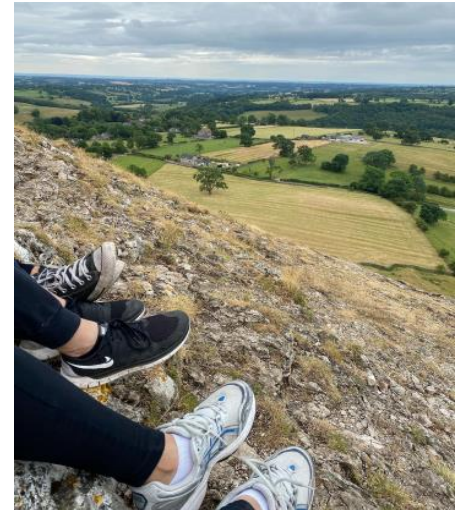


Davina's Story

My name is Davina and I'm 23 years old. I was raised in a small market town in Nottinghamshire and spent a lot of my time outdoors in nature. With the Peak District on my doorstep, I often hiked with my sisters when we got the chance. Thor's cave and Black Rock were some of our favourite walks in the summer, especially during the pandemic where we put our walking boots to some good use.

As I grew up I became more connected to Sikhi (Sikhism), being from a predominantly English town I found comfort in my faith. Grounding me as I searched to understand my identity. It may sound cliché but Sikhi made me who I am today. In my little market town there wasn't really anyone that looked like me but when I moved to London for university I found my community. Along this journey I joined initiatives linked to Sikhi and discovered different ways religion had shaped people's interest.



Thus, with a passion to make a difference and interest in colonial legacies I travelled to Glasgow during COP26, interested to see how those who pollute the least are facing the worst consequences (the Global South). I always held an interest in geography and nature, but this was the first time I wanted to understand the climate crisis. The spontaneous trip occurred because I hoped to learn in person and not from a textbook. To my surprise I connected deeply to people from different global south backgrounds desperate to save their homes and make a change. I came across a group of Native Americans who shared with us an ancient spiritual practice and expressed their pain over their natural sustainable practices being ignored. Over a campfire, we spoke across different communities the ways we could make a difference. These experiences moved me to connect to my own faith on the topic of climate change.

Being from a Panjabi background, I knew my homeland was likely negatively affected from rising temperatures and water extraction. During this trip I met a group called EcoSikhUK who advocate for environmental justice through Sikh practices. An exciting turn in my journey. I joined an initial meeting and knew I had a responsibility to get involved. An important Sikh teaching we shared at EcoSikhUK is 'Air is our Guru, water is our father, and the earth is our mother' (Guru Nanak Dev Ji SGGs Ji Ang.8). This shabad (hymn) recognises the world around as God's creation. We exist within this creation and have a role as children and Sikhs (learners) to take the responsibility to care for it. Not because we are advised to but out of love and compassion. This teaching I reflect on often, reminding myself I have a responsibility to respect all that God has created whether that be the world, people, or myself. In this teaching I feel evermore connected to the earth and nature, finding peace when amidst my surroundings in fresh air.

This exposure revealed it is no longer climate change but a climate crisis. The time to act is now and to ensure I take action I have previously volunteered with EcoSikhUK and currently with the UK

Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC). For those interested, UKYCC is a volunteer-run, non-hierarchical, consensus-led organisation. We are run by and represent young people aged 18-29, and our mission is to mobilise and empower young people to take positive action for global climate justice. An organisation I have collaborated with at UN climate conferences, where I have campaigned to educate others on climate economics and promote the development of alternative systems.

Whereas, during my time at EcoSikhUK I gained first-hand experience working with media and ensuring partnerships went smoothly. My favourite partnership was with Forestry England, creating a 'One-ness grove'. This site marks the ethos of one human race, one united effort, and one planet, with the hope of bringing people together. Focusing on the Sikh teaching of 'Ik' (one) whereby, we are all the same, coming from one light and one day returning to that one light. Additionally, this project aimed to bridge segregation across communities and encourage solidarity as we reclaim our green sites as a place of compassion and sharing. You can watch a small clip of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8WELZ0mQHw&t=21s>



Personally, these experiences have taught me the role of intergenerational knowledge sharing and the importance of building sustainably across generations -history always repeats itself. Therefore, researching into my parents and grandparents' pasts has taught me the importance of re-purposing items, using natural ingredients that are sourced locally and passing down clothes across generations. A practice becoming popular amongst younger generations in the shape of 'thrifting or charity shopping'. Not only does this avoid waste but allows for creativity and history to be shared, sharing memories through material items.

As I look toward the future, my hope is that we, as a global community, can truly understand the urgency of the climate crisis and work together to find solutions that are inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. I hope for a world where every person, regardless of background, feels a responsibility toward the earth, not out of obligation, but out of love and compassion. Awakening this sense of responsibility can guide each of us in our actions, no matter how big or small, towards creating a world where nature and humanity coexist in harmony.

My faith, Sikhi, fuels my hope for this future. The teachings of Guru Nanak Dev ji, particularly those that emphasise the oneness of humanity and nature, remind me that we are all interconnected. The perspective to always see the good in people with judgement, leaving judgement to God so we can be filled with kind intention. Additionally, the teaching to be equally spiritual and political (Miri-Piri) gives me motivation to continue, knowing that each action, each conversation, can contribute to a larger, positive change. Ensuring I support this movement with action alongside compassion.

Young people from diverse backgrounds have a vital role in building this better future. They bring unique perspectives shaped by their varied cultures, traditions, and histories. Their experiences, whether rooted in indigenous knowledge, spiritual practices, or modern science, offer valuable insights into living sustainably. By coming together, sharing our stories, and learning from one another, we can develop innovative solutions that honour both people and planet. I believe that by empowering children and young people, giving them the tools to make a difference, and valuing their voices, we can build a world that respects diversity, fosters resilience, and embraces compassion.

