

## CRIMES IN AN URBAN SOCIETY : A CASE STUDY OF ROHTAK TOWN

SACHINDER, Rohtak

**ABSTRACT :** The article encompasses a study about the incidence of crime in Rohtak town. A part of the national capital region, the town is at a distance of 70 kilometres from Delhi and has a population of 2, 16, 096 (1991 census). The town has been in news in the recent past due to the alarming rise in the number of criminal incidents. Kidnapping of the grandson of the state's urban development minister on the National Highway No. 10 recently (September 17, 1998) has thoroughly exposed the law and order situation in the town. Sharp reactions have come from the leaders both of the ruling party and opposition parties over the incidence. The present article has been written in this perspective.

### ABOUT ROHTAK TOWN

Situated on the flattish alluvial plain of Ghaggar-Yamuna Divide, the town of Rohtak is one of the oldest towns of Haryana. Its name place history can be found even in the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods (645 B.C. to 300 B.C.). Spreading over an area of 23.38 sq. kilometres, the town is located between 28° 29' 30" to 29° 6' 3" north latitude and 76° 12' 45" to 76° 58' 15" east longitude. It is the administrative headquarter of the district and tehsil of the same name. According to 1991 census, the number of households in the town was 36,475 and population was 2,16,096. The decadal population growth was 29.58 per cent and density of population was 7,614 persons per sq.kilometre. Sex Ratio was 884 females per 1,000 males. Total literacy rate was 76.91 per cent and among females it was 67.92 per cent. Out of the total population, 27.47 per cent persons were categorised as "main workers" and 72.33 per cent as "non-workers".

The rest (i.e. 0.2 per cent) were classified as "marginal workers". Nearly 21.4 per cent of the population in the town is below poverty line i.e. having a per capita income below Rs. 337.42 per month. The scheduled castes population was 14.09 per cent.

The town has both old and new urban morphological characteristics. The original site of the town was an ancient mound which is one of the detached hillocks of sandy ridges running roughly north-west. During the Medieval period (1206 to 1803 A.D.) the town continued to occupy its earlier site on the mound. In the British period (1803 to 1947 A.D.) expansion took place outside the walled town for the first time. It was during this period that the civil lines and municipal committee (in 1867) were established; railway station was constructed (1896); a wholesale grain market was built (1910) and various educational institutions were started. Since then the town has expanded in all possible directions particularly in the

eastern direction. For administrative purpose, the town is divided into 35 municipal wards.

### ABOUT CRIMES IN THE TOWN

Presently two police stations, viz. Civil Lines and Thana City are working in the town. Police Station Civil Lines is located near Sukhpura Chowk and there are five police posts under it (Arya Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, D-Park, Pt. B. D. Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) and Sector 1). Thana City on the other hand is very near town's bus stand. Four police posts (viz. Indira Colony, Sabzi Mandi, Bus Stand and Shivaji Colony) are functioning under it (Fig. 1a). These police posts monitor and maintain law and order within their respective areas, collect information of crime and disseminate the same to their concerned police stations.

Year-wise data on crime in the town reveals a rapid rise in the crimes. During the period 1982

to 1997 there has been an increase of almost 190 per cent in the total number of crimes reported. Since 1982, maximum number of crimes has been recorded in the year 1997 when a total of 2311 such cases were registered (Fig. 1b). In 1997, property worth 84,84,425 rupees was stolen, of which property worth 42,10,385 could be recovered. The recovery percentage figure in the case of Thana city was 55.25 per cent and in the case of civil lines 46.16. Out of the total 2311 crimes registered in Rohtak town for the year 1997, 1359 crimes were recorded under thana city and 952 under civil lines. Crime-head wise picture shows that maximum number of crimes were recorded under prohibition law (1181), followed by theft (262), burglary (143), electricity theft (136), gambling (110), hurt due to rash driving (90) and accidental deaths (37). There were 351 other cases (Table 1). In the present paper cases of prohibition, theft,

**Table 1 :**

#### Crimes in Rohtak Town : 1997

Crime Head	Crimes Recorded under		Total
	Civil Lines	Thana City	
Prohibition	404	777	1181
Theft	171	91	262
Burglary	83	60	143
Electricity Theft	73	63	136
Gambling	24	86	110
Hurt Due To Rash Driving	46	44	90
Accidental Deaths	17	20	37
Kidnapping & Abduction	3	9	12
Murder	5	6	11
Attempt of Murder	4	6	10
Rape	5	3	8
Robbery	1	2	3
Others	116	192	308
Total	952	1359	2311

\* It was in the year 1982 that Civil Lines and Thana City police stations were established separately. Prior to this all police posts of the town were under the control of Thana City police station.

