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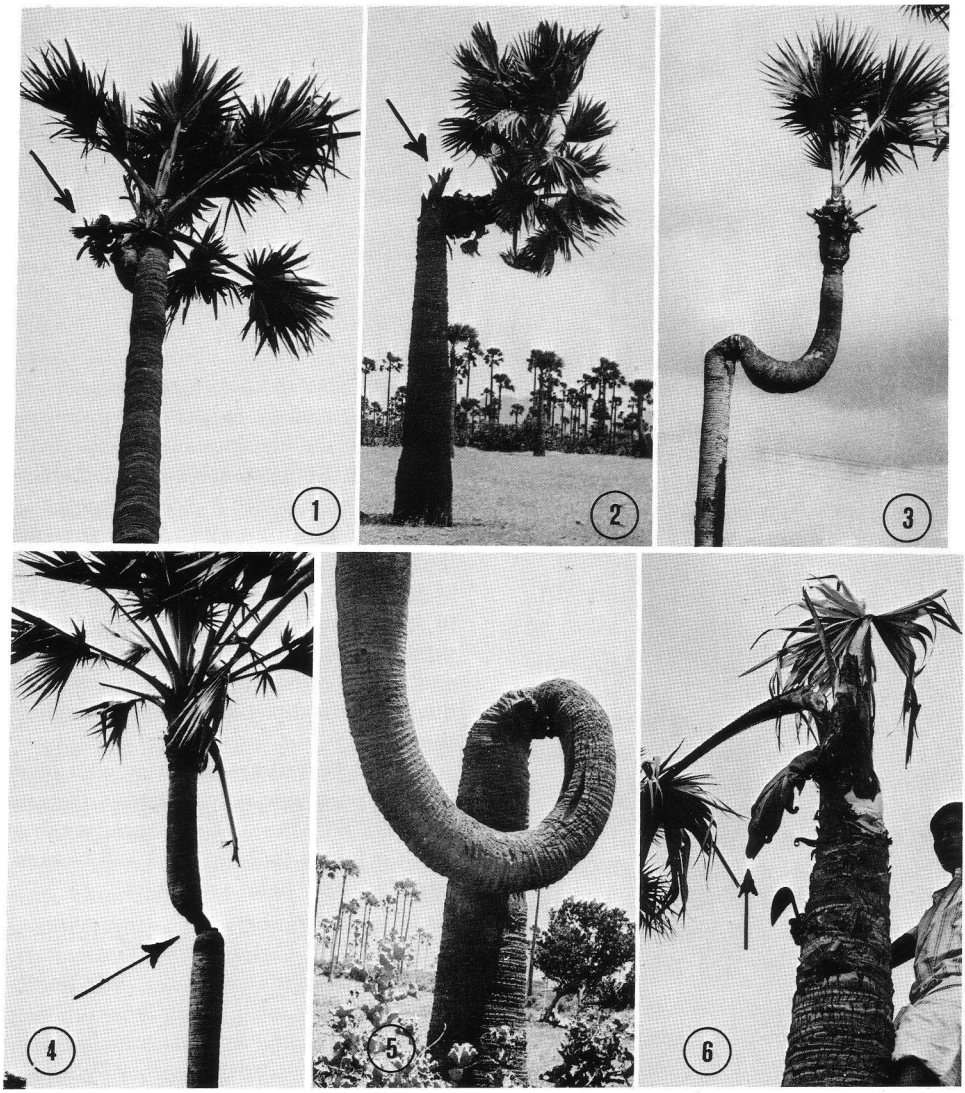
PALM PORTRAIT

In South India, it is not unusual to encounter palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*) palms that branch or are deformed in some way. The photographs in the Figs. 1–8



1. Laterally projecting new crown with leaves (arrow). Leaves of the original crown are gradually drying. 2. Plant after resuming growth upwards. Note remnants of the leaves in the original crown (arrow). 3. Plant with hunchback-like stem. 4. Stem with a constriction (arrow). 5. A twisted stem. 6. Original crown with dried-up leaves and laterally protruded new crown (arrow).

7. Dried-up leaves of original crown of the plant shown in Figure 6 dissected out to show the projecting new crown. 8. Same plant at a later stage. Note leaves of the new crown appearing like juvenile leaves of coconut.

show unusual "hunchback" stems growing in Tamil Nadu. Such "hunchback" stems are the result of the stem apex growing out of the side of the crown after damage to the apex caused by the rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*) and palm weevil (*Rhyncophorus ferrugineus*). These beetles can kill palms, but where only part of the apex is eaten by larvae, the apex may recover and grow out sideways to produce the bizarre shapes illustrated. Such damage has been recorded in other palms but the palmyras illustrated are some of the most bizarre examples of recovery after beetle attack.

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