In this study of the beginnings of the Iron Age in India and its progress in the early years till it was firmly established, the following inferential points may be emphasized:

(i) The Harappan civilization, which, inspite of some recent claims, is not the handiwork of the Aryans, but of an earlier people, came to an end about 1500 B.C. Suggestions have been made to bring down the date to circa 1200 B.C. on scientific grounds.

(ii) The Boghaz Keui inscription, marking the treaty between the Indo-European Hittites and Mitannis and pointing to the development, if only to an extent, of the Rigvedic way of life at the time, though outside the bounds of India, is dated to 1365 B.C.

(iii) The Mitannis, being a minority in Syria and having sacrificed their language, could not have been the people who were connected with the Aryan immigration into India.

(iv) The Indo-European Hittites were defeated and ousted from their home in Asia Minor (Turkey) by the invading armies of Thraco-Phrygians in 1190 B.C., setting in motion a colossal exodus of an Indo-European people in all directions with all their arts and sciences.

(v) A new people is seen to occupy parts of the Iranian plateau about this time, i.e. in Sialk VI,
or slightly later and introduce iron in the new habitat. These people have been claimed to be Indo-Europeans.

(vi) The great links between Iran and Vedic India in language, and in the fundamentals of religion point to a period of coexistence prior to a split over mainly religious concepts.

(vii) Stratigraphically the earliest sizable archaeological remains, after the Harappan civilization, is characterized, almost from the beginnings, by a distinctive ceramic called the Painted Grey Ware, though an overlap between the two is yet to be found. This characteristic has been discovered even in the Bikaner region, watered by the Sarasvatī and Drisadavatī and recognized as the early habitat of the Aryan folks. There is, therefore, no difficulty in recognizing the Aryans in the users of the Painted Grey Ware ceramic which they did not possibly bring into India from outside, but had every opportunity to adopt, because of its attractions and superior qualities, from the makers of the Shah-tump cemetery, who seem to have shared, with many other circumscribed tribal groups, in the invasion of India with the Aryans.

(viii) A people using another ceramic type, called the 'ochre coloured pottery', seem stratigraphically to intervene in the Ganga plains before the beginnings of the Painted Grey Ware. This has been dubiously connected with the innumerable 'copper hoards' found from time to time disjointedly and
without stratigraphic contexts in the Ganga plains. While the possibility of their being associated with an indigenous people is strong, their link with the 'ochre coloured pottery' is neither clear nor established. Simultaneously, claims have been raised that the so-called 'ochre coloured pottery' represents the handiwork of Harappan refugees, who fled before the invaders who had destroyed their mighty civilization. The apparently degenerate state of the pottery has possibly to be attributed to centuries of water-logging. This is quite possible. Nevertheless, it would mean a slight time-lag between the destruction of the Harappa civilization and the advent of the authors of the destruction into the more easterly Ganga plains.

(ix) The date of 1100 B.C. for the commencement of the Aryan culture in the Ganga plains is in this context very nearly upto the mark.

(x) The Aryans would be expected to have knowledge of the use of iron even at this remote date from their contacts with an iron-using folk outside India. This is borne out to a certain extent by the frequent use of the word ́ayas in the Rigveda as a metal that appears to have covered gold, copper and iron.

(xi) The time-lag to settle down in the new land of their adoption, look for ores and start smelting the new metal and manufacturing objects of utility would not be unreasonably long and a date around 800 B.C. for this phenomenon has been suggested.
The foregoing discussion in the dissertation and the summarization of the main points have sought to establish that it was the Aryan settlers in India, who also used the distinctive Painted Grey Ware ceramic, that were the first to use iron in ancient India around 800 B.C. or even earlier. Almost simultaneously or slightly later, the use of iron is testified among a people who buried fragmentary remains of their dead in cairns in the borders of Iran and Pakistan. It is possible that they obtained their knowledge of iron from Sialk VI in Iran even as the Aryans of the Ganga plains did. A little later iron comes into its own in west-central India in the post-chalcolithic phase as also in the megaliths of south India. In both cases the advent of iron is apparently later than its arrival in the Ganga plains, and possibly, on that score, they, especially the megaliths, owe not a little of its inspiration to the northern plains. The possibility of a cultural influence direct from Iran (Sialk VI) being transmitted through the cairn-burials to the megaliths of south India, with substantial traces in the intermediate regions, cannot be ruled out. While Dravidian speakers appear to have taken a special fancy to the megalithic mode of disposal of the dead, considerable numbers of a brachycephalic people, akin to the Sialk VI folk, were present in their midst to accentuate the megalithic order of life.

A relative superiority of the northerly Aryans in arms, more than in numbers, would possibly account
for the ultimate confinement of the Dravidian speak-
ers, who had earlier lived in the Indus plains, into
peninsular India, and would, by inference, confer on
the Aryans the glories of being pioneers in a new
metallurgical experience in the new land of their
adoption.

Endeavours to associate the Achaemenid Per-
sians, after Darius, with the introduction of iron
into India have not found support from archaeological
evidence.

As to an indigenous origin, the evidence is
too thin as yet, and does not lend itself so far to
a stratigraphical correlation with any antecedent or
precedent cultural milieu.

The early Iron Age in India, can, therefore, be
dated between circa 800 B.C. and 200 B.C., and the
prime responsibility for introducing it in India and
spreading it far and wide within the subcontinent
can be squarely fixed on the Aryan endeavour.