CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The anthropological notion of 'culture' originated with the Enlightenment critique, in its effort to construct reason upon sentiments. Sentiments and tradition were perceived as irrational and also as the causes of all social ills. This perception dominated Western thought from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century; forming into a critique of modern social spheres and arenas. Initially, the target was the theological and metaphysical world view of the past. Then it was extended to classical literature, ascetic morality and the authority of the church, heroic historiography and its myths, feudal institutions, and the forms of economy supporting them; and to the arena to the politics and the institutions of the absolute state. Science and the rise of technology provided the stimuli for the expansion of the scope of the critique, not only in terms of its articulating subject matter, i.e. history, but also comprehending the 'present' in a novel way, based on rationality and reason. For the Enlightenment theories of knowledge, the 'present' is a 'new age', in which 'rationality' and 'science' are considered as the guiding principles of human society, while its opposite, the 'dark ages' are considered as the era dominated by superstitions and ignorance. The Enlightenment critique emphasized that the rational knowledge constructed on empirical facts would pave the way forward for civilization.

This great divide of intellectual history 'before' and 'after' Enlightenment was later projected as a radical distinction between the non-West (or 'them') and the West (or
‘us’). Human society was then interpreted in such a way that non-Western societies (i.e. ‘them’) were relegated to a position of ‘backward’, ‘primitive’, ‘irrational’ or ‘superstitious’. In contrast, the West was placed in a supreme position of ‘progressive’, ‘modern’, ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’. The Enlightenment made such distinctions possible and the road to progress open. The rational knowledge projects of the West (us) were set in motion, exploring the facts of nature and leaving behind the conventional wisdom of the pre-modern people. The goal of the science thus was to liberate people from superstitions as well as from false authorities. In short, reason had to be liberated from imagination (Hastrup, 1995:68).

In achieving this goal, social sciences have involved in theory building--within a framework of ‘unilinear’ progress of society. Anthropology, for example, presented a theory of social evolution, which assumed that all societies evolve through similar stages of growth, and as a result, some societies are advanced than others. In his classic work, *The Division of Labour*, (originally published in 1893), Emile Durkheim (1864-1920) argued that societies are transforming from ‘primitive’ to ‘modern’ societies. The primitive society, he argued, is characterized by ‘mechanical solidarity’ in which there is a low division of labour, a segmentary structure and strong collective consciousness. In contrast, modern societies manifest ‘organic solidarity’ characterized by highly specialized division of labor, greater independence between component parts, individual orientation and differentiated social structure.

The writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883) presented a comprehensive evolutionary theory arguing that societies have evolved in a series of stages from ‘primitive communism’ to ‘industrial capitalism’, and all societies would eventually pass through all
these stages. He assumed that Europe would be the first among all others which would transform to socialism, the highest stage of ‘development’. Moreover, he assumed that the British possessed the socially necessary conditions for this transformation as the dominant colonial powers in Europe.

The construction of knowledge within the Enlightenment Culture was not a pure intellectual exercise. As far as the ‘knowledge’ (constructed in the classical theories) is concerned, it seemed that there had been a hidden political motivation; that is, Enlightenment theories of knowledge have attempted to separate the ‘West’ from the ‘non-West’ by relegating the latter into an exotic primitive culture. These ‘exotic cultures’ were seen as primitive and non-specialized in conceptual domains: political power was inextricably embedded in kinship; art was not distinguished from craft or from ritual production, economic life was sustained by social reciprocities and belief systems; and science could not engage as an autonomous field, as people had not yet found efficient ways of disentangling the practical from the religious or superstitious—an assumed incapability to separate cosmological belief from pure philosophy and practical knowledge. Thus ‘knowledge production’ in the Enlightenment culture was nothing other than an attempt to politicize social scientific and cultural knowledge with a view to emphasize the ‘superiority’ of the ‘West’ over the ‘non-West’.

In order to discuss this political motivation of the Enlightenment thesis, two widely contested discourses are analyzed in this thesis, namely the 'colonial discourse' and the 'development discourse'. The colonial discourse attempts to demonstrate the theory of civilizational progress; that ‘non-Western’ people are yet to be civilized through the forms they have already been experienced by the ‘West’. On the other hand, the
discourse of development is a post-colonial construct, which has a dual character: in its vision, it is always international; but in practice, it is local. This discourse has the elements of a practice as well as an ideology.  

