

LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF AI: TRADITION, INNOVATION, AND THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the evolving position of literature in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on the tensions and opportunities arising from the intersection of technological advancement and literary tradition. Drawing upon examples from Malay literary heritage, including pantuns, proverbs, classical manuscripts, and oral traditions, the discussion highlights literature's enduring role as a repository of collective memory, cultural identity, moral values, and human experience. While AI and digital technologies have transformed the production, dissemination, and consumption of literary works, they also pose challenges including cultural homogenisation, the proliferation of superficial content, and a diminishing appreciation of authentic human creativity. The article argues that literature possesses unique qualities rooted in lived experience, emotional depth, and ethical reflection that algorithmic systems cannot fully replicate. At the same time, AI offers valuable support for authors through translation, editing, idea generation, character development, and research assistance. Rather than viewing technology as a threat, the article advocates for a balanced and critical engagement with AI, positioning it as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for human creativity. To ensure the continued relevance of literature, the paper emphasises the preservation of literary traditions, the responsible use of technology, the promotion of quality literary works, and collaboration across generations of writers. Ultimately, it contends that literature remains essential to the cultivation of humane, ethical, and culturally grounded societies, serving as a vital counterbalance to the increasingly mechanised nature of contemporary life.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, literature, literary tradition, digital humanities, Malay literature, cultural identity, creativity, technology, literary ecosystem.*

INTRODUCTION

Our present age and those before it have for several decades been excessively enamoured with technology. Technology has thus been allowed to reign as both king and queen. Amid the onslaught of a literary world deemed insubstantial and unprofitable, and what is often called "progress" - defined narrowly as buildings, commerce, and shopping malls - literature has been pushed aside, relegated

far behind, even beyond the margins. This new reality shakes the very tree of our being and identity.

As we move toward this new world, it is prudent to re-examine our direction and momentum, and to compare our experiences with those of other nations that have traversed this path before us. By doing so, we may gain a fuller perspective and assess ourselves and our challenges more judiciously.

In the era of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technology, literature worldwide - including in Malaysia - is undergoing profound transformation. It is therefore imperative that we reassess AI, as this technology increasingly permeates everyday life.

The literary world is a reflection of the human soul, where every interwoven letter mirrors life itself, revealing joy, sorrow, and the confusion that surrounds human existence. Yet in this digital age, where technology dominates nearly every aspect of life, the literary ecosystem stands at a crossroads - between the preservation of tradition and the necessity of adapting to the currents of the times. Technological advancement, particularly artificial intelligence, has altered paradigms across almost all fields, including literature. The question then arises: what is the fate of literature amid this technological deluge, and how does it compare with other fields that are likewise struggling to maintain relevance?

LITERARY TRADITION: INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE AS THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF A NATION

Literature that grows within the soul and language of a people ultimately becomes an instrument, a testament, and an image of its identity. Its ancient roots are embedded in the values, modes of thought, and emotional sensibilities of that people - including intellectual and artistic expressions recorded in history, poetry, *pantuns*, and performance arts. Over time, as it contributes to cultural formation, literature becomes an inseparable part of the nation's face and soul.

Traditional literature is rooted in the beauty of speech, the wisdom of metaphor - often tinged with melancholy - and narratives rich in meaning and moral instruction. Its works are born of human hands that interpret lived experience and translate it into art that touches the soul. Before the digital era, literature was written with pens or typewriters, published in physical form - books, anthologies, or manuscripts - and functioned as a civilizational legacy that shaped imagination and strengthened cultural identity.

Literature is not merely a beautiful record of life, but a vessel that preserves the collective memory of a nation. Through folklore, epics, verse, and poetry, historical experiences, worldviews, moral values, and shared emotions are passed down from one generation to the next. Literary tradition becomes the inner archive of society - binding past and present, and shaping our understanding of who we are as a people. In every stanza, proverb, and story lies wisdom that fortifies national identity and guides the intellect and spirit toward a higher awareness of humanity.

