

FOR IMMEDIATE

March 22, 2007

Contact: Kate Swan / 212.636.2680
kswan@christies.com

**CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER THE MOST IMPORTANT PEARL NECKLACE
EVER SEEN AT AUCTION**

Magnificent Baroda Pearls lead Christie's Spring Jewelry Sale

Magnificent Jewels
Christie's New York
April 25, 2007

New York - Christie's announces that the Baroda Pearls, the most important natural pearl necklace to ever be seen at auction, will lead the April 25 *Magnificent Jewels* sale in New York. This extraordinary two-strand natural pearl necklace is strung with sixty-eight of the largest pearls from the famed seven-strand natural pearl necklace that formed the cornerstone of the Royal Treasury of the Maharaja of Baroda. This exceedingly rare and historically important necklace presents an unrivaled opportunity for collectors through its combination of royal provenance, unrivaled quality, and exceptional rarity. The Baroda Pearls are expected to realize in the region of \$7-9 million.



“Having amassed huge quantities of pearls from all over the Gulf region, the Indian Royal families were famed for the superlative natural pearls in their treasuries. The seven-strand Baroda pearl necklace was the masterpiece of all these collections. The two-row necklace now comprising sixty-eight of the finest and largest pearls of this superb necklace encapsulates everything the modern collector could expect from the most important pearl necklace in the world,” said Rahul Kadakia, Head of Jewelry for Christie's Americas.

MAGNIFICENCE, ROYALTY & SPLENDOR: THE BARODA PEARLS

In India, the pearl was treasured most among all other gems and was used prolifically, adorning the magnificent royal dress of the Maharajas of India and woven into ornate decorative objects. Over the centuries, the Maharajas became known for their lavish taste, and their eagerness for vast quantities of pearls to adorn their crown jewels, symbolizing their wealth and power, often reached mythical proportions. Notable examples that illustrate the boundless riches of a Maharaja include an ornamental belt of one hundred rows of pearls; a majestic seed pearl and bejeweled canopy; and the magnificent seven-strand Baroda pearl necklace.

Considered to be one of the most notable jewelry collectors of the nineteenth century, the Maharaja of Baroda, Khande Rao Gawkwar (r. 1856-1870), possessed an unparalleled collection of state jewels. Most remarkable in his collection was the famous “Star of the South” diamond, a Brazilian diamond of 129 carats, and the “English Dresden,” a drop-shaped diamond of 78.53 carats, both of which were set together in a triple-tiered diamond necklace worn by the Maharaja. In addition to diamonds, Khande Rao came to possess an extraordinary necklace composed of seven strands of perfectly matched and graduated natural pearls. This necklace was among the most expensive items in the Baroda treasury and it remained among its most prized jewels.

In 1943, Maharaja Pratapsingh Gaekwar (r. 1939-1947) made headlines by marrying Sita Devi, his second wife. Referred to as “The Indian Wallis Simpson” by the Western media, she went on to become one of the most flamboyant Maharanis of all time, known for her passion for jewels and strong personality. Upon marrying the Maharaja, Sita Devi received the jewels from the Baroda treasury that dated back to Mughal times, as well as the renowned seven-strand pearl necklace and the three-row diamond necklace suspending the “Star of the South” and the “English Dresden.” While many of Sita Devi’s jewels were sold in Monaco in later years, the seven-strand pearl necklace remained a part of the Baroda Royal Treasury.



The current lot features the largest and most perfect pearls from the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh strands of the historic, rare, and world-renowned seven-strand necklace. Its two large strands, joined by a cushion-cut diamond Cartier clasp, consist of sixty-eight graduated pearls, measuring approximately 9.47 to 16.04 mm, all impeccably matched in color, luster and shape. Never before has such a supreme example with exceptional provenance appeared at auction. The necklace is complemented by a pair of natural pearl and diamond ear pendants, a brooch, and a ring *en suite*.

Auction:	<i>Magnificent Jewels</i>	April 25
Viewing:	Christie’s Galleries at 20 Rockefeller Plaza	April 20-24

CHRISTIE’S - JEWELRY MARKET LEADERS SINCE 1994

Christie’s has been the world market leader in jewelry for over 13 years, with sales totaling a record \$355 million in 2006, a +27% increase from 2005 and the highest sales total ever realized. Christie’s jewelry auctions take place in Amsterdam, Geneva, Hong Kong, London, Milan, New York and Paris, and cater to a vast audience of international collectors looking to buy a range of magnificent jewelry, from a single pair of ruby-inlaid cufflinks to a 100 carat diamond. Christie’s has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets, including the inaugural jewelry sale in the Middle East in January 2007 in Dubai.

###