The main concern of this thesis is the development discourse. It attempts to analyze the dynamics of the 'local' culture of a rural community in Sri Lanka within the context of rapid expansion of transnational culture. The processes of cultural interaction between the two, and the resultant changes in structures and institutions of the local community are analytically examined. 'Cultural dynamics' are considered in this thesis as a form of response to external interventions.

One way of entering of an alien transnational culture into a rural community in the non-Western world is 'development'. In this study, 'development' is considered not as a set of actions, but rather as an external force penetrating the community from outside with powerful ideologies. The power involved in this force can be seen in the manner it affects the thoughts and actions of people of the non-Western communities. A narrow perspective that focuses on the observable 'present' does not reveal what development is and what it does. Such a perspective usually hides rather than reveals the power involved in development. Therefore, in understanding development, it is necessary to relate it to the historical context within which it was born and fostered.

It was during the colonial period that the theoretical discourses of 'modernity' began to engage in non-Western societies. The knowledge produced by these discourses was thought of as 'democratic' and 'egalitarian', as opposed to 'racism'. When practicing the theory, it was advocated that the highest form of reason and freedom has been attained in the West by virtue of the putative superiority of the Western sciences.
Colonial anthropology and history contributed in a significant manner to propagate these theories of Western superiority. British historian, James Mill, for example, introduced India to colonial rulers as a country of ‘barbaric’ and ‘backward’ people. In his classic book, *History of British India*, (First published in 1817), Mill disputed and dismissed practically every claim ever made on behalf of the Indian culture and its intellectual traditions, concluding that it was totally ‘primitive’ and ‘rude’. This diagnosis fitted well with Mill’s general attitude that supported the idea of bringing a rather barbaric nation under the benign and reformist administration of the British Empire. Consistent with his beliefs, Mill was an expansionist in dealing with the remaining independent states in the subcontinent. The obvious policy to pursue, he explained, was to make war on those states and subdue them (cited in Sen, 1997:9).

In a similar manner, colonial anthropology was interested in developing models of society that can be interpreted mainly through Western theories and the experience of western modernity. While studying kinship and marriage in pre-modern societies of Asia and Africa, anthropologists presented a logic that every society transforms from matrilineal to patrilineal society. Thomas and Beckman (1985) disputed this false construction of society by pointing out that matrilineal societies still persist in many countries, despite their incorporation into the world market economy and urban culture. The idea of the elementary family is another example of anthropological model-building, based on Western experience. Anthropologists were keen to show that elementary or nuclear family is universal. Kathleen Gough, for example, argued that the elementary family would eventually emerge as the key kinship group with respect to residence, economic cooperation, legal responsibility, and socialization, with narrow range of
kinship relations spreading out from it bilaterally and linking it to other elementary families (1961:631).

Western science is associated with the idea of modernity. It is believed that science is inherently liberating and enables man to control nature for his perpetual material well-being. Modernity is, therefore, the ideology of technological and economic development. For its perpetuation, modernity requires a dynamic and expansionist capitalist order, the growth of bureaucratic systems, the dominance of secular, materialist, rationalist and individualist cultural values. The orientation of modernity is the formation of a rational culture and an efficient economy. Thus, modernity is associated with the principles of market capitalism. The polarities between 'progressive' and 'backward', and 'civilized' and 'primitive' therefore meant the presence and absence of capitalist values.

The hidden political agenda of modernity and the capitalist market in the West can be understood by analyzing the way in which capitalist values are transmitted to the non-western societies. These societies were first subjugated by the European powers by military strength and then by non-military mean such as conceptual, social and institutional programs. In controlling and changing a society, these non-military means were more effective and permanent than military power, and were exercised by the colonizers through the so-called 'civilizing mission'. Numerous studies have emphasized the gap that exists between the announced principles and actual practice of the civilizing mission. In this regard, Balandier (1996) shows that the enormous gulf between the facts and principles of the civilizing mission. Colonizers justified the crude exploitation of local economy and the capitalist values that they introduced by humanitarian principles of
the civilizing mission. Thus the entire ‘colonial project’ appears to have assumed an essentially pseudo character.

