The present study deals with the study of rural leadership among scheduled castes. The main interest of the study is to analyse the socio-economic position and their pattern of leadership of the elected panchayat members in a rural society through sociological analysis and interpretation. It is to study the socio-personal background of the rural leaders of the scheduled caste, their degree of exposure to the mass media and political awareness, their functional effectivity and their responsiveness to scheduled castes.

The study was conducted on the scheduled caste panchayat presidents in Dharmavaram Revenue division of Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh.

The sample for the study consists of 64 leaders drawn from 64 village panchayats in Dharmavaram Revenue division. All these members are elected to the village panchayats.

The general conclusions of the study are: (i) most of the rural leaders of scheduled caste are new, young and literate.
and hail from the upper caste among the scheduled castes namely Mala, (ii) their exposure to mass media, political awareness and political participation is quite low. Their political awareness is also rated as low. This may probably due to their socio-economic backwardness, (iii) their entry into power and authority structure is through the process of reservation and a very few are entering power and authority structure by contesting with non-scheduled caste people. (iv) their emergence as successful leaders depends upon the group-support-structure they have i.e., having strong caste kin and village factional base; (v) they are quite responsive to the people of the scheduled castes but feel quite dissatisfied with the role and attitude of the leaders of their own castes and communities. (vi) Majority of the rural leaders of scheduled castes are married and live in nuclear families. All the leaders have their own houses to live in and most of them have landed property and was the main source of livelihood. Only very few leaders came from families whose fathers are educated.

The exposure of the leaders to various mass media is moderate. Out of 64 respondents, 28 own radio and most of them listen to radio very regularly. From among these, most of them
particularly listen to news. Only half of the leaders read newspaper regularly and fifty per cent of them read about political matters.

The political knowledge, political opinion and the political awareness is quite high. This may be due to their literacy, constant listening to the radio and reading newspapers. Majority of the leaders could say the correct age for exercising voting, names of the Prime minister and Chief ministers and the political parties to which they belong.

Majority of the leaders do not have interest in political affairs. They do not bother to know about the conduct of elections, know the election results and even to discuss the political matters. Most of the leaders participated in panchayat elections and voted on party basis based on his own thinking and decision.

Most of the leaders did not participate in politics in the form of election campaign, propagating party ideas and attending party meeting. But many a time they brought to the notice of gram sabha and panchayat members about the local and community problems faced by their people.
Majority of the leaders do not belong to any political organization and do not have any social and political activity before entering into politics. Among the elected panchayat presidents, more than 60 per cent contested and were elected for the position and only 37.5 per cent were elected uncontested.

With all the above finding it is concluded that the leadership among the scheduled castes in rural society is in the process of transition and there is an emergence of new pattern of leadership. The old traditional leadership is fading and passing into young, educated and numerically dominant groups. The new leaders are more socially and politically aware. The leaders' place in political structure is due to the factional support and numerical dominance and solidarity of the numbers of their own castes and communities. Scheduled caste leaders did not still become functionally effective in social and political life of the village. They are quite responsive to the needs and problems of members of scheduled castes and willing to do something for them as and when the need arises.