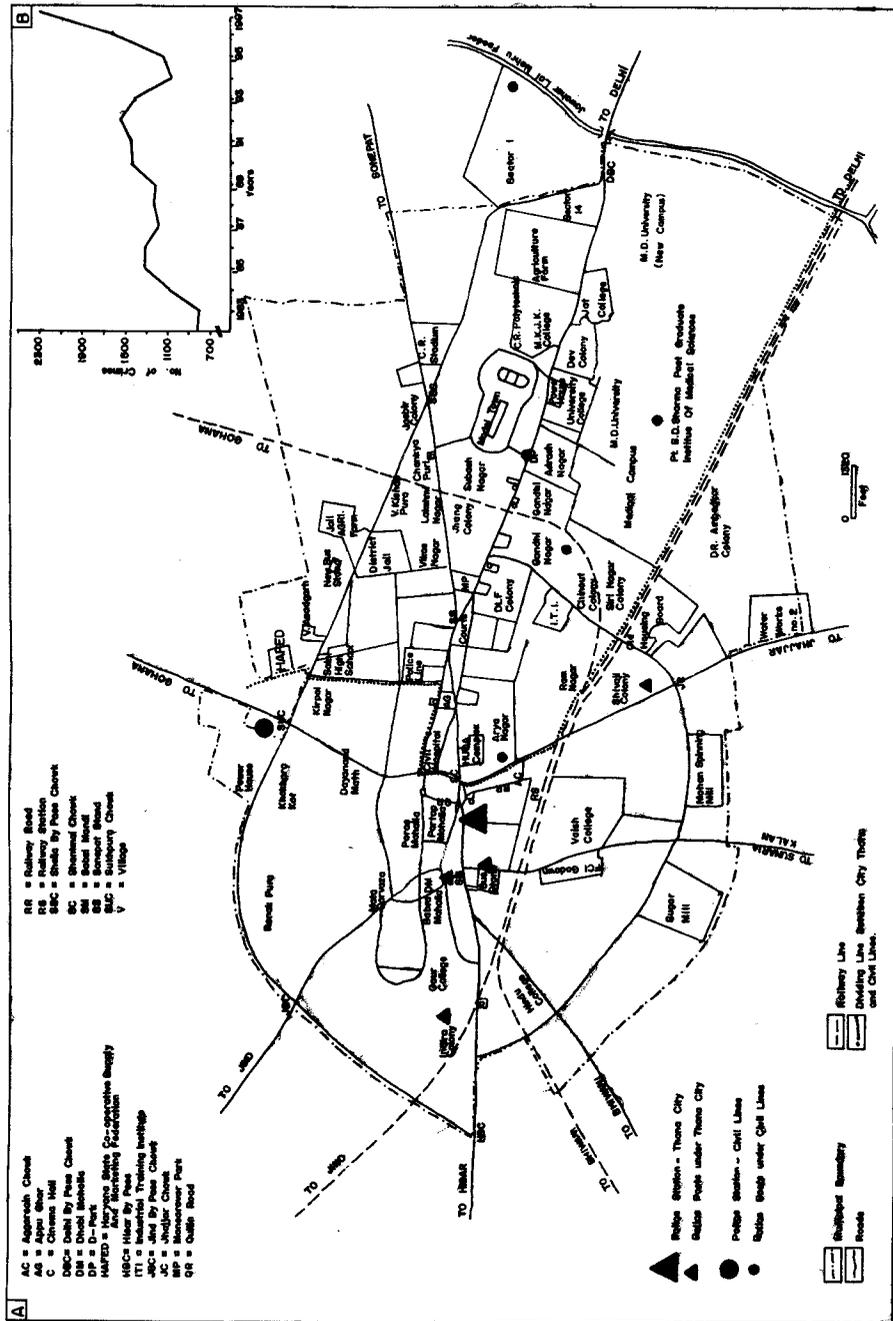


Fig. 1 (a) : Lay-Out Map of Rohtak Town

(b) : Total Number of Crimes in Rohtak Town : 1982-1997

burglary, gambling, hurt due to rash driving and accidental deaths are examined. The cases of electric theft have been left because the patterns for such cases depend upon the areas covered by the surveillance team of the electricity department. Otherwise it is a common practice in the town.

