

Keeda Jadi: The Golden Caterpillar of the Himalayas

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Abstract-Keeda Jadi (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), also known as the "Himalayan Viagra," is a rare medicinal fungus belonging to the family Ophiocordycipitaceae. It grows naturally in the high-altitude Himalayan regions of India, Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan by infecting the larva of a ghost moth. Due to its rarity, limited harvesting season, and high market value, it is considered one of the world's most valuable medicinal fungi. The major bioactive compound, cordycepin ($C_{10}H_{13}N_5O_3$), has been studied for its antioxidant, antitumor, and organ-protective properties. Traditionally, Keeda Jadi has been used to support liver, kidney, lung, cardiovascular, and reproductive health, and is especially valued for promoting vitality, stamina, and sexual wellness. However, further clinical research is required to confirm its safety, efficacy, and long-term therapeutic potential.

Key words- Keedajadi, (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), Himalayan gold, wild Mushroom, Caterpillar fungus, Yarsagumba, Himalayan viagra

I. Introduction

The name *Keeda Jadi* comes from two Hindi words: "Keeda" (insect) and "Jadi" (herb). Despite its name, it is not a plant but a rare medicinal fungus.

Keeda Jadi develops when a fungus infects the larva of a Himalayan moth. Over time, the fungus grows

inside the larva eventually producing a slender fruiting body that emerges above the soil. The harvested specimen is a unique combination of the preserved insect body and the fungal growth. Because wild Keeda Jadi naturally develops on an insect, it is not considered vegan. In contrast, cultivated *Cordyceps militaris* is grown on plant-based substrates without insects, making it a vegan alternative.²

Botanical Name-*Ophiocordyceps sinensis* (formerly called *Cordyceps sinensis*).

Family-Ophiocordycipitaceae

It is a rare natural combination of a parasitic fungus and a caterpillar, found only in the high-altitude Himalayan regions.

Keeda Jadi (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), also known as the caterpillar fungus, is a rare medicinal fungus found in the high-altitude Himalayan regions of India, Nepal, and Tibet. It develops by infecting the larva of a ghost moth, eventually replacing the insect and producing a mushroom-like fruiting body above the soil after the winter snow begins to melt.

Highly valued for its rarity, Keeda Jadi provides an important seasonal source of income for many mountain communities. It is also known by different local names, including *Yarsagumba* in Nepal and Tibet and Dong Chong Xia Cao in China, meaning "winter worm, summer grass."³



Figure 1



Figure 2

Keeda Jadi Price and Rarity³

Keeda Jadi is often called the world's most expensive herb. Its price depends on quality, demand, and origin.

- Average price in India: ₹8–12 lakh per kg
- International market: \$20,000–40,000 per kg
- Reason for high cost:
- Found only at high Himalayan altitudes
- Short harvesting season (May–July)
- Extremely limited availability
- Growing demand in global markets

Challenges in Harvesting Keeda Jadi

The collection of Keeda Jadi is not easy. Local villagers trek for days to high-altitude pastures, risking health and safety.

Challenges faced:

- Extreme cold and tough terrain
- Risk of landslides and altitude sickness
- Strict government regulations to control over-harvesting
- Declining availability due to climate change and over-extraction

Pharmacological Activity-

One of the key bioactive compounds in Keeda Jadi is cordycepin ($C_{10}H_{13}N_5O_3$). It acts as a DNA synthesis blocker, helping inhibit the growth and multiplication of certain abnormal cells. This

property has made cordycepin a promising compound in ongoing medical research.⁴

1. Maintain liver function
2. Maintain kidney function
3. Maintain Lung's function
4. Improve sexual function
5. Antioxidant properties
6. Antitumor activities
7. Effects on Heart

Also Known As: Himalayan Viagra

Keeda Jadi (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is often referred to as the "Himalayan Viagra" because of its traditional use in Himalayan medicine to support vitality, stamina, libido, and overall sexual wellness. While this nickname reflects its long-standing reputation, scientific research is still ongoing to fully assess these potential effects.

II. Conclusion

Keeda Jadi (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is one of the world's rarest and most valuable medicinal fungi, renowned for its unique life cycle and long history of traditional use in the Himalayan region. Rich in bioactive compounds such as cordycepin, it has attracted significant scientific interest for its potential pharmacological activities, including antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and organ-protective effects. Although preliminary research suggests promising therapeutic benefits, further well-designed clinical studies are needed to confirm its efficacy and safety. Sustainable

harvesting and conservation are also essential to protect this valuable natural resource for future generations.

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