The creation of the modern state is closely associated with the concept of development. The ‘pre-colonial’ state in Asia and Africa was not an all-pervasive regime that controlled the entire social fabric of its subjects. However, in contrast, the modern state is a regime that not only controls its subjects but also proliferates its power through a complex assemblage of institutions and procedures. Foucault (1979) notices this as a form of ‘governmentalization’ of the state, a situation in which the state creates charters for interventions. The state adopts a method for intervention by constituting the society as a population that can be classified, differentiated, described and enumerated. Thomas states that “[A] subject nation is encompassed in a book, in a document that enumerates, classifies, hierarchies and locates a range of tribes, races, faiths and occupations, according to an array of grids that are objectified and naturalized in the vision of the state. These collations did not only express the colonizers’ omniscience, but also addressed more specific problems of classification and administration” (1994:38). The modern state created by colonial rule has become the sole authority that is responsible for the development and welfare of its subjects. Similarly, the distinctions it makes among segments of the population have become the means for allocating resources and actions of the state. Unlike in the pre-colonial era, “the state secured its legitimacy not by the participation of citizens in matters of the state but by claiming to provide for the well-being of population” (Chatterjee, 1988:281). Thus a close association can be found between the formation of the modern state and the origin of the development discourse. The interventionist state created by the colonizers was not merely a new experiment, but
rather an application of the model of a state that emerged in Europe at the time of the Enlightenment.

Direct state intervention in the form of providing well-being for the populations in colonies started in the early twentieth century. In 1939, the British Government revised its Law of Development of the Colonies, insisting that the colonial power should maintain a minimum level of health, education and nutrition among its subjects (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:5). The welfarism suggested that in this changed policy was a clear indication of the way in which the colonial state intervened in local society to enforce its policy. Its desire to improve the levels of education, health and nutrition of the people implies a 'desire for a planned change' of the local society.

Planned change is another connotation for 'development'. It implies a positive change or progress. It is the idiom in which Western modernity and capitalism is couched. While making economic gains from the investments on plantations, mining and business enterprises, colonizers attempted to orient the non-Western colonies towards Western modernity. In this attempt, natives were considered and posed as backward or childlike, and the colonizers as rational agents of progress. These notions of development are thus linked to the history of colonialism and capitalism. When we look at the post-colonial state, one can see how effectively these notions of development have been used to convince the colonized. In anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa, nationalist leaders condemned colonialism as an exploitative force that creates and perpetuates a 'backward' economy in their countries. Ironically the primary objective of their struggle was to replace colonial rule with self-government in order to develop their so-called backward economy. What is important in this regard is that the nationalist leaders now
undisputedly accept that their economy is 'backward' and that 'modernity' is the advanced form of development for which they should aspire. This sentiment could clearly be seen in Nehru's statement that "the impact of Western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society of a "modern" consciousness, on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought, which, however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations" (1946:64).

Although the European power conquered and ruled territories in Asia and Africa, the natives of those territories were not mere passive victims of the colonial power. They responded to colonial power through various forms of resistance, including armed struggle. The causes of these resistance movements were not just necessarily economic and political - the drain of national wealth, the destruction of existing production system and the creation of a backward economy. More importantly, they were cultural causes. Chatterjee (1993) rejects the idea that the Third World nationalism is a modular form supplied by the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe. Instead, he argues that the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West. He says that anti-colonial nationalism (in Asia and Africa) creates its own domains of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material domain is the domain of the 'outside' of the economy and of state-craft, of science and technology, a domain where the east had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority has to be acknowledged and its accomplishments are to be carefully studied and replicated. The
spiritual domain, on the other hand, is an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity of a group of people. The greater the one’s success in imitating Western skills in the ‘material domain’, the higher the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one’s spiritual domain, that is culture (Chatterjee, 1993:6). Generally speaking, leaders and their followers in the post-colonial society do wish to become ‘modern’, but at the same time, they oppose ‘modernity’ in the form of Western culture. They often have an articulated concept of ‘indigenous’ modernity which is difficult to define using the framework of local culture or the Western concept of modernity.

