

Folk Song: Mo Li Hua (Jasmine Flower)

“Mo Li Hua,” or “Jasmine Flower,” is one of the most famous traditional folk songs of China, cherished for its gentle melody and poetic simplicity. Its origins are often traced to the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), though it likely developed from even earlier regional folk traditions, especially in the Jiangsu province.

The lyrics are short and repetitive, describing the beauty and fragrance of the jasmine flower. The singer praises the flower as the most lovely of all and expresses a desire to pick it. However, this desire is held back by hesitation—fear of damaging the flower or of being scolded by others. This small moment of indecision gives the song its emotional depth.

In Chinese culture, jasmine often represents purity, grace, and quiet beauty. The singer’s hesitation can reflect deeper ideas:

- Respect for something beautiful rather than taking it for oneself
- The value of self-control and humility
- Awareness of social expectations and harmony with others

These themes connect to important ideas in Chinese philosophy, especially those influenced by thinkers like Confucius, who emphasized respect, balance, and proper behavior within society.

Musically, “Mo Li Hua” is simple but expressive. Its smooth, flowing melody makes it easy to sing, which helped it spread widely among ordinary people. Over time, it has been arranged for many different settings—from solo voice with traditional instruments, to full orchestras and even Western classical performances.

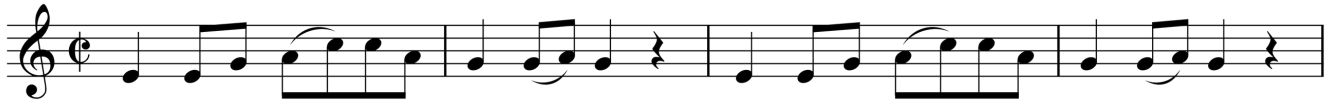
The song has also played an important role in cultural exchange. It has been performed internationally at major events and even been incorporated into Western works, helping introduce global audiences to Chinese musical traditions.

Though its lyrics are brief, the song captures a quiet moment of admiration, reminding listeners that true beauty is something to be honored, not hurriedly taken.

Below is the translation of the song into English. (For singable lyrics, see next page.)

*Beautiful jasmine flower
Beautiful jasmine flower
Sweet-smelling, beautiful, stems full of buds
Fragrant and white, everyone praises
Let me pluck you down to give to someone
Jasmine flower, jasmine flower*

Mo Li Hua (Jasmine Flower)



好 一 朵 美 麗 的 茉 莉 花 好 一 朵 美 麗 的 茉 莉 花
Hao yi duo mei li di mo li hua. Hao yi duo mei li di mo li hua.

5



芬 芳 美 麗 滿 枝 桠 又 香 又 白 人 人 誇
Fen fang mei li man zhi ya, you xiang you bai ren ren kua.

9



讓 我 來 將 你 摘 下 送 給 別 人 家 茉 莉 花 呀 茉 莉 花
Rang wo lai jiang ni zhai xia, song gei bie ren jia, mo li hua ya mo li hua.

Mo Li Hua (Jasmine Flower) Lyrics

Singable Lyrics:

Oh what a lovely little jasmine flower
Oh what a lovely little jasmine flower
Blooming proudly like never before
Fragrant and white, you are praised by all
Oh how I'd love to take you with me
For someone special to see
Jasmine flower, jasmine flower