

John Bissell is a Founder of Fab India , a Famous Retail store that sell Furnishings, apparels (garments) , furniture and ethnic products, which are handmade by craftspeople across rural India.

With over Rs.1500 Crores valuation, along with 90,000+ artisans and craftspeople and roughly 200 stores across India and abroad, Fabindia today is widely known to be and has successfully managed to boost rural employment across villages in India.

Due to such a unique business model, the craft-conscious enterprise concept of Fabindia has also become a Harvard Business School case study.

Since the demise of John in 1998, the reigns of the company has been managed by his son William Bissell.

On the completion of 50 years of the foundation of Fabindia, they have also released a book depicting the journey of Fabindia called – **“The Fabric of Our Lives: The Story of Fabindia”**, written by Radhika Singh.

Today, apart from his wife Bimla Nanda, John is survived by a son and daughter, William and Monsoon.

A Journey to India!

Originally, John belonged to Hartford, where his grandfather served as the President of the Hartford Fire & Life Insurance Company. John completed his education from the Brooks School in North Andover and then Yale.

Since his childhood, John grew up listening to the stories from his father about India during the World War II. And thus grew his love for India as well.

After completing college, John began working for Macy’s, New York as a buyer, and at the same time also developed a sense of liking for the look and feel of hand-woven fabrics.

These two interest of his came to life when, in 1958, John was given a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation to guide and advise the Government of India run Central Cottage Industries Corporation in making goods for export.

He strongly believed that the Indian textile industry had immense potential to grow big and wanted to help Indian handloom textiles with a way to provide employment to traditional artisans.

During this phase, he met Bimla Nanda, who was serving the then United States Ambassadors to India – Chester A. Bowles and John Kenneth Galbraith, as their Social Secretary.

After his grant expired, John decided to get married to Bimla and stay back India. And hence began a new chapter in his life!

The Early Days...

He was completely determined that the Indian handloom textiles were a super success and all they required was a platform. That is when he decided to do something about it, at the same time capitalise on the golden opportunity, and thus *established Fabindia in 1960*.

His aim while forming the company was to provide fair and impartial employment to these craftsmen and traditional artisans, along with combining the best aspects of East/West collaboration.

So What Exactly Was Fabindia?

Now initially, Fabindia had started as just a one-man export company of home furnishings, by John. His idea back in those days was to provide the world with the beautiful crafts from India.

The Success

Looking at John's situation and condition his son William was asked to join the company.

Till before then William, who is an Undergraduate and study in philosophy, political science and government from the Wesleyan University, was working with rural artisans and crafts co-operatives across Rajasthan, and was also an integral part in setting up of various weaver's cooperatives. He had also spent several years in Jodhpur, after completing his education in 1988.

He gradually began to work and take care of the company under the guidance of his father till 1998, when the sad day arrived. John Bissell at the age of 66 passed away, leaving behind a legacy and his wisdom.

And since then, William took complete control of the Business! This was the time the when the business was in profits.

Between 2000 and 2006; Fabindia added their first non-textile range of products from the fields of organic foods which was followed by personal care products and then later Handcrafted jewellery as well.

Creations of Fabindia (Products)...

With this move, they had also began catering to the urban India as well, and to stand apart from other government-owned and subsidized players in hand loom fabrics and apparel sector; Fabindia decided to adapt their own fabrics and designs according to the urban taste. company's team of designers provide most of the designs and colors that are executed by these village-based artisans only.

To do so, the designers were asked to modernize their line of home linens, and to add to that, they also introduced a range of **ready-to-wear garments for Mens**,

Womens & Kids which included churidar-kurta suits for women, men's shirts etc.

Fabindia also had wide range of **Cereals, Pulses, Spices, Sugar, Flavoured Tea, Coffee, honey, Soaps, Shampoos, Hair oils, Moisturisers, Body Scrubs, Facepacks, & special skin care products.**

Beautiful **wooden Furniture** like **Beds, Chairs, lampshades, Tables** etc are exclusive collections of Fabindia

STORES:

They also began a wide range retail expansion into the multiple and larger stores in metros like Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi, and otherwise as well. Today the company runs 196 retail stores across India, 2 stores in Singapore and 1 store each in Bhutan, Dubai, Italy, Nepal, Malaysia and Mauritius. Other than that, Fabindia also exports to more than 33 countries worldwide, mainly to wholesalers and retailers.

Brandnames For Special Collections & products

And last year, with an idea to cater to the modern youth of India and the international buyers, the company has launched their western wear brand called '**Fabels**'. The brand which was first launched at their Connaught Place store in Delhi has been made available all over the country.

Organic Certification for fabindia Food Products

- Products displaying **Green logo** are '**Fully Certified**' Organic. All processes, from growing to preparing to packing have been done according to National and International standards, verified by accredited agencies.
- Products displaying our **Blue logo** are '**In Conversion**'. This means that the farmer is using purely organic techniques, and has registered and is complying with set standards. Farmland must be managed organically for about 3 years before it can be fully certified.
- Products displaying our Yellow logo are '**Natural**'. This category contains products produced by small farmers who use purely organic techniques, but who have decided to not yet register for certification. It also includes some processed foods, which do not contain any synthetic preservatives, colours, flavours or additives.

Special services of Fabindia Team

Additionally, the company also has a dedicated team of professionals to handle product customization and interior consulting for heritage hotels, resorts and corporate houses too!

School by Fabindia For Weavers & Craftmens Childrens

And lastly, keeping the noble deeds alive, William and John Bissell have also established "**The Fabindia School**" in Rajasthan. It is a co-educational, senior

secondary school with more than 600 students including 40% girls. The school also subsidizes the tuition fees of the girl students and offers them scholarships, which is in partnership with "The John Bissell Scholars Fund".

Achievements!

- Awarded with 'Outstanding Achievement in Promotion of Cotton by a Brand' by Cotton Council of India (2011)
- Awarded as the "Best Retail Brand" by The Economic Times (2011)
- Rated amongst "India's Best Companies to Work for" by Economic Times and Great Places to Work (2011)
- Awarded with "TIE Retail Innovation Award" for 'Excellence in Supply Chain Management' (2010)
- Awarded as the "Best Retail Brand" by The Economic Times (2004)
- Everyyear Fabindia Had Number of Fashion Shows to Showcase their Creations & won Many Awards

What also makes Fabindia stand out in the crowd is the fact that, Fabindia does not advertise, and largely works on word-of-mouth publicity. And this resulted in the traditional apparel and products section becoming mainstream and trendy. It also was quickly picked up and adapted by the growing middle class and had began to get identified as the brand for the elite and intellectual, at the same time was affordable ethnic.. Over the period of time the company also opened multiple stores as well.

Fabindia is indias Famous retail store Chain Famous all over the world.