Rhythmic improvisation

Improvisation is at the heart of North Indian classical music, both rhythmically and melodically. The simplest way to improvise a tukḍā is by using repetition. The following is an example of how to extend the ṭukḍā that we’ve learned into one that is four times the original length using three basic rules:

Step one
As we’ve discussed earlier, this tukḍā is in teen tāl, a time-cycle of 16 mātrā. It begins and finishes on the first māträ, which takes the total length of the tukḍā to 17 mātrā.

Firstly repeat the bol of the first four māträ, one bol at a time:
- the bol of the first māträ becomes dhā dhā dhā dhā
- the second bol of the second māträ doubles up to tin tin tin tin
- the third is nā nā nā nā
- and finally, the bol of the fourth māträ becomes te te te te te te te te

The rest of the tukḍā is played in exactly the same way as the original, hence increasing the total length of the amended tukḍā to 21 māträ. This is a tukḍā in its own right, as it begins with a teen and ends with a tihāi. However, in order to begin and end on the first māträ of teen tāl, two more steps are required.

Step two
Next, further extend the composition by repeating the entire amended tukḍā three times to make it 63 māträ in length (21 māträ times three, as seen by the end of step one).

Step three
Finally, keep a one-māträ gap between repetitions one and two and between repetitions two and three of the 21-māträ tukḍā; the result is a cakkardār tukḍā of 65 māträ in length.

This cakkardār tukḍā fits into a time-cycle of 16 māträ as four times 16 is equal to 64 māträ and the 65th māträ coincides with the first māträ of the fifth āvartan (time-cycle) of tīn tāl.

Advice to ‘take away’: you might ask yourself if it’s simpler to remember the above three rules in order to create the cakkardār tukḍā or remember the entire composition, as notated in its entirety – we think you know the answer to this question.