Literature is not simply an entertaining art form, but a medium that sustains the intellect and soul of a nation. Through literature, humans learn to evaluate life, to recognize the meanings of suffering and happiness, and to comprehend the subtleties of moral refinement. It records the pulse of each era, serving as a mirror for the collective conscience that shapes historical and moral consciousness. In a world increasingly fractured by technology and the speed of information, literary tradition must be preserved as a bulwark of values - lest humanity lose its bearings in the tide of sophisticated progress. For example, there is a proverb about the forest: "Roots are strong because of the taproot; the taproot is strong because of the roots." Another says: "A tree stands strong because of its roots; the roots are strong because of the soil."

And:

A great tree in the open field,

A shelter from the blazing sun,
A refuge from pouring rain,
Its roots a place to sit cross-legged,
Its trunk a place to lean upon.

There is, as yet, no definitive history explaining the origin of the *pantuns* form. I conjecture that our ancestors were fundamentally fond of words with similar sounds and rhymes - verses composed initially for their children. These basic lines later evolved into the two-line *pantuns* of greater structural, thematic, and semantic complexity.

The croaker fish with sharp spines,
Over time becomes a thief.

The Malays were also keen observers of nature. As they entered forests, waded through paddy fields or seas, climbed hills and mountains, and observed the habits of plants and animals, they discerned parallels with human behaviour and disposition. These observations were gathered and fashioned into *pembayang maksud* - the symbolic prelude to the intended meaning expressed in the final two lines of a *pantuns*.

The more prawns, the more salt,
The more people, the more temperaments.

Because of glutinous rice, coconut milk is spoiled;
Because of the mouth, the body is destroyed.

Already eaglewood, now sandalwood too;
Already knowing, yet still asking.

The plate uncracked, the rice not cold;
If you do not desire us, neither do we yearn.

A turtle within a boat,
Feigning ignorance.

When rice grains are round, they are eaten by chickens;
Those who wake up late marry the lazy.

Like old taro,
The older it gets, the more it thrives.

Similarly, the *pantuns* emerged in early Malay society when prehistoric peoples of the Nusantara became aware that nature offered reflections of the lived reality. The characteristics and behaviours of trees, animals, fish, and natural events suggested parallels with human life and conditions. From this awareness arose a mode of thought that perceived "the unfolding of nature as a teacher," or believed that "to understand humanity, one must enter the wilderness." Thus, when humans wished to express their worldview, the two most vital dimensions of life - nature and humanity - were aligned as mirrors that mutually complete one another.

If it is rice, say it is rice,
We will not thresh it in vain;
If it is done, say it is done,
We will not wait in ambiguity.

However, in the digital era, this intimacy has begun to be replaced by data uniformity. E-books are increasingly supplanting physical books, poetry is read through screens, and short stories are

delivered in audio formats. This transformation is inevitable - but can the deep and intricate soul of literature survive in a world that is fast-paced and superficial? In the use of AI, humans merely type on keyboards to obtain data. For instance, the image below, generated using AI Studio, is employed to explain a proverb.

Figure 1.
Image Generated by AI Studio

Asal besi pengapak kayu, asal emas menjadi penduk

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Peribahasa "Asal besi pengapak kayu, asal emas menjadi penduk" ialah peribahasa Melayu yang membawa makna tentang asal-usul dan nilai seseorang atau sesuatu. Mari kita pecahkan maksudnya:

◆ Maksud literal:

- Besi pengapak kayu → besi yang digunakan untuk mengetam atau membentuk kayu.
- Emas menjadi penduk → emas dijadikan perhiasan (penduk ialah hiasan di kepala).

◆ Maksud kiasan:

Peribahasa ini bermaksud setiap sesuatu itu akan menunjukkan sifat dan kegunaannya mengikut asalnya. Dengan kata lain, asal-usul seseorang atau sesuatu ↓ menentukan kelakuan, nilai, dan tarafnya — sama seperti besi tetap digunakan sebagai alat kerja, manakala emas tetap dijadikan perhiasan berharga.

Ask anything

Attach Search Study Voice

Figure 2.
Image Generated by AI Studio

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◆ Pengajaran:

- Seseorang tidak dapat lari daripada asal-usul atau tabiat semula jadinya.
- Sesuatu yang baik tetap bernilai walau di mana pun ia berada.
- Nilai dan martabat ditentukan oleh sifat asal, bukan keadaan luarannya semata-mata.