### **Prohibition**

As liquor in Haryana over the years has become the main cause of social disharmony, family disputes, crimes against women, financial strain etc., the State government had enforced the "prohibition policy" on 1st July 1996. Under the policy no person was allowed legally to manufacture, import, purchase, sell and consume intoxicants. However, many people found this opportunity lucrative and amassed huge wealth. Data for the year 1997 indicates that out of the total 2311 recorded criminal cases in the town more than 50 per cent accounted for violation of prohibition alone. Out of the total 1,177 cases of prohibition, 775 cases were recorded under thana city and 402 under civil lines. Under such cases, 1348 persons were arrested and 1101 bottles of illicit country made liquor; 23,115.75 bottles of english wine and 1,34,509 pouches of liquor were recovered by the police. Out of the total 1348 persons arrested, maximum number of arrests were made in the age-group of 20-25 years (i.e. 24.26 %). Caste-wise percentage of persons arrested under such cases was as follows: Punjabis (23.22%), Jats (18.69%), Balmikis (8.75%), Chamars (6.75%), Sansi (4.82%), Dhanaks (4.59%), Sainis (2.37%) and Vaisyas (2.07%). As to reason that why people belonging to different caste groups were involved in such an illegal activity, it was observed that the life styles of persons of lower economic strata changed drastically once they entered the field of supplying illegal, alcoholic beverages, irrespective of their castes.

Spatial distribution of crimes registered under prohibition shows three areas. (Fig 2a) :

- i. The entry points of the town which include: Delhi-By-Pass-Chowk; Sheila-By-Pass-Chowk; Jhajjar Chowk; Hisar-By-Pass-Chowk; Jind-By-Pass-Chowk and Sukhpura Chowk.
- ii. Commercial areas of the town where culprits were found either consuming, selling or storing such intoxicant material. These areas include: Bus Stand, Grain Market, Sabzi Mandi (Horticulture Market), Railway Road, Quilla Road, Gohana Stand, Hisar By-Pass Over Bridge, Jawahar Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Sonapat Stand and New Bus Stand.
- iii. Internal areas of the colonies and small transport nodes. These include: Shivaji Colony, Arya Nagar, Babra Mohalla, Partap Mohalla, Garhi Mohalla, Tej Colony, Prem Nagar, Khokra Kot, Renakpura, Adarash Nagar and Fourth-Class Employees residences of PGIMS Campus.

It has been noted that it was the influx of huge quantity of both traced and untraced intoxicants in the state and lack of social movement on the issue, that the prohibition policy of HVP (Haryana Vikas Party) government had failed.

### **Gambling Acts:**

In the year 1997, 110 cases of gambling were recorded, of which 86 were registered under city thana and 24 under civil lines. Spatial distribution of such cases shows that the majority of gambling activity is taking place in and around commercial sites: the railway road, HUDA commercial area, Gandhi Nagar and Grain market. It is interesting to note that not even a single case of gambling was registered in other two main commercial sites of the town: Quilla Road and Model Town (Fig.2b). The

