The model of integrative state formation is a fairly recent construction. It is the outcome of a critical but most fruitful debate with the other two dominant models of early medieval state formation, i.e. Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State. In 1982, I tried to delineate my uneasiness with these models in a paper “Fragmentation and Segmentation versus Integration? Reflections on the concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History”. In his famous Presidential Address of the year 1983, “Political Processes and the Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective”, B.D. Chattopadhyaya even stated: “I posit political integration as a counterpoint to the decentralized polity of the feudal model” and baptised the early medieval Indian state as an “integrative polity”. In more recent years, it was primarily Bhairabi Sahu who referred to this concept in several articles as an alternative model, an idea which I tried to summarise and substantiate in 2005 in the paper “The Integrative Model of State Formation in Early Medieval India” which I submit to the Seminar for its critical evaluation.

Whereas Chattopadhyaya emphasises processes of expansion of state society, peasantisation of tribes and cult appropriation and integration, I focus on various aspects of cultural integration through different means of “ritual policy”. Sahu points out that the emphasis, given to local processes, ritual integration networks of trans-local linkages and the spreading of state society into marginal pre-state societies, may be regarded as major contributions of the integrative model. But he also rightly observes that the actual processes of economic integration still “remain somewhat untouched.”