Contoh ayat:

Walau hidupnya susah, budi bahasa dan keturunannya tetap mulia — *asal besi pengapak kayu, asal emas menjadi penduk.*

Adakah anda ingin saya bantu buat huraian penuh seperti untuk karangan sekolah (dengan pengenalan, maksud, dan pengajaran)?

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Likewise, the structuring of AI-produced *pantuns* follows a similar pattern. Although AI systems may assist us, their use does not confer meaning upon human beings, for it is through literature that beauty unfolds into lived experience - into encounters with the many characters that inhabit our world. Literature invites us to reflect collectively on the meaning of life itself, and may lead us toward a future that is better, more complex, and more meaningful than the past we have already traversed, rather than toward a path shaped solely by AI.

Figure 3. *Pantuns Produced by AI*


Hijau daun di hujung taman,
Bunga mekar harum berseri,
Indah sungguh ciptaan Tuhan,
Penawar hati penenang diri.

Pantun 2 – Mentari dan Pagi

Mentari naik di ufuk timur,
Embun menitis di atas daun,
Hati terasa amat syukur,
Melihat alam ciptaan Tuhan.

Pantun 3 – Lautan dan Ombak

Ombak berdebur di tepi pantai,
Burung camar terbang beriring,
Alam luas indah permai,
Jadi bukti Tuhan yang mending.



Experimentation is always possible and ever-present, yet the most powerful energy - one does not know how many millions of kilowatts - has been channelled toward “fragrant” literature, drawing along with it a substantial portion of readers who had begun to grow accustomed to serious literary works. Science is granted pride of place, almost at the gates of heaven, and technology is rendered in golden ink - its wonders showcased to children alongside visions of the thick wallets of its graduates. Meanwhile, almost everyone forgets that a nation requires its literature, especially when 70% or more of it reflects national identity, inherited knowledge, and the history of its people.

In literature, local humans are creators and thinkers, composers of the music of language and the subtleties of metaphor. In the technological world, however, we are generally nothing more than naive consumers.

This prevailing gloom spreads and renders language and literary officers themselves less dynamic. Politicians dominate the governing boards of institutions, while linguists and literary scholars are seldom given space or a meaningful voice. Those appointed are often political selections rather than intellectual ones.

Similarly, leaders connected to language and literature are not always drawn from those with training or talent in these fields. In the past, individuals well-versed in both disciplines were given their due place; today, this is no longer assured.

At times, these institutions feel like mere sites of livelihood rather than spaces of passion for the Malaysian nation to sharpen its language and literary voice, to refine its instruments of thought, and to sketch its civilisation. Books do not sell - indeed, they are not read. Storerooms grow ever more crowded. Many Malay-language bookstores have closed, faded into obscurity, or sell only religious texts.

At other times, it seems that these institutions serve only a particular group—and even then, one bound to a specific ideology. No trace of diversity can be discerned, whether from afar or up close.

As Shakespeare observed, “There’s something rotten in the State of Denmark.” Is there something rotting, something putrid, within our language and literature? In such a scenario, what form and face of the future can we reasonably hope for?

I wish to place my hopes in the younger generation - those who will either carry Malaysian literature forward with the urgency of survival or bring its story to an end. If we learn from our past, we may

realise that traditional folk literature did not depend on courts or rulers, but instead drew upon talent and lived hardship to articulate voices and questions that were relevant to society.

If this is the path we choose to follow, then I urge writers, young and old, to write with greater intensity, greater appeal, and to soar on the wings of imagination - beautiful yet meaningful. Take inspiration from writers of Chile, Argentina, or Brazil; from India or Vietnam; from Australia or Nigeria.

Write about Malaysian humanity and society, as well as about humanity and societies that are universal. We must be rooted in our villages, but also in the global community.

We should also resist excessive sentimentality about village and rural life when we ourselves now reside in apartments. Our lives have changed, yet our literature has been slow to follow - lagging far, far behind. If we do not wish to search too far for examples, let us return to *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, for instance, which presents a grand narrative of a man representing his people - portraying humanity at sea and international civilisation within his homeland. He was a man from Kampung Duyong, in Daik, yet was carried across the world of Melaka and thereafter to Siam, China, Rome, and Keling, speaking in many of the world's languages through the course of history.

