

women in senior management positions in the private sector (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015). According to the report by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2015), this figure is only 3% and 4% in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively, making Sri Lanka the leading South Asian nation in terms of the number of women occupying senior management positions in the private sector. However, we cannot be overwhelmed by these statistics as there are both private and public sector organizations in Sri Lanka, which do not have any women in senior management positions. As a third world developing nation, which achieved women suffrage in 1931 (Kearney, 1981), the present position of Sri Lanka is commendable, yet it has a very long way to go with drastic improvements to reach the standards of first world countries.

Regarding the improvements, advances in the rate of visibility and presence of women in senior management positions in both private and public sectors in Sri Lanka are important, in view of the degree of high quality managerial and leadership skills exercised by women in their day-to-day lives at home (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Furthermore, there is sufficient empirical evidence that indicate women make better managers compared to their opposite sex and thereby lead businesses to achieve better financial performance (Badal and Harter, 2014; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Billard, 1992; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Pounder and Coleman, 2002). According to research, organizations with a higher number of women in senior management positions have experienced more positive organizational outcomes (Joy, Carter, Srira, and Wagener, 2007; McKinsey and Company, 2007) and have outperformed companies with fewer women at the top (Catalyst, 2007). Hence, it is mutually beneficial for both the womankind and the organizations to promote women to high-ranking positions in all types of organizations. "Encouraging more women into senior management roles is good for women, and it is good for business (Hurst, Leberman, and Edwards, 2016, p. 62)". Given this situation, the question arises, as to why in spite of these reciprocal benefits to both organizations and female employees, and while having a higher percentage of women in the population, that Sri Lanka is not seeing a greater representation of women at senior management levels in organizations?.

The simplest explanation for this question, coming from the Western management literature is the overt and covert discrimination and prejudice against women in the Asian society (Bell, McLaughlin, and Sequeira, 2002; Cortina, 2008; Macarie and Moldovan, 2011), which is often emphasized by the feminist movement.