopause, and post-menopausal changes.

Table 3: Acharya Harita Classification of Female Age.[4]

SN	Stage of Life	Age Range
1.	Bala	Up to 5 years
2.	Mughdha	6 to 11 years
3.	Bala	12 years
4.	Mughdha	13 to 19 years
5.	Prauda	20- 28 years
6.	Pragalbha	29-41 years

The female age classification of *Acharya Harita* not only highlights physiological and anatomical changes but also the psychological transformations that occur as a woman matures.

- **Bala (childhood)** - A phase of *Aparipakva Dhatu*, (immature *Dhatus*) where bodily tissues and organ systems are still in the early stages of development, indicating ongoing anatomical development.
- **Mughdha (early teenage)** - Marks the onset of hormonal changes and psychological immaturity, indicating the early transitions of adolescence marking the beginning of physiological growth. Teenagers face several obstacles as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood. Peer pressure, mental health issues, low self-esteem, academic stress, and family disputes are some of the physical, emotional, social, and psychological causes of these challenges.[5,6,7]

This stage, which symbolizes the delicate and transforming budding period of a child's growth, closely aligns with the *Mugdha* phase of female development as defined by *Harita*.

- **Bala (early adolescence)** - A critical stage of growth and development, marks the onset of *Rajodarshana* (first menstrual cycle) and the initial reproductive awakening, which signify physiological maturity.
- **Mugdha (adulthood)** - Even while adolescence continues, full reproductive maturity has not yet been reached; for this reason, this stage is once more referred to as *Mugdha*, highlighting the gradual progression towards adulthood and signifying incomplete psychological and psychosocial development.
- **Praudha (late adulthood)** - Represents anatomical, physiological, and psychological stability. indicating the woman's attainment of full reproductive maturity and emotional stability, signifying adulthood and general maturity across all age dimensions.
- In terms of mental and social characteristics, women mature to exhibit themselves in society during *Madhyamavastha* (24–37 years), which is known as the *Uttam Avastha* (ideal reproductive phase) and the best time for conception and childbearing.[8]

Table 4: Female age classification in *Parasara Smṛti*. [9]

SN	Age Range	Term Used
1.	Up to 8 years	Gauri
2.	Up to 9 years	Rohini
3.	Up to 10 years	Kanya
4.	10 years onwards	Rajaswala

The *Parasara Smṛti* outlines female age classification,

Detailing early developmental changes and the gradual transition to maturity, focusing on both physical and physiological growth.

1. Interpretation of word *Gauri*[10]

- In *Parasara Smṛti*, *Gauri* represents early childhood, which is derived from the word "*Gaur*," meaning white—a colour linked to *Kapha* dominance, which governs this phase of growth.
- In Hindu mythology, *Gauri* represents the primordial form of Devi, symbolizing the origins of creation. Similarly, this stage signifies the beginning of a girl's developmental journey.

2. Interpretation of word *Rohini*[11]

- "*Rohini*" originates from "*Aarohana*" or "*Rohana*," meaning "ascending" or "climbing," symbolizing the onset of anatomical and physiological growth.
- The word also represents colour red; it reflects the appearance of a bright, flushed complexion (rosy cheeks) due to increased vascularity from rising estrogen levels.
- In Hindu astrology, *Rohini* refers to *Rohini Nakshatra*, the star that the Moon favors and travels through each month of the lunar cycle. This mythical reference mirrors the onset of a girl's monthly hormonal cycle, signalling the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis's activation and marking a significant milestone in her physiological development.

3. Interpretation of word *Kanya*

- The word "*Kanya*" typically refers to a girl, and Sanskrit dictionary frequently translates it as "virgin." It is probably a sign of an unmarried phase or period just before menstruation.[12]

- Derived from the word "*Kana*," meaning small or young. It signifies the transition from childhood to maturity, marking the onset of regular menstrual cycles.[13]

4. Interpretation of word *Rajaswala*

- A girl who has started menstruation is called a *Rajaswala* in *Ayurveda*. According to classical scriptures, the first menstrual period (*Raja Darshan*) usually begins around the age of twelve,[14] but this can change depending on pathological, psychological, or environmental variables.

Freud believed that children's psychosexual development shapes their personalities as adults. In the latent stage, the sexual energy is redirected into creative, intellectual, and social pursuits, which lasts from the age of six to puberty. At this stage, children are not cognitively prepared to comprehend sexual concepts; instead, they are focused on developing their social skills and self-confidence. [15] This notion resonates with the early phases outlined in the *Parasara Smṛiti*, in which young girls are perceived as sublime and pure, signifying a morally and socially innocent state. It is a hidden concept that provides a solution for the behavioural challenges that women encounter at this stage due to societal factors.