He was respected because he thought as both a Malay and a global human being. Learn from the world - from Africa and Latin America, East Asia, and also from peoples of small societies that have achieved great success. Learn from the literary resurgence of Israel and the Jewish diaspora - without adopting Zionism, but by observing their courage in writing in multiple languages and winning Nobel Prizes and other honours.

We must learn from Heinrich Heine, Saul Bellow, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Marcel Proust, Harold Pinter, and Joseph Brodsky - and not forgetting many other great writers, including Le Clezio, Gyatisolo, Tanikawa, and Basho. All of them bear messages for us as Malaysians, and as writers and readers of literature.

We must learn from China, the Netherlands, America, and the Arab world, and translate as many foreign-language works as possible - studying them as exemplary creations within our own language, so that the world may one day enjoy the songs and messages of our literature. Translate our works into foreign languages so that readers elsewhere may appreciate and evaluate us. We cannot remain endlessly self-indulgent.

AUTHORS AND AI

Human beings do not live by science and technology alone. Great nations and civilisations maintain a balance between literature, the social sciences, and science and technology. When we observe major world civilisations such as France, England, Greece, and Japan, we find that they are renowned for excellence in both domains - and their citizens take equal pride in each.

1. Assistance in translation across multiple languages
2. Shaping and crafting characters—for novels, short stories, and other genres
3. Creating and detailing narrative settings
4. Assisting in the use of refined language and in linguistic editing—enhancing writing style and strengthening the author's skills
5. Generating initial ideas for poems, *pantuns*, and other literary forms
6. Supporting authors in various aspects of the writing process
7. Helping authors conceptualise their desired main characters and develop them so they become more vivid, realistic, and emotionally resonant for readers
8. Assisting authors in organising an entire project within a shorter timeframe
9. Generating complex and engaging descriptions, enriching narrative settings and helping readers immerse themselves more deeply in the fictional world
10. Guiding readers from the printed page into the circuitry of computers.

These functions serve only as preliminary assistance to initiate a project. Ultimately, it is the author who makes the final decisions.

As an example, let us consider AI assistance in the following translation:

Figure 4. *AI-assisted Translation*

The gentleman's footsteps—
as though a serpent coiled about his legs;
like an eaglet soaring against the wind.
One step forward,
two steps back—
a sign that he was leaving the land.
Yet two steps backward
meant his heart was returning.
The right foot crossed over the left,
secured, bound,
the *canggai* creaked on the right.
His broad chest tightened,
and his fingers moved with quiet grace.

✦ Penambahbaikan yang dibuat:

- Menukar "as though a snake was coiling" — "as though a serpent coiled" untuk nada lebih puitis dan klasik.
- Menyeragamkan tempo dan aliran dengan tanda sengkang panjang (—) supaya irama bacaan terasa seperti puisi.
- "Flying against the wind" diubah menjadi "soaring against the wind" untuk memberi kesan megah dan bebas.
- Menyusun semula baris "two steps backwards meant that he was returning" supaya selari ritmanya

Figure 5. *AI-assisted Translation*

the footsteps of the gentleman;
as though a snake was coiling on his legs,
like the eaglet flying against the wind;
a step forward,
two steps backwards,
a sign that he was leaving the country,
two steps backwards
meant that he was returning,
a right foot forward,
stepping over the left,
fastened, tethered
the *canggai* creak on the right;
the broad chest was strained
and the fingers moved with grace,

Baik, terima kasih atas perkongsian teks tersebut. 🌱

Terjemahan anda sudah sangat puitis dan menarik — ia menggambarkan gerak langkah penuh makna, seolah-olah sebuah tarian atau upacara simbolik. Namun, saya boleh bantu menambah baik dari segi kejelasan, kelancaran irama bahasa, dan kesan estetikanya, tanpa mengubah makna asal.

Figure 5. AI-assisted Translation

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No matter how advanced the civilisation of a nation may be, it requires literature to record its life, to trace its pathways and directions, and to look to its writers for reflection and critique. In this respect, authors are vital contributors who offer balance—not only to the world of an individual or a nation, but also to individual readers who often find themselves lost in a world that is complex and somewhat chaotic.

AI AS A NEW MEDIUM OF LITERARY EXPRESSION

As AI technology continues to evolve, its role in the literary world is expected to become increasingly prominent. Although AI is not intended to replace authors, it offers them opportunities to explore new creative pathways, experiment with diverse writing styles, and potentially reach wider audiences through AI-powered recommendation tools. The future of literature may be shaped by a collaborative approach, in which AI complements and strengthens human creativity, thereby fostering a literary landscape that is dynamic and continually evolving.