In order to present this argument, the thesis examines the discourse of development, expert forms of knowledge, interaction between local and transnational cultures and cultural resistance movements operating in local society. The intention of the thesis is not to make an original contribution to the theory of development and culture, but rather to attempt to explain the nature of cultural responses to Western modernity in the post-colonial society and their outcome. As said earlier, anti-colonial nationalist movements were explained in conventional histories as political resistance to colonial rule, without considering their deeply-rooted cultural implications. The demands in the post-colonial society for local identities are also narrowly defined either in terms of cultural specificity or as representational issues in mainstream democracy. In the cultural specificity ethos, emphasis is hardly on the aspect of cultural dynamics, a factor significantly relevant for understanding post-colonial modernities. Those who locate these demands within representational issues have narrowed down their approach to political and economic reasons.
In this thesis, I will argue that cultural specificity constitutes an undeniable factor in articulating a particular identity, (be it local, regional, ethnic, race, religious or caste), and therefore is the most striking phenomenon in the post-colonial society. It is important to recognize that all identities are socially constructed, and the specific form of an identity is always culturally and historically determined. These identities are considered, therefore, as 'primordial relations'. Geertz recognizes such identities as "one that stems from the 'givens' — or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' — of social existence" (1973:259). Primordial attachments respond vigorously to alien cultural values. However, most important in this regard is the specific context that gives specific meanings to those attachments. I define this context as a 'community' in which a sense of 'togetherness' is shared by a group of individuals. The sense of belonging together, according to Brow (1990c), typically combines both 'affective' and 'cognitive' components, both a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of shared identity.

Certain ambiguities arise in defining a 'community'. According to Western liberal thinking, 'nation' is considered as a 'community', where individuals have a fair chance to represent themselves in the common good. Michael Walter argues that "the nation-state was the one community which could give every person within a certain territory the same status as citizen and also satisfy every person's need to participate in the social distribution of goods." (Chatterjee, 1988:279) On the other hand, those who reject liberal individualism argue that "individuals were not sovereign subjects, unencumbered by involuntary obligations, freely choosing between available options on the basis of their individual preferences. On the contrary, those preferences were shaped by a network of
social attachments into which people were born; not all attachments were freely chosen” (Chatterjee, 1988:277). Both these arguments have emphasized ‘togetherness’ as an essential characteristic of a community. However, I will argue that the two forms of community presented above do not fit into the Sri Lankan rural community, i.e. Sinhalese village. I will premise this argument on the general observations that the Sinhala society is engulfed by two pervasive cultures: pan-Sinhalese culture, formed by and identified with Eastern ethos, and a hybrid culture founded by a combination of European and Eastern ethos. ³

In his analysis of contemporary Sri Lankan society, Brow points out that “the discourse of development serves to modernize what is traditional and to traditionalize what is modern, while at the same time, it also helps to sustain not just a national memory of historical community but also an energizing sense of national destiny” (Brow, 1990:9b). This thesis will argue that this dual nature of the post-colonial society’s culture is neither natural nor evolutionary, but an invention of colonialism and development.

1.1 The scope of the study

In this thesis I will analyze cultural dynamics in rural communities in relation to their responses to transnational culture. It is argued that cultural dynamics are a form of response to alien value systems such as transnational culture, which penetrates local societies through development projects. In this thesis, the term “transnational culture” refers to the cultural practices of Western origin that are based on individuality, rationality and economy.

My experiences in the field of rural development in Sri Lanka indicate that the main objective of such bilateral and multilateral development projects is often promote
these cultural practices as essential conditions for development. Development experts and policy makers in developing countries, on the other hand, believe that the adherence to traditional cultural patterns and lifestyles would ill-prepare people to embrace modernization. This study will investigate the pattern of these alien cultural practices, which are penetrating into rural communities and their impact upon poverty, gender and environment.

The term ‘cultural dynamics’ refers to the cultural change in a broader sense, but, in this study, it means both change and persistence of the local culture. Cultural changes usually occur in response to an exogenous influence upon the indigenous cultural practices, while cultural dynamics take place when a particular social value system resists an alien value system which is attempting to penetrate it. ‘Cultural change’, therefore, is considered in this thesis as a process of acculturation or modernization, while cultural ‘dynamics’, as interculturation or cultural hybridization.