Correlation Between *Ayurvedic* Female Age Classification and Tanner's Stages of Puberty

Parasara Smṛti's classification aligns with Tanner's stages, highlighting the gradual progression from childhood to reproductive maturity. While *Parasara Smṛti* classifies stages culturally and developmentally, Tanner's classification focuses on physical and hormonal changes.

Table 5: Relation between age classification in *Parasara Smṛiti* and Tanner classification.

Parasara Smṛti Female Age Classification	Age Range	Meaning & Characteristics	Tanner Classification of Puberty.[16]	Correlation
Gauri	Up to 8 years	Early childhood, Kapha predominance, prepubertal phase, innocence, and growth.	Tanner Stage 1 (Prepubertal Stage)	No visible secondary sexual characteristics; childhood growth and development.
Rohini	Up to 9 years	Initiation of growth phase, early anatomical changes, increased estrogen levels, increased vascularity.	Tanner Stage 2 (8-15 years)	Onset of breast development (thelarche), slight pubic hair growth (pubarche),
Kanya	Up to 10 years	Pre-menarchal phase, nearing reproductive maturity, transition from childhood to puberty.	Tanner Stage 3 (10-15 years)	Accelerated growth (growth spurt), breast enlargement, pubic hair darkens, hormonal changes continue.
Rajaswala	10 years onward	Onset of menarche (first menstrual cycle), activation of the reproductive system.	Tanner Stage 4 (10-17 years)	Menarche usually occurs, full breast development, thick pubic hair, increased reproductive hormones.
Rajaswala (Continued Pubertal Development)	After menarche	Regular menstrual cycles begin, reproductive system matures, nearing adulthood.	Tanner Stage 5 (12.5-18 years)	Full physical maturity, completion of secondary sexual characteristics, stable menstrual cycles.

Tanner's categorization and *Parasara Smṛti* share a similar sequential pattern in pubertal progression, even if the timing of developmental events may differ between modern and *Ayurvedic* perspectives due to environmental, physiological, and ethnic influences. Both acknowledge the normal stages of puberty, which include growth during childhood, followed by hormonal activation, secondary sexual development, and ultimately, reproductive maturity. Although the onset may be influenced by lifestyle, environmental, and hereditary variables, the overall sequence of physiological changes in both systems remain unchanged.

Result

The study emphasizes an organized process from childhood to aging, highlighting the alignment between contemporary developmental theories and *Ayurvedic* female age classification. While contemporary theories focus on specific developmental stages, *Ayurveda* offers a holistic approach by combining physical, psychological, and reproductive aspects. *Ayurvedic* classifications provide gender-specific insights, particularly regarding reproductive health, and hold clinical relevance in preventive and personalized healthcare. Despite differences in timing due to genetic and environmental factors, incorporating *Ayurvedic* and modern viewpoints can improve healthcare practices by integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary scientific understanding.

Discussion

The classification of female age in *Ayurveda* provides a holistic understanding of physiological, psychological, and social transformations across different life stages. *Acharya Charaka*, *Harita*, and *Parasara Smṛti* provide detailed classifications that align with modern developmental frameworks, such as Erikson's psychosocial stages, Freud's psychosexual stages, and Tanner's classification of puberty.

A key correlation exists between *Parasara Smṛti's* classification and Tanner's stages, as both recognize a sequential pattern of pubertal progression—beginning with early childhood growth, followed by hormonal activation, secondary sexual development, and reproductive maturity. Similarly, *Acharya Harita's* classification recognizes the progression from childhood to adulthood,

Focusing on hormonal changes, anatomical growth, and mental evolution. *Acharya Charaka's* classification further emphasizes the wavering mind (*Asthir Chitta*) during adolescence and early adulthood, which aligns with Erikson's Identity vs. Role Confusion stage. These frameworks collectively provide a clinical basis for understanding female health concerns, including menstrual irregularities, reproductive challenges, menopause, and aging-related disorders.

By incorporating chronological, biological, psychological, social, and functional aspects of age, *Ayurveda* offers preventive and personalized healthcare approaches. It emphasizes balancing *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha doshas* to ensure optimal health across childhood, reproductive years, and old age.

Conclusion

Ayurvedic age classification serves as a comprehensive tool for understanding female growth, development, and reproductive health. The parallels with modern classification systems validate *Ayurveda's* scientific approach to life stages, highlighting its relevance in contemporary healthcare. By integrating biological, psychological, social, and functional aspects of age, *Ayurveda* provides individualized health strategies that promote long-term well-being and disease prevention. Recognizing the significance of each age phase allows for targeted interventions, ensuring holistic wellness from childhood to old age.

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