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OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the structure of the legal system which existed during the Sangam Age.
2. To analyse whether such a legal system was sufficiently independent and impartial.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This leads us to our research questions for this project:

Whether such the legal system of the Sangam Age was sufficiently independent and impartial to deliver justice?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This project shall be carried out with close reference to primary and secondary sources.

We have referred to primary sources viz. translations of *Tirukkural*. Further, we have referred to secondary sources viz. papers in academic journals, books, and websites.

METHODOLOGY

This project shall be carried out using a mixture of the descriptive, and analytical, method of studying history.

1. Descriptive Method: The descriptive method shall be used to study, and elucidate, the structure, and nature, of the legal system that existed during the Sangam Age.
2. Interpretative Method: The interpretative method shall be used to interpret the picture of the legal system of the Sangam Age thus arrived at, in an attempt to analyse whether such a system was sufficiently independent and impartial to deliver justice.
king in no luminous words. 33 According to the Thirrukural, it is “not javelin but the sceptre swayed with equity that brought glory to the king.” 34 It was believed that a righteous king assured rain and plentiful crops in the country, and commanded the respect of his subjects. 35 There is evidence that there existed a bell outside the royal palace, known as the araichimani. Any aggrieved person could ring this bell for a personal hearing by the king. 36

Despite the king being a despot, he could not possibly have been autocratic in the administration of justice, in the true sense of the term. Customary law 37 was applied in the deciding of cases. 38 In the dispensation of justice, the Council of Ministers and the carankuru avaiyam helped the king discover and apply principles of this customary law.

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Customary law is essentially law derived from customs. In sociology, customs are understood to be those practices which are uniformly being followed by a particular community since time immemorial. By virtue of such long, uniform, and continued usage, customs acquire the force of law by prescription.
38 Ibid.