1.2 Objectives of the thesis

(a) To examine the nature of the post-colonial society in the context of Sri Lanka.

(b) How does the society respond to externally-induced development.

(c) To examine how do a local community respond to external interventions, for example, ‘expert knowledge’ that come with development programs, which are posed as characteristics of modernization.

(d) To study how the interaction between the local cultural dynamics and external interventions and/or resistance of the former to the latter, impact on the value system of the community and on ‘individuals’ cultural identity.
To find out how external interventions, e.g. development programs can be adapted to the sensitivities and value systems of local communities.

1.3 Research problem

A widely circulating idea that anthropology has no role to play in the modern world, as primitives and savages are disappearing from the globe, is the starting point of this thesis. The falsity of this assumption would be established by arguing that anthropological knowledge has indeed become critically important in dealing with socio-cultural forces that are emerging in the post-colonial society. The development discourse is taken as part of the research problem as it provides an ideal arena to discuss how the anthropological knowledge is used in modern world to stabilized the post-colonial hegemony.

The following research questions were formulated to address the research problem of the study.

(a) To what extent is the development discourse meaningful in addressing issues of the post-colonial society in the Third World?

(b) To what extent is the existing anthropological knowledge useful for explaining the dynamics of local culture?

(c) How can contemporary social movements operating at the local-level be explained within the context of changing cultural dynamics of local societies?
1.3.1 Core-concepts

In order to discuss the core concepts and processes of local responses to wider processes, it is necessary to define how they are used in the thesis. The chosen four concepts and processes are:

1. Anthropological knowledge
2. Development
3. Transnational culture
4. Cultural dynamics

1.4 Anthropological knowledge

First, I will discuss briefly the issue of anthropological knowledge. Here I try to show briefly how the discipline began to engage in practical work, and the manner in which anthropologists practiced their craft during the Western colonial era in Africa and Asia. Anthropology began as a discipline of social inquiry at a time when Europeans were establishing colonies in Asia and Africa. This was the period when non-Western societies came into contact with the West more than before through missionaries, traders, travelers, soldiers and colonial administrators. When the western interest on non-western societies was growing, anthropologists tended to use these sources in studying non-modern cultures. Some of them gained opportunities to do intensive fieldwork when the colonial rulers wanted to know more about indigenous people. There had been a growing interest among colonial administrators that anthropologists could play a role in this regard. As a result colonial administrators encouraged anthropologists to study
indigenous societies, cultures and political systems by providing research grants and other facilities.

The criticism that anthropologists were the complicity agents of colonial expansion and administration is closely associated with the practice of generating anthropological knowledge for the 'colonial rulers' advantage. Although the colonial administration utilized anthropologists whenever needed, it is not always true that anthropologists promoted colonial expansion in Asia and Africa. In fact some anthropologists were indeed liberal and held anti-imperialist views. On the other hand, those anthropologists who did not accept social evolutionary views tended to think that local, non-Western cultures as something to be preserved. These factors sometimes led colonial administrators to believe that anthropological studies have little value to day-to-day administrative problems. As a result, they tended to work on their own without consulting anthropologists. Evans-Pritchard, in an article written in 1946, bemoaned the fact that the colonial government of Sudan had never consulted his opinion about anything, although he lived there for 15 years (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:33).

Some anthropologists had tried to protect the rights of natives when they were working for the colonial government. For example, P.H. Gulliver in the 1950s worked among the Arusha people for the colonial government of Tanganyika in East Africa. His job had been to identify important administrative issues and to collect information on such issues for the benefit of the government. While some of his recommendations were rejected or ignored, others such as the need for making more land available for Arusha settlements to relieve the pressure on heavily cultivated lands, and the need for recognizing traditional Arusha local government patterns to be included and elected tribal
council were accepted. Gulliver writes: "it has been generally acknowledged that many of us in social anthropology were critical of colonial regimes, both for what they represented-an arm of Western metropolitan exploitation and paternalism, tinged with racialism and for their inequalities and inefficiencies and the down-right oppression by particular regimes in particular conflicts. With such a critical attitude, it nevertheless seemed to me in 1952, when I applied for the appointment in Tanganyika, that colonialism was the going regime and it seemed reasonable and attractive to try and work within it, to contribute towards amelioration and improvement and even, just a little, to hasten its end" (quoted in Gardner and Lewis, 1996:33). The majority of anthropologists, however, wanted to conduct their studies independently and were uninterested in the role that the colonial administration expected them to play.

