

## **Gender Stereotypes in Sri Lankan Legal Profession: The Company Secretarial Role**

SMAG Senevirathne<sup>#</sup>

*Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

<sup>#</sup>anuruddika\_s@hotmail.com

Phenomenon of corporate glass ceiling still exists in many companies across the globe and especially evident in the Asian region including Sri Lanka. Comparative to other top management positions, boards are predominated by men, and they are recognized and acknowledged as a masculine arena. (Konrad, Kramer & Erkut, 2008). As a member of the board, the role of the company secretary has drastically changed overtime. Similarly, it has been claimed that the company secretary is the longest serving member in a board comparative to directors. Due to orthodox patriarchal mind-set, this critical and significant role in the modern companies is still an under researched domain (McNulty and Stewart, 2015; Hilb, 2011; Cadbury, 2002; Roberts, 2003; Muller, Lipp & Pluss, 2007, Erismann- Peyer, Steger & Salzman, 2008). However, with the recent corporate and financial crisis, the role of the company secretary regained its prominence as earlier. This study reflected on the research problem of whether modern company secretarial role is a gender stereotyped in the Asian region, especially in Sri Lanka. This is a qualitative exploratory and descriptive research. Findings of the study revealed that modern company secretaries play an important role as central corporate governance professional in both private and public companies. Also, the company secretarial role was transformed from simple administrative record keeping one to a top-notch corporate governance and leadership role. Further, this study provides evidence on how Sri Lankan company secretaries utilized this gender stereotyped role to scatter contemporary corporate glass ceiling and utilized it as a strategy to diffuse gender equality in contemporary patriarchal Sri Lankan society.

**Keywords:** *company-secretary, women, worker, glass-ceiling, gender-stereotype*