

CHAPTER . III

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An inexhaustible range of floor coverings manufactured in India are used for functional as well as ornamental purpose. The variegated designs and colours used in carpets and rugs not only add aesthetic richness to a room but also give a soft, pleasant feeling of warmth and comfort to it. Thus floor coverings combine their decorative element alongwith utilitarian purpose. Because of these reasons floor coverings become all the more important in the cold climate of hills. The soft, thick texture of carpets and rugs wards off the chill of the floors, provides walking comfort and the rich colours and designs brighten up the surroundings, lending a cheerful disposition to the room. Weaving of various types of floor coverings is a traditional craft in Himachal Pradesh. Furthermore to pass the long and dreary winters, spinning and weaving are taken up as leisure time activities. People in the hills manufacture these floor coverings for personal use as well as for commercial purpose.

Sheep rearing is a very common practice in the higher region of the state. These sheep are shorn two

or three times a year. This forms the raw material for a variety of articles manufactured in the handloom sector. Shawls, gudmas, kharchas and thobies are some of the well known hand woven articles of Himachal Pradesh which are made with indigenous, locally available wool. Realising the importance of preservation of handicrafts and for giving an impetus to human development, the state government, through its various undertakings has opened training and production centres for different floor coverings.

Because of the compatability of environment, a number of Tibetans have settled in Himachal Pradesh. Since carpet weaving has been an integral part of Tibetan culture, almost all the Tibetan settlements have workshops and co-operative societies where training in carpet weaving is imparted and carpets are produced for domestic as well as foreign market. This has not only given a boost to the carpet production of the state by itself but has also motivated many enterprising natives to learn carpet weaving and open their own units. All these factors have contributed to rapid growth and development of the industry in the past decade.

Due to rising standard of living, there has been a manifold increase in demand for carpets. Still for most

consumers carpet remains a life time investment. Because of their use as floor coverings carpets are constantly being subjected to dynamic and static loading through walking and placement of furniture. This results in flattening or bedding down of the pile structure. The initial luxurious and thick feeling does not last long. Carpets lose some of its initial thickness fairly quickly and thereafter at a much slower rate. The greater part of the carpet's life is thus spent in a compressed state. Since carpet is an expensive item of furnishings, the consumers are interested in maintaining the "new look" of the carpets as long as possible. Coating the carpet pile with flexible polymer lattices, such as polyacrylates, may be helpful in improving the appearance retention of the carpets.

A critical review of the existing literature led the investigator to believe that though several studies have been conducted on floor coverings of Kashmir, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and other states which are famous for these. Himachal Pradesh has been neglected by the researchers. No indepth study regarding the manufacture or the socio-economic aspect of the industry has been made. Furthermore little attention has been paid to explore the possibility and feasibility of enhancing

carpet wear characteristics such as appearance retention, compressibility, recovery, resiliency and abrasion resistance, through application of acrylic finishes. Here the investigator thought it desirable to study these aspects of carpet finishing.

The present investigation has been undertaken to provide a social, technical and socio-economic document regarding the floor coverings of Himachal Pradesh. This could form a base for the growth and development of the craft and the upliftment of the craftsmen engaged in this craft in the State. At the same time an attempt has been made to study the effect of acrylic finish on wear characteristics of carpets.

The specific objectives of the study were -

- 1) To study the socio-economic aspects of the manufacture of floor coverings in Himachal Pradesh.
- 2) To study the production processes and the techniques used for the manufacture of these floor coverings.
- 3) To study the motifs, designs and colour combinations used in the floor coverings and the symbolic significance of these.
- 4) To study the production and the marketing channels adopted and the problems faced by the personnel

engaged in the manufacture of floor coverings.

- 5) To study the effect of application of acrylic finish on the compressibility, recovery, resiliency, appearance retention and abrasion resistance of carpets manufactured in the State.

Limitations of the Study

- 1) The study was limited only to ten districts of the State.
- 2) The effect of acrylic finish was studied on woven carpets only.