Because its main focus was on studying pre-modern societies within the then dominant paradigm of knowledge, some scholars think that anthropology has lost its importance altogether with the collapse of colonies and the establishment of new states which are not 'pre-modern'. Dell Hymes (cited in Ahmed and shore, 1996) points out, for example, that the "future of anthropology in the United States is thus a question of whether its present institutional context, essentially the graduate departments, will prove to have been chrysalis or coffin" (1995:1). This is a warning about the inability or unwillingness of mainstream anthropology to break away from its conventional approach. In this regard, Escobar's attack on development anthropology is a step taken to divert anthropology from its conventional path. He states: "Their [development anthropologists] practice can be said to rely on mainstream views of both development and anthropology and to be largely immune to the critiques that have shaken both fields.... They do not
question the overall need for development, but accept it as a fact of life and as a true descriptor of reality” (Escobar, 1997:501). What Escobar emphasizes is the need for a turn from mainstream anthropology in order to contribute meaningfully both to theory building and development practice.

Such a new perspective is particularly important to study the Third World societies, which were once dominated by colonialism, and again recreated by development. In this context, anthropology can play a major role in disclosing the realities of these societies. Furthermore, understanding culture has become critical in the modern world order, particularly, in terms of the demands for local, regional, ethnic, religious or caste identities. New understandings are increasingly required on these issues in order to find a way to combat them. Equally important is communicating these issues to a wider audience that consists of academics and non-academics, literates and illiterates, professionals and laymen.

Finally, the question of anthropologist's involvement in policy and practice. From the beginning, anthropology has remained an academic discipline rather than a discipline that advocated practice. The applied anthropology which was encouraged during the 1930s and 1940s was unable to establish itself as a distinct discipline due to the insufficient recognition it received from both academic departments and government institutions. A continuing divergence between mainstream academic anthropology and applied anthropology has promoted a feeling among many university-based staff that only second-rate anthropologists worked on loftier, self-determined subject matter (Gardner and Lewis, 1996:36). However, anthropological inputs have been recognized in again in applied work such as forced migration. In his Malinowski Memorial Lecture,
Michael Cernea said: “I am therefore pleased to say that since that lone anthropological “slot” was allocated in 1974, the Bank’s (World Bank) in-house corps of non-economic social scientists—sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists—have grown steadily in both number and institutional weight. This has been a major leap. The group assembled during these twenty years is today the world’s largest group of this kind working in one place—about 50-60 social scientists, who actually practice development anthropology and sociology” (1995:4).

1.5 The concept of development

Until recent times, ‘development’ was defined as a set of actions aimed at making a change in a given situation. When defining development in such an oversimplified manner, it is difficult to know what development really means. Development is understood in this thesis not merely as an action but rather as powerful ideas guiding people in a specific direction. Nevertheless, this direction is predetermined according to a historically unique experience, namely Western modernity. Thus development is a mechanism through which local societies connect with the centers of power. As Perston (1985) states “development is an ethno-political grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us.” This dominant character of development is questioned today by academics as well as practitioners of development. Arturo Escobar (cited in Gardner and Lewis, 1996) for example states that “as a set of ideas and practices, ‘development’ has historically functioned over the twentieth century as a mechanism for the colonial and neo-colonial domination of the South by the North. This concept of development was invented during the post-war period by economically rich nations of the North and subsequently introduced it to the nations of the South as a
practice, which involved specific ideas and institutions. Industrialization, urbanization and economic growth are the targets that these institutions insist the nations of the South should achieve. Thus development is a professionalized practice with "a range of concepts, categories and techniques through which the generation and diffusion of particular forms of knowledge are organized, managed and controlled" (1996:3). The situations in Asia, Africa and Latin America are interpreted from the conceptual framework of this dominant paradigm. According to the paradigm, these regions unavoidably fall under the category of 'underdeveloped'. Such an explanation not only neglects the profound historicity of the so-called underdeveloped countries, but also justifies the unfair and untrue claim that they have not achieved industrialization and economic growth. Ferguson (1991), states that 'like 'civilization' in the nineteenth century, 'development' is the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us. With this interpretative grid, a host of everyday observations are rendered intelligible and meaningful" (Escobar, 1997: 503).

