



The precaution which Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) exercised when dealing with public wealth was indeed proverbial. Below are just two of the many incidents which illustrate this invaluable quality that he possessed:

On one occasion, some musk and ambergris (a type of perfume) arrived from Bahrain. (As it was public wealth,) Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) said, “By Allah! I wish to find a woman who is proficient at weighing items so that she can weigh these perfumes for me, enabling me to distribute them equally between the Muslims.”

Hearing this, Sayyidah ‘Aatikah bintu Zaid (radhiyallahu ‘anha), the respected wife of Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu), offered to weigh it for him saying, “I am proficient at weighing. Bring it and I will weigh it for you.” However, Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) declined her offer.

She then asked him the reason for his declining, to which he replied, “I fear that (while weighing it,) you might take the perfume (that adheres to your fingers from handling the musk and ambergris) and apply it like this (saying this, Sayyiduna ‘Umar [radhiyallahu ‘anhu] demonstrated by rubbing his fingers on his temples), and you will rub it on your neck. In this manner, you will have received more perfume than the rest of the Muslims.”

*(Az Zuhd lil Imaam Ahmad #623)*

Likewise, Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) was once suffering from a certain illness for which honey was prescribed as a treatment and medication. However, the honey which he required was in the Baytul Maal (public treasury).

Hence, Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) ascended the mimbar and sought permission from the people to use the honey saying,

“If you permit me to take some of the honey, I will do so. Otherwise, it is haraam upon myself.” Upon his request, the people permitted him to take the honey.

*(Tabaqaat Ibni Sa’d)*

*vol. 3, pg. 276)*

**Lessons:**

1. Sayyiduna 'Umar (radhiyallahu 'anhu) was the khaleefah and ruler of the Muslims. Hence, there was no person who was above him in authority. Despite this, he regarded himself to be completely accountable, to Allah Ta'ala as well as the people, as far as public wealth is concerned. Also, an added benefit of maintaining this level of transparency was that the situation would never arise where he could be accused of misusing public wealth.

2. The task of weighing the perfume had to be carried out by some person, and whoever the person would have been, his/her fingers would have become perfumed through handling the perfume. Hence, it was an unavoidable outcome. However, despite it being unