Most societies of the world consider teaching as a noble profession and teachers are held in high esteem. In ancient India, the Guru was considered to be equivalent to the Trinity – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. When free societies are taken over by totalitarian regimes, teachers, along with other intellectuals, are often the first victims. So much so, the status of teachers in any society is a reflection of that society.

In spite of the significant role they play in nurturing the intellectual climate of societies, the teaching profession is not financially attractive in most countries, barring a few. As a result, it is often difficult to attract the brightest and most talented among the younger generation to the teaching profession, other than the few who are passionate and committed. For the vast majority, poor salaries and perks make teaching a low priority career option. In India, though we celebrate Teachers’ Day in honour of all teachers every year, even high-profile institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology find it difficult to make recruitments to their faculty. If we wish to preserve our intellectual values and traditions, we must take better care of our teachers.

A good teacher is more than a mere conveyer of information. To be a successful teacher, one has to be an outstanding communicator, one who can listen as well as talk. The joy one can derive from interacting with bright young minds, challenging and stimulating them, is indescribable. Combined with enhanced financial remunerations, this sense of satisfaction more than anything else must make teaching a better career option.

This issue of Resonance honours a great teacher and expositor of mathematics, Paul Halmos, who passed away recently. In his article, V S Sunder pays homage to his guru. A sample of Halmos’ inspirational writing is reproduced in the Classics section.