The above criticisms about development are equally relevant to anthropology. Anthropology has also failed to reveal the profound historicity of these societies, as much as development has failed to make lasting improvements in social, economic, political and environmental conditions of the Third World countries. Instead, it remained an instrument of critique and contestation of what is given and established. In studying 'non-modern' societies in Asia and Africa, anthropologists confined their inquiry to the conventional method of 'observation' and consequently, the texts that they produced contained an account of what is existing or the ethnographic present of these societies.
One of the best illustrations of this is Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* (1935) which has continuously been in print. Benedict presented cultural diversity in an influential manner, but failed to retrieve what the *Samoa* people lost forever as a result of their colonial encounter. These issues have led some anthropologists to adopt an interventionist approach to ethnography.

June Nash’s anthropological fieldwork with *Chiapas* communities in South Mexico in (1970 and 1993) and Soren Hvalk’s nearly two decades fieldwork with the *Asheninka* of the *Gran Pajonal* area of the Peruvian Amazon are two examples of this new orientation in applied work of anthropology. They suggest an alternative approach to produce anthropological knowledge and practicing it in a way of local construction of identity, history, nature and development. Nash’s field work among the *Chiapas* is important for explaining the origin of the reassertion of indigenous identity during the last two decades. Commenting on her studies, Escobar remarks that “Nash unveils a series of tensions central to the understanding of the current situation: between change and the preservation of cultural identity; between resistance to development and the selective adaptation of innovation to maintain a degree of culture and ecological balance; between shared cultural practices and significant heterogeneity and internal class and gender hierarchies; between local boundaries and the increasing need for regional and national alliances; and between the commercialization of traditional craft production and its impact on cultural reproduction” (Escobar, 1997:507). In addition to this intellectual contribution, Nash played a role as an international witness of the negotiations between the government and the *Zapatistas* (the social movement) and disseminated information about the movement in specialist publications on indigenous affairs (1989:507). What is
important in Nash’s contribution is that it presents an alternative meaning of ‘development’ that preserves cultural autonomy on the one hand, and promotes material and institutional infrastructure to improve local conditions, on the other. The message that Nash wanted to deliver from her experiences is that local communities defend their cultures and rethink development.

Soren Hvalkof’s (1989) involvement with Asheninka in the Peruvian Amazon presents another example of anthropological practice in development. Hvalkof’s main concern was political ecology, that is the study of the interrelation among culture, environment, development and social movements, the key areas in which development is being redefined. His field work over a period of two decades with Asheninka “ranges from historical ethnography to local construction of nature and development, to theorizing political ecology as anthropological practice” (in Escobar, 1997: 509). Like Nash in the Zapatistas movement, Hvalkof intervened on behalf of Asheninka to stop the World Bank’s support to development projects in Gran Pajonal area. Instead, convinced an alternative development focused on collective titling of indigenous land. Escobar (1997) remarks on Hvalkof’s interventions as follows: "These (land) titling projects were instrumental in reversing the situation of virtual slavery of indigenous people at the hands of local elites that had existed for centuries; they set in motion processes of indigenous cultural affirmation and economic and political control almost unprecedented in Latin America.(1997:57) Hvalkof’s emphasis was on contrasting and interactive views of development at local and regional levels among indigenous people, mestizo colonists, and institutional actors. He also stressed, “the importance of understanding the difference between conceptualizing collective land titling in a regional context as a prerequisite for
reversing genocidal policies and conventional development strategies; documenting Ashenin's long-standing strategies for dealing with outside exploiters, from colonizers of the past to today's military, coca bosses, guerrillas, and development experts; and providing an interface for the dialogue of disparate worlds (indigenous people, development institutions, NGOs) from the perspective of the indigenous communities” (Escobar, 1997:509-510).