At present, technology is fully empowered - at times even reigning supreme - and I find myself feeling estranged from a world I once believed I knew intimately. Thankfully, beyond this realm lies the natural world that builds and balances civilisation: coconut trees still produce blossoms, and buds continue to grow.

AI technology should also help us become courteous and attentive users of language - individuals who can listen closely to the sounds of sentences and phrases, and ultimately employ them effectively and with sincerity. AI ought to accelerate us toward a path of linguistic grace that nurtures well-being, rather than rushing so recklessly that the tree of language is struck down and civility pushed aside by bulldozers. This technology should not feel ancient and beautiful trees in full bloom, but should also recognise that mushrooms and fungi exist as nourishment for humanity. Without all these elements, we too would be impaired as inhabitants of this Earth. With benevolent technology, we may become gentle in our dealings with others, yet remain resilient when confronting human challenges and environmental realities.

LITERATURE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Artificial intelligence has advanced rapidly in recent years. Its focus has largely been on creating intelligence within computer systems that assist humans in activities once dependent on natural human cognition—such as understanding texts, detecting patterns, and interpreting linguistic

meaning. As a result, the digital world has begun to feel the effects of AI, particularly in the dissemination of literary works across the globe without reliance on physical books.

However, the darker side of this development is the proliferation of works produced without qualitative filtering. In the vast ocean of digital content, profound and high-quality works are often submerged beneath the popularity of shallow creations more aligned with mass taste. Social media algorithms prioritise clicks and “likes” over aesthetic value or narrative excellence.

More troubling still is the capacity of AI to generate poetry, short stories, and novels in mere moments. AI-generated works, though often lacking soul and emotional depth, are increasingly capable of mimicking human writing styles and structures with striking accuracy. Can traditional literature remain competitive when technology can produce thousands of works within a short span of time?

At the same time, the power and reach of national governments are diminishing, while supranational authorities and large corporations are emerging with broader and more pervasive influence. Certain forms of employment are disappearing, while new ones arise. With the advent of new technologies, occupations such as typists may no longer be necessary, while technology-based professions continue to expand. Workers are no longer loyal to a single job for a lifetime. Consequently, individual careers become more fluid, requiring workers to adapt continuously to changing conditions and local demands.

Market forces—including advertising, consumer goods, and commerce—have grown stronger and more expansive than ever before, penetrating ever more areas of our lives, from education to commodities, religion, and family. Globalisation introduces a sense of uniformity across cultures and nations, where the same products can be obtained almost anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, electronic media increasingly defines how we receive information, what kind of information we receive, and how we fill our leisure time. Its influence may surpass that of formal education. Ultimately, our lives and identities will continue to become eclectic, with elements from diverse cultures blended for advertising purposes, while household tools and décor may originate from Thailand, Iran, or Italy.

COMPARING LITERATURE WITH OTHER FIELDS

In the visual arts, AI technologies such as DALL-E and MidJourney have produced extraordinary illustrations and paintings. In music, algorithms have composed symphonies of remarkable beauty, challenging the uniqueness of human creation. In journalism and research writing, AI has helped accelerate data analysis and the dissemination of facts.

Yet literature possesses a distinct quality that technology finds difficult to replace: it is an art born of uniquely human experience, imbued with emotional subtlety and experiential complexity. AI may replicate structure and style, but it clearly lacks the authenticity of lived experience that only humans can convey. A poem about love, for instance, does not rely solely on rhyme and rhythm, but on wounds, loss, and hope endured by the poet.

Moreover, one of the most valuable treasures of the Malay world lies in its ancient manuscripts scattered across the globe. In the past, these works were often regarded as insignificant due to a lack of recognition of their commercial and aesthetic value. Today, however, perspectives have shifted, and these manuscripts are acknowledged as vital sources for understanding the heritage and history of the Malay people.

Figure 6.
Taj al-Salatin

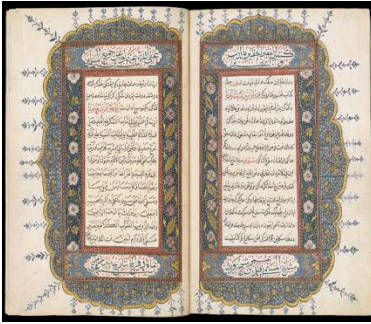
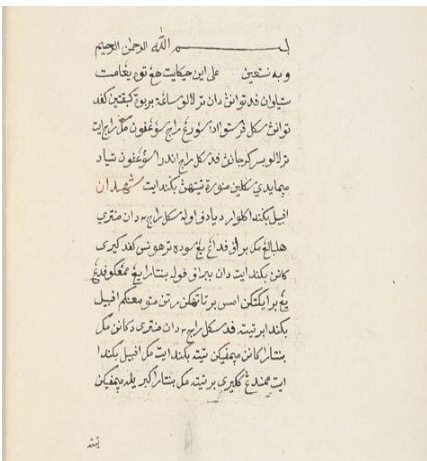


Figure 7.
Hikayat Hang Tuah, Or. 16215, in British Library



These manuscripts preserve a long history, the stories of our ancestors' past, as well as knowledge, counsel, and wisdom passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, because so many of these manuscripts are scattered across the world, efforts to collect and access them have become increasingly difficult. Although digital technology has made such efforts more feasible, the need to establish a dedicated Nusantara Manuscript Centre remains urgent. Such a centre would serve as a global reference hub for the research, preservation, and development of Malay and Nusantara manuscripts.

Compared to other fields, literature is also more vulnerable to the threat of homogenisation. In the visual arts and music, the human touch continues to be valued for the uniqueness of individual technique. In literature, however, where language is often perceived as a universal tool, AI-generated works may be more readily accepted by general readers who are less attentive to the inner soul of this art form.

CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE OF LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF AI

In responding to the tide of AI, the wisest course is not to reject technology, but to engage with it thoughtfully, so that literature may remain the voice of human conscience—rather than a mere echo of algorithms. To ensure the survival of literature as a human art, several measures must be taken:

Preserving Tradition

Literary education must continue to be strengthened—not merely as a subject of study, but as a means of understanding life. Emphasis on linguistic refinement, critical thinking, and artistic

appreciation must be prioritised. In this new AI-inflected world, we need authentic works—born of restless souls, disappointment, and complexity—to mark us as human beings who are intricate, imaginative, and capable of both grand and modest ideas.

The Wise Use of Technology

Authors should therefore use AI as an aid, not a replacement. AI may assist in research, editing, or the exploration of ideas, but the soul of a work must continue to arise from human experience.

Valuing Quality Works

We must encourage readers to choose works of quality through recognition such as literary awards, critical reviews, and the promotion of deep and meaningful writing.

Intergenerational Collaboration

Writers of older and younger generations must work together, learning from one another to integrate tradition and innovation. Such collaboration can create a more balanced ecosystem in which artistic values are not sacrificed for technological advancement.

This narrative will always be referenced and cherished, with or without technology.

Sadly, we have built a technology that has also created its own distinct and novel character. As a result, many of us now behave and move as human beings profoundly shaped by this technology. Regrettably, its literary logic of plastic and metal continues to dominate, wielding syllogisms that proceed directly, without the hesitation or doubt inherent in human experience. Such reasoning advances swiftly, but without the courtesy and compassion known to the human heart. Without doubt - an essential element of the real world - we may arrive instead at false certainties.

As human beings, we all desire foundational and advanced technological assistance to help us live more easily and comfortably. We have enjoyed this gradually for over two thousand years, and for this we are grateful. Yet I sense that beyond the pursuit of comfort, we also seek metaphors that can carry our thoughts and feelings toward those we love or despise. We search for correspondences and symbols, for metaphors and analogies capable of conveying images of experience that are still unclear or difficult to articulate.

Human beings also seek stories - fragments of lives once lived, both our own and those of others - because stories compose experience and meaning, arrange conclusions, and offer lessons. We must not forget the narrative paths taken by both ordinary and extraordinary individuals. We need stories as we need life itself; we need narratives as we need self-reflection, so that we may read the meaning of life on our own faces as well as on the faces of storytellers. Literature is among these consolations, received and digested daily - because in listening to stories, we feel closer to and better able to understand this complex world.

Moreover, humans often seek beauty, which offers a measure of relief in lives that are frequently difficult and painful. Through beauty, experience becomes more graceful, meaningful, and worthy of gratitude and enjoyment. This is the beauty that resides within us—the beauty that flows through *pantuns* and *syair*, that speaks in *gurindam* and free verse, that narrates within Malay–Nusantara and global storytelling traditions.

called the sea
(an expression from a resident of Sungai Rampah, Serdang)

it is called the sea:
water changes its nature
the soul rages

or sinks into contemplation.
it is called the wind:
that blows from fire
or dies upon the mountain.
it is called the earth:
dense with self
anchored by gravity
yet at times
moves against itself.
it is called nature:
rolling through the cosmos
and dwelling in the wilderness.

I believe that our literary scholarship remains modest and must be consolidated, strengthened, and elevated to global recognition. We must draw the spirit and energy from within - from intellectual necessity and real conditions. Having been indulged for so long, we have become mere custodians and recipients of inspiration from outside and above.

When I contemplate the present age, I cannot escape the conclusion that the elements that make us human are being eroded, stripped away, and marginalised. This is a deeply grave and dangerous phenomenon of our time—the danger of being alienated from the finest qualities once cultivated and practised across generations to confer dignity upon our brief lives on this Earth.

No matter how advanced modern technology becomes, I maintain that only technologies that uphold human dignity and honourable self-worth should be embraced. Such technology must make us more attentive and sensitive to the fate of those around us—whether in the interior of Pahang or on the slopes of Ranau, in Bachok or Sipadan. As inhabitants of this world, we should also share in the suffering of humanity in Gaza and Ukraine, in Syria and Fiji, and wherever people are engulfed by hardship and disaster.

Technology should also help us become courteous users of language—capable of listening carefully to the sounds of sentences and phrases, and ultimately employing them effectively and with integrity. It should accelerate us toward a path of civilised conduct that nurtures well-being, rather than rushing so recklessly that the tree of language is struck down and civility is pushed aside by bulldozers. This technology must not only refrain from felling ancient and beautiful trees or flowering shrubs, but also recognise that mushrooms and fungi exist as sustenance for humanity. Without all these elements, we too would be crippled as inhabitants of this planet. With good technology, we may become gentle in our dealings with others, yet remain resilient in confronting human and environmental challenges.

I have no desire whatsoever to discard new technology. I am aided by it daily; I travel by sophisticated and swift cars and aeroplanes—for all this, I am grateful. What I hope for is that we may establish a new order that is more efficient, more balanced, and more conscious of the gifts of nature and technology alike. We need the knowledge carried in the voice of a singer just as much as we need the knowledge contained in books and diagrams. These must be combined so that we may reap the fullest benefit.

With both together, humanity may become more whole, more open, and more capable of giving and receiving. While we retain our self-respect, moral dignity, and honour, we must also continue to cultivate the garden of the heart and the voice of conscience, so that we are always guided by our better choices.

I call upon Malaysians - and those beyond our borders - to return to a flourishing civilisation that grants space to technology on one hand, and to feeling, linguistic beauty, and intellect on the other.

CONCLUSION

The literary ecosystem in the digital era is a site of encounter - between tradition and innovation, between human beings and machines. Despite its immense challenges, literature possesses the strength to remain relevant, for it is an art rooted in the human heart, spirit, and soul. In an increasingly mechanised world, literature can serve as a reminder that technological progress must complement, and not replace, human values.

As AI continues to rise, we must ensure that literature remains the finest reflection of what makes us human - our emotions, uniqueness, and incomparable complexity. If this can be preserved, literature will continue to live, not merely as an art form, but as a torch illuminating the path of civilisation.

In my view, no discipline within the sciences or mathematics alone can shoulder the great task of nurturing noble human beings for a dignified Malaysia. Therefore, we must bring the arts and literature to the centre of school and university curricula, so that the nation's larger philosophical aims may be realised.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I do not oppose science and technology in our classrooms - but I advocate a form of knowledge that is balanced and mutually enriching. In this way, we can cultivate students and graduates who are intelligent yet emotionally refined, ethical, and dignified. Let us cast our gaze north-westward - to Norway and Finland, which have freed education from the narrow confines of grades and classroom success alone.

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