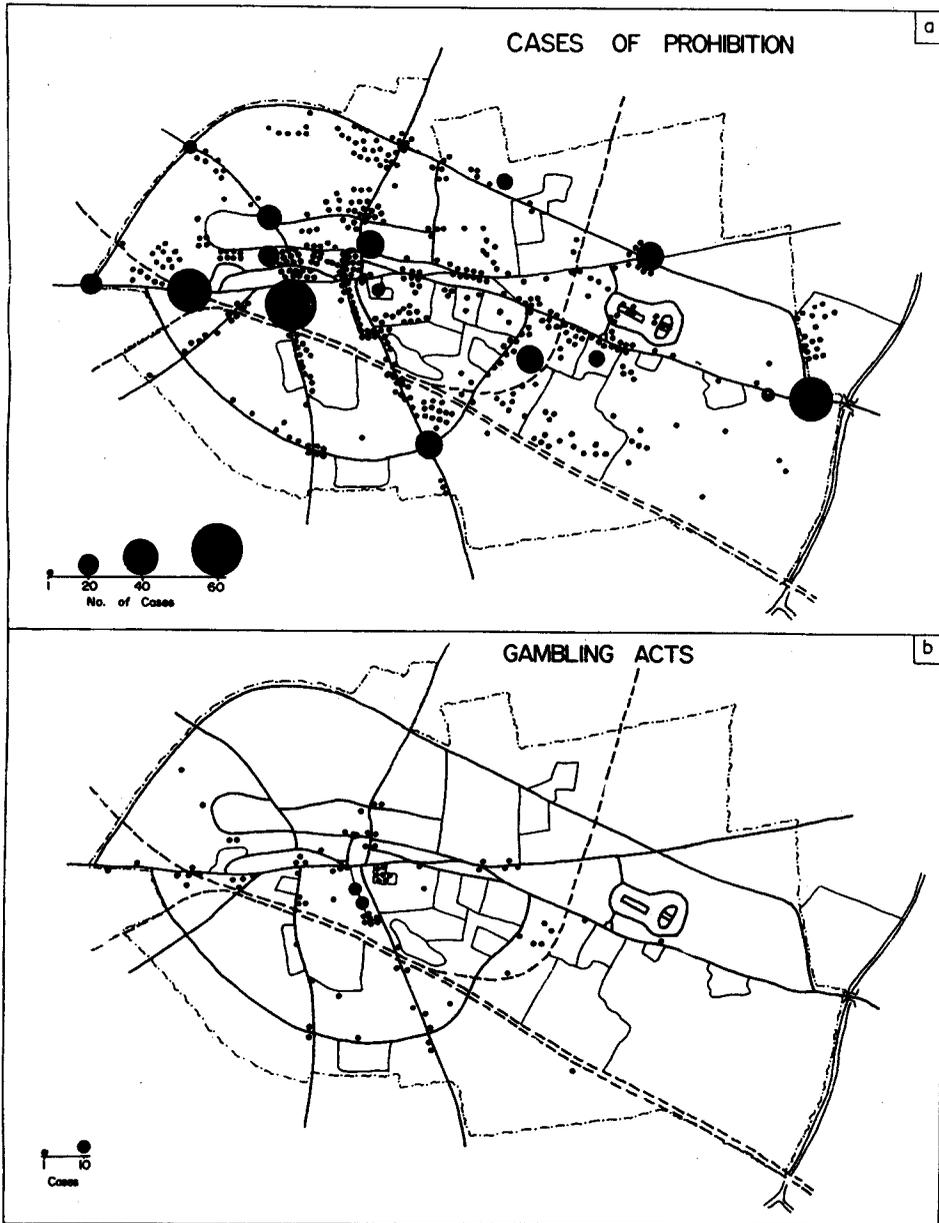


Fig. 2 . (a) : Cases of Prohibition in Rohtak Town : 1997.  
(b) : Cases of Gambling Acts in Tohtak Town : 1997.

main reason is that in majority of those commercial areas where gambling practices take place, the work place and the place of residence of the culprits is the same. Thus whenever required they can hide in friend's or their own place of residence. Caste-wise data on the persons arrested under gambling acts shows that punjabis and vaisyas castes are the ones which are predominantly involved in this.

### Theft

In 1997, 262 cases of theft were recorded in the town, of which 171 were recorded under civil lines and 91 under thana city police stations. It was found that among the cases of theft, vehicle theft cases were common. In total, there were 200 cases of vehicle theft which includes 75 cases involving scooter, 58 motor-cycle, 49 car, 7 truck, 4 each of moped and jeep (including Tata Sumo) and one each of matador, auto-rikshaw and trailer. Out of these 200 stolen vehicles 85 were recovered. Police station wise figures were as follows:

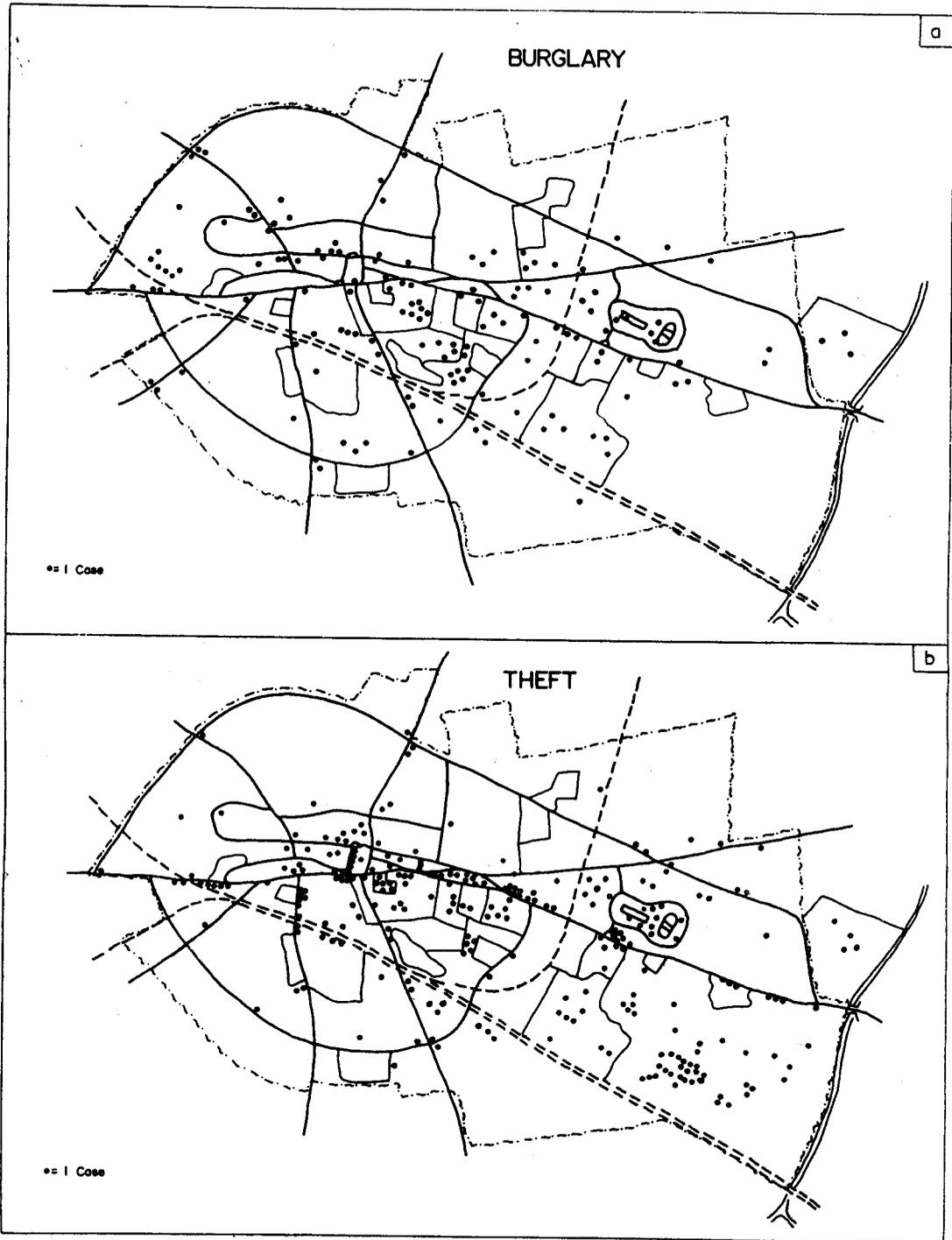
- (i) under civil lines 137 cases of vehicle theft were recorded (48 scooter, 44 motor-cycle, 36 car and 9 others) of which only 49 were recovered (11 scooter, 16 motor-cycle, 18 cars and 4 other);
- (ii) out of the total 63 cases of vehicle theft (27 scooter, 14 motor-cycle, 13 cars and 9 others) recorded under thana city, 36 were recovered (12 scooter, 10 motor-cycle, 10 cars and 4 others).

Map showing point pattern of the cases of theft in the town clearly indicates that frequency of such incidents is much in the areas of educational institutions, market places and amusement centres (Fig.3b):

- (1) In regard to cases of theft in areas falling under educational institutions, it is noted that out of the total 128 theft cases of scooter, motor-cycle and car under Civil

Lines, 52 were from PGIMS, M.D. University Campus and Jat College. Thirty three cases were from PGIMS alone. The recent case that has rocked the PGIMS campus was the incidence in which a Maruti car was snatched from a lady doctor by some armed youth in broad daylight. The incidence had taken place in the official parking itself which is opposite PGIMS police post (at the distance of less than 100 metres). The situation is so much alarming here in the campus that "... resident doctors and faculty members have started looking for jobs elsewhere" (Contemporary Academician, 1998: 4). It is observed that in these areas the chances of vehicle theft are more when:

- i) a person goes to educational institutions and stays there for a longer period of time and keeps his/her vehicle at a stand which is not under proper surveillance;
  - ii) a person comes to medical hospital for emergency and keeps the vehicle not at the proper stand due to haste;
  - iii) a vehicle is placed inadvertently here and there without any kind of fear due to vehicle's insurance cover.
- (2) Regarding places of amusement it is noted that due to lack of any kind of parking facility, vehicles parked outside Mansarovar Park (8 cases) and Appu Ghar (4 cases) were stolen. People visiting these places for relaxing come back fully tense and tired when their vehicle is lost.
  - (3) The third theft-prone area of the town are the sites for marketing. In such areas again, majority of the theft cases are of vehicle theft where noticing the customers busy in shopping the offenders take away the



**Fig. 3** (a) : Cases of Burlary in Rohtak Town : 1997.  
(b) : Cases of Theft in Rotak Town : 1997.

vehicles. These areas include: Model Town (9 cases), HUDA Complex (6 cases), Quilla Road (3 cases) and Bhiwani Stand (3 cases). It has been noted that from the commercial sites of the town in total 27 scooters, 14 motor-cycles and 13 cars were stolen.

It is pertinent to note that except those commercial sites of the town which are in the internal parts of the town, most of the theft cases have taken place in more open areas. These areas suit the offenders in fleeing away with the vehicles.

### **Burglary**

In 1997, 143 cases of burglary were recorded in the town, of which 60 were under the city thana and 83 under civil lines. Map showing the cases of burglary indicates that majority of the cases have been recorded in the central and western parts of the town (Fig. 3a). This is in contrast to the map showing incidence of theft where majority of the cases were recorded in central and eastern parts of the town. This contrast might be due to reason that the persons involved in burglary used to target areas dominated by congested houses and areas where the walls of the houses are attached.

### **Accidental Deaths And Cases of Hurt Due to Rash Driving**

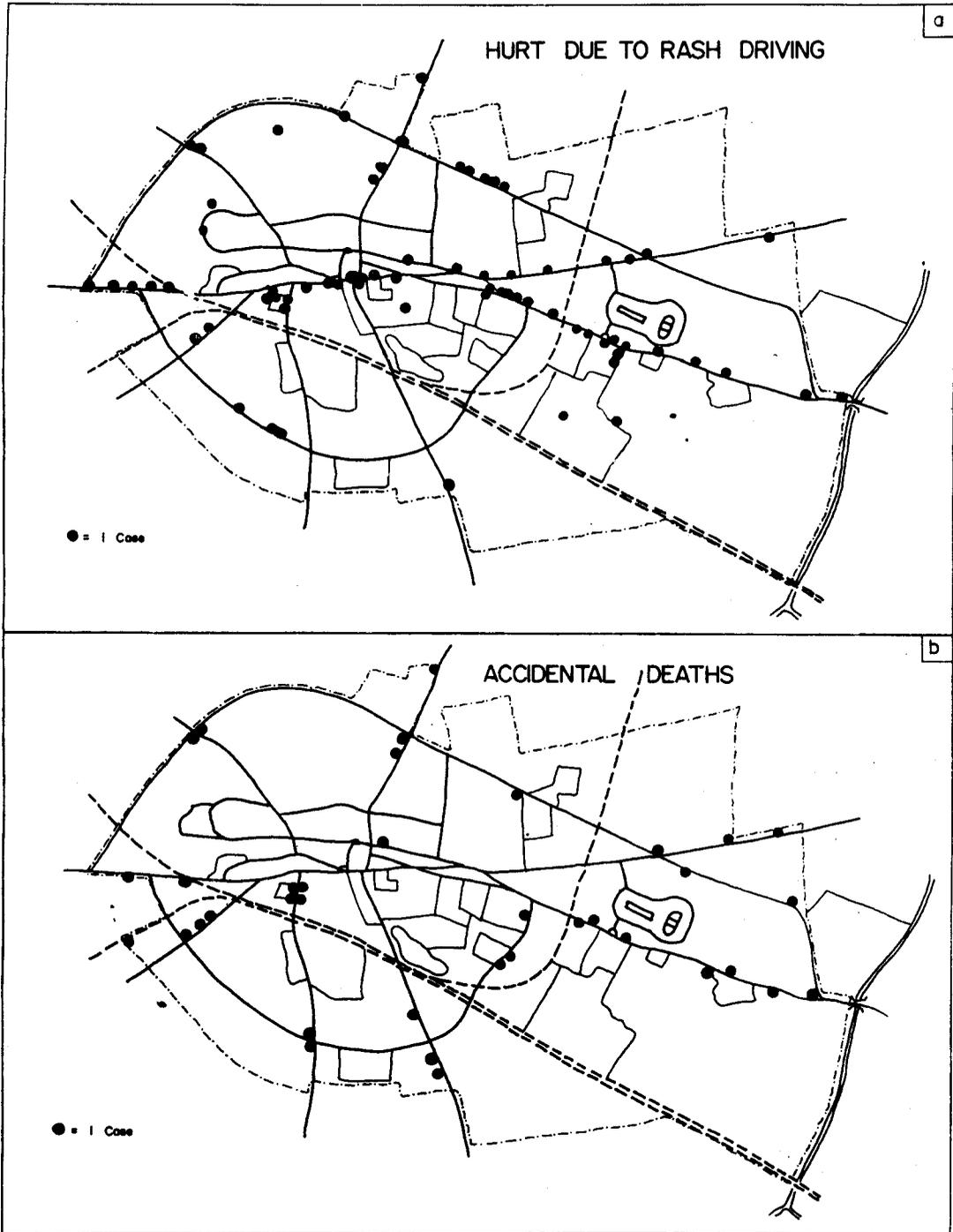
In 1997, 37 cases of accidental deaths were recorded in the town as a whole-17 under civil lines and 20 under thana city. These 37 cases include 30 cases of spot deaths and other 7 cases in which the victims died either on way to the hospital or in the hospital. The important points of accidental deaths in the town were: Bus Stand Gate, Bhiwani Road, Circular Road (near ITI Gate), Gohana Road (near Sukhpura Chowk), Sonapat Road, Jind By-Pass-Chowk, Jhajar Road, Sunarian Road and Delhi By Pass Chowk (Fig. 4b). As the main cause

behind all these cases was rash driving, majority of them are preventable by making our road-transport system user-friendly. Twenty culprits were held under these cases, of which fourteen were in the age-group of 20 to 30 years. This cautions us about how our youth are making roads and transport system "unsafe".

In addition to the 37 cases of accidental deaths, there were 79 other cases of rash driving, cases of hurt, grievously hurt or hurt with a loss of money. Map showing cases of hurt due to rash driving clearly exhibits that majority of such cases are either on the major roads passing through the central parts of the town or on the National Highway No. 10 (Fig. 4a). Under the cases of hurt due to rash driving, 95 persons were arrested of which 46 belonged to Jat caste alone.

Why cases of rash driving are increasing in the town, the following points are observed:

- i) the checking and issuance of driving licence is not effective and as a result of this persons without proper knowledge of driving and traffic rules come on the road;
- ii) the speed at which the vehicles (both light and heavy) move in the town is also deplorable, but remains unchecked;
- iii) the length and width of the main road (i.e. Delhi Road) on which majority of vehicles move remains same over the years, whereas, the number of vehicles has increased manifold;
- iv) even in the most crowded areas of the town including Model Town and area near Quilla Road, one can easily find adolescents driving scooters and motor-cycles at a very fast speed;
- v) there is not even a single transport node in the town where "traffic signals" system is installed and on majority of transport nodes no police man is seen to regulate the traffic.



**Fig. 4** (a) : Cases of Hurt Due to Rash Driving in Rohtak Town : 1997.  
(b) : Cases of Accidental Deaths in Rohtak Town : 1997.

Increase, in the volume of traffic on a limited space and lack of traffic sense leads to nothing else but cases of hurt and accidental deaths.

### **POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE VIEWS**

It seems to be a utopian idea to think of a crime-free society, but at least the living environment should be worthy of living. No human and economic activity can flourish unless there is a safe and secure environment. It is also necessary to secure faith of the people in the administrative system. What is happening in Rohtak town? People here are greatly perturbed over the incidents of thefts and robbing of cars, scooters and motor-cycles; rash driving etc. This sense of fear has led Resident Doctors Association from PGIMS, a former Minister of State for Home, Rohtak district's BJP chief, a Member of Parliament from the state's ruling party and other leaders to express their deep concern. The deteriorating law and order situation has also unnerved the district and state administration. Haryana government has recently (18th September, 1998) shifted SP, Security, Chandigarh to take over the charge as SP Rohtak. The Deputy Commissioner has also recently convened a meeting of town SHOs and advised them to be vigilant and alert.

The police personnel of the town are of the view that people involved in the cases of theft in residences are those who are from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh and live in places near Delhi, whereas, in the robbery cases on national and state highways stoutly-built anti-social elements are involved. Even the chief-minister Mr. Bansi Lal has recently claimed that criminals from Uttar Pradesh and Delhi were responsible for most of the crimes committed in Haryana. In cases of vehicle theft stoutly built people from Julana (Jind), Hansi (Hisar), Sonapat, Jhajjar and Bhiwani are involved. In this regard, the district authorities have also sought help from

village panchayats. Deputy Commissioner and Senior Superintendent of Police have asked the *Sarpanches* and *Panches* to inform the administration about persons who had, without any adequate sources of income, amassed wealth and acquired cars. Awards for such information have been proclaimed by the administration.

Following a report published recently in the regional daily (The Tribune: 28 August, 1998) the former Minister of State for Home, expressed the following reasons behind worsening law and order situation :

- i) the up-gradation of the post of the SHO from the rank of Sub-Inspector to Inspector had made the SP a "symbolic" head as only the DIG has the power to transfer an SHO. Therefore, the SP had on effective control over the SHO;
- ii) the posting of constables in their home districts and at places near their home badly affected night patrolling and had in fact, given anti-social elements a free hand to indulge in crimes;
- iii) less number of police stations, posts and chowkis in proportion to the increase in population;
- iv) formation of a union by the policemen and its recognition by the government has also led to indiscipline in the force;
- v) by authorising the deputy commissioner to initiate the ACRs of police personnel the chain of command has been disturbed and the SP now has two bosses -- the DIG (Range) and the DC;
- vi) politician - criminal nexus.

### **WHAT IS NEEDED**

Though many sincere deliberations are presently going on at the national level in regard to the "rise in the crime graph" and factors like

sharp rise in prices, devaluation of the rupee, judicial apathy, police misdirections and political action that make for the increase in crime are considered. In addition to these factors, the fact that the lifestyles of urban dwellers are changing, the factors operating at the locality level should also be given a serious thought to evolve a meaningful strategy to combat the ever increasing rate of crime.

Since the ban on the supply, manufacture and consumption of intoxicants is no more, our major concern now should be towards combating the increasing incidence of theft and burglary (theft and snatching of vehicles in particular), accidental deaths and hurt to rash driving. What needs to be done in this regard? Here are some suggestions in regard to the vehicle theft and cases of accidental deaths and hurt due to rash driving:

**a) vehicle theft:**

- i) majority of vehicles are stolen from PGIMS - M.D. University campus. If we look at the entry/exit points to this area, there are four such points: Medical mor, Gate no. 2, Gate no. 3 of M.D. University campus and a small entrance near Fourth Class Employees Quarters of PGIMS campus. First three points are important in regard to cases of car theft. At these points police posts, which can be temporary in nature, should be set up and be provided with efficient vehicles, arms and communication system. So that if any untoward incident happens the same can be communicated to these posts immediately;
- ii) more regulated parking facilities should be made available in the town;
- iii) police-patrolling should be increased in the busy areas of the town.

**b) accidental deaths and hurt due to rash driving :**

- i) issuance of driving licene should be made stringent;
- ii) vehicle drivers and the general public should be made aware about the traffic rules and their responsibilities toward others;
- iii) parents should be requested to discourage their adolescent wards from using vehicles;
- iv) the number of three-wheelers should be controlled on the Delhi-Road;
- v) there should be regular checking to ensure compliance with motor vehicle rules in general and speed limits in particular;
- vi) the main transport nodes at least should be equipped with "traffic signals system";
- vii) few vehicles with first-aid-facility should always be ready along the major routes so that if any accident takes place, the injured can be given medical treatment immediately.

In addition to these, not only that the process of disposing off the cases should be expedited but more employment programmes should be started so that our youth do not become restive. Keeping in view the success of nation-wide programme "India's Most Wanted" telecast like "Town's Most Wanted" should be initiated at the town level through cable net-work.

Keeping in view all these, the role of police in the present circumstances can be summarised in the words of K.F. Rustamji (1998):

The police can only keep this [increasing] phase of crime under control if it behaves

correctly and galvanise the whole city or countryside to give information and help. Massive rewards, rigorous searches for weapons, secret telephone numbers, mohulla

vigilance, and proper publicity are needed... They must learn how to galvanise a city, and take the help of citizens, *If citizens help there can be no undetectable crime*

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