Anthropologists can play this kind of mediatory role between development agencies and local people in the current practice of development. While playing a mediatory role they can actively involve in planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects by adopting new methods, which enable local people to contribute more directly to the evolution of policies and programs.

1.6 Transnational culture

The term 'transnational culture' is used in the thesis to denote cultural flows that go beyond the boundaries of nation-states. Cultural flows in the West use vectors such as migrations, multinational capitalism and international donors’ development projects and programs move from the West to the developing countries. For example, development creates particular images and identities for people in a locality, region or country through its practice. Although the practice of development is local, its vision or ideology is international and universalizing. Ideology associated with development sensitizes people of the non-Western world to imitate and assimilate cultural practices of the West. When development projects are carried out in specific localities, an imagination of a 'high' culture is created among those who are targeted by those projects. In this imagination, the 'receivers' of development are 'folk' or 'rural' while those who deliver 'development'
are 'developed' and 'modern'. The development discourse links rural communities with urban elites, national political institutions, and international development agencies. This linkage stretches the 'receivers' of development across national boundaries, thereby forming two social worlds for them. At one level, they still are bounded to their local culture. At another level, they transcend their local boundaries thereby assimilating social, cultural and economic traits from the outside world.

1.7 Cultural dynamics

Although the concepts of 'cultural dynamics' and 'cultural change' are used interchangeably in anthropological literature, in a broader sense the two terms or concepts have two different meanings. 'Cultural change' means a transformation, while the term 'cultural dynamics' means both change and continuity of culture. Cultural dynamics take place in response to impulses coming from within or outside. "A culture moves rather like an octopus—not at once in a smoothly coordinated synergy of parts, a massive coaction of the whole, but by disjointed movements of this part, then that, and now the other which somehow cumulate to directional change" (Geertz, 1973:408). The term 'cultural dynamics' is used in this thesis to mean interculturization or cultural hybridization. Cultural hybridization characterizes the ways in which people face increasing exposure to transnational influence, selectively incorporating and synthesizing them with varied roots of origin, senses of the past and existing practices.

1.8 Outline of the thesis

The thesis comprises of two parts. Part one focuses primarily on theoretical aspects of the study. In analyzing theoretical aspects (chapter two), an attempt will be made to show the linkages among Enlightenment theories of knowledge, colonialism,
capitalism and development. In chapter 2, it is argued that socio-cultural differences that were created by classical theories between the West and the non-West have been reinforced by development agendas and projects. Development is considered here as the technical phase of colonialism.

Part two of the thesis discusses several themes of development and culture in relation to a village community's responses to development and modernity. The community was studied in-depth and a particular development project introduced form outside was examined in detail to answer three main research questions highlighted in page 14.

Part two begins with an introduction to the village where the field study was conducted (Chapter 3). In chapter 4 methodological issues raised in the study are discussed by answering a set of questions. (a) in what manner the uniqueness of this village can be justified; (b) how this specific village is relevant to the subject matter of the study; (c) by what means this community maintains its uniqueness or for what reasons it is unique; (d) was this village a closed system in the past, and if yes; (e) when and for what reasons has it become an open social system; and (f) how does this community maintain its uniqueness against internal dynamics and external interventions. Chapter 5 discusses cultural responses to modernity and demonstrates the process of cultural give-and-take. It is pointed out in the discussion the manner in which rural communities became part of the larger societal system through the process of development. Chapter 6 presents a case study where it is shown how development experts reorient rural communities through development projects and programs. The final chapter presents the conclusions derived from the study.
The idea of progress and development were born in Europe and they were systematically transmitted to the Third World societies through their ruling elites. Third World elites in turn transmitted them to the local societies as true descriptors.

The primordial attachments usually express a sense of ethnicity. Although the basic argument of the thesis is relating to this concept of ethnicity, I do not discuss ethnicity but instead use its essential core of culture.

The Tamils are the second major ethnic group in Sri Lanka. But I do not concentrate about this Tamil element in the hybrid ethos because it is not relevant to this study.