On this auspicious Fullmoon Day of Thadinkyut, which is also known as Abhidhamma Day, Buddhists celebrate the festival of lights, to mark the end of Buddhist Lent and also the completion of the preaching of Abhidhamma. In the seventh year after the attainment of Buddhahood, the Buddha ascended to the celestial abode. “Tavatimsa” and preached the Abhidhamma to Santussita Deva, who was His mother in a former existence, together with many other celestial beings (Devas and Brahmas) as a mark of noble gratitude to him (male Deva).

During the Lenten period, the Buddha came down daily to earth and spent the day at a retreat near the great lake called “Anodatta” and preached Abhidhamma to the Ven. Sariputta, while His replica left behind by the Buddha's miraculous power was also preaching the same simultaneously in Tavatimsa for three rainy months. When the preaching was over at the end of the Lent, the Fullmoon Day, the Buddha returned from Tavatimsa to the human world and along the route of His return, many lower and higher celestial disciples respectfully extended a warm welcome and paid homage to the Buddha, adorning and illuminating lights of various colours.

The Ven. Sariputta, who was the chief disciple of extraordinary wisdom, repreached to his five hundred disciples, Bhikkhus, in various methods in the Sandal wood forest. He was the only noble disciple who was capable of remembering what the Buddha taught in brief. It is indeed impossible in the human world to expound the Abhidhamma for three whole months at a stretch.

The Buddha expounded Abhidhamma in great detail in Tavatimsa while He was preaching it in brief to the Ven. Sariputta who again repreached it neither in brief nor in detail to his disciples.

The Abhidhamma pitaka, the basket of the Buddha's Higher Teaching, is the most important and extremely essential as it comprises of the profound philosophy of the Teaching, in contrast to the simpler discourses in the Suttanta Pitaka. The Abhidhamma, however contains the quintessence of His profound Doctrine. According to some scholars, Abhidhamma is not an original Teaching of the Buddha, but is a later elaboration of learned Bhikkhus. However, many various aspects of the Text attribute the essential themes of the Abhidhamma such as, "Kusala dhamma" the Wholesome States and ‘Akusala dhamma” the Unwholesome States and "Abyakata dhamma” the Indeterminate States or neither Wholesome or Unwholesome States were definitely expounded by the Buddha.

By observing so many systematic and authentic facts in the Abhidhamma, we have to admit that Abhidhamma must be the product of intellectual genius comparable only to the Buddha. This is quite evident from the intricate, subtle and profound "Patthana pakarana” which describes the various causal relations in the minutest detail.

The prefix ‘Abhi” is used in the sense of higher, greater or excellent, meaning "Atireka” in Pali or distinguished, exceeding or sublime “Visiththa” and "Dhamma” means Doctrine or Teaching. Abhidhamma therefore means the Higher Doctrine or the Sublime Teaching, because it enables one to achieve one's deliverance “Vimutti”, and also because it exceeds the Teachings in the Suttanta Pitaka and Vinaya Pitaka, where the Buddha made use of ordinary or conventional terms, such as man, animal, being, tree, etc., whereas in the Abhidhamma on the contrary, every thing is minutely analysed and only abstract terms, such as, consciousness, matter, solidity, psychic factor, etc. are precisely
explained. In brief, it is the so-called Abhidhamma, the preponderance of the Teaching, because it is conducive to one's deliverance through insight wisdom by realising the thing as it truly is and by virtue of the excellent analytical method of treatment.

The Abhidhamma Pitaka consists of seven treatises, namely, 1. Dhammasangani - Classification of Dhamma. 2 Vibanga - The Book of Analysis. 3. Dhatukatha - Discourse on Elements. 4. Puggala Pannatti - The Book on Individuals. 5. Kathavatthu - Points of Controversy. 6. Yamaka - The Book of Pairs. 7. Patthana - The Book of Causal Relations. The main things in these subtle and profound books consist of consciousness, mental concomitants, matter and Nibbana: and the psycho-physical phenomena, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eight fold Path, the Law of Dependent Origination, the Principle of Enlightenment, the Transitoriness of all phenomena, the voidance of Self, Ego or Soul or personality, various attainments of individuals, the Insight Knowledge on the theory and practice of meditation, are well founded for the realization of the Path (Magga), the Fruition (Phala) and Nibbana.

By comprehensively studying and understanding the subject of the sublimity of Abhidhamma, one can analytically concentrate or contemplate or meditate on oneself as well as on others and thus one comes to realize that the so-called I or he, or she, or man, or woman, or tree, etc. as nothing, but merely a mass or aggregate of mental and material phenomena, just arising and passing away at every consecutive moment. Consequently, one is inclined only towards liberation from the manifold sorrows in "Samsara" (round of rebirths).

The Abhidhamma expounds that every one of us is composed of mind and body and the mind depends on the body, so also the body depends on the mind. These two phenomena are interdependent and interrelated, yet it is obvious that they are in nature quite different from each other. Mind, in the ultimate reality, being a process of consciousness, is ever arising and passing away; likewise, the physical body too, is momentarily decaying and collapsing. Until and unless we realize each and every one as a composition of mind and matter in a state of constant flux through the knowledge of Abhidhamma, we are misdirected with the wrong self-illusory view 'Attaditthi', and as a consequence attached to everything and everyone, such as, he, she, my son, my daughter, my husband, my wife, my property and so on. Thus we are almost always confronted with sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, etc.

In brief, from the Abhidhamma point of view, in the ultimate sense, the most essential factor for everyone is to develop spiritually with mental peace and happiness in the supreme wisdom of the Path, Fruition and Nibbana.

Such being the case, while we are materially offering lights to the Supremeley Enlightened One, Buddha, as during the Thadinkyut Festival on one hand, we must also carry out the bounded duties for our own nation and Sasana to preserve the good tradition on the other in conformity with Buddhist culture.

Culture, which reflects the morality and ethics of the Buddhist Teaching, is the very source of lifeblood for the stability of a nation and the Buddha Sasana. The development of culture means to raise the living standard of both the material and spiritual life of the human society. If our culture degenerates, the Sasana will decline and so will the nation. Therefore our actual responsibility is to preserve our own Buddhist Myanmar Culture and strive to develop, strengthen and heighten the spirit of our traditional Buddhist custom.

So in order to celebrate the Festival of lights with religious and cultural essence, we should certainly try to refrain from bad behaviour and speech that are contrary to our noble tradition and heritage and must also strive spiritually for the attainment of a higher standard of character or morality (Sila), of concentration (Samadhi) and of supreme wisdom (Panna), so that we can escape from the miserable whirlpool of Samsara and reach Nibbana, the Ultimate Bliss and Final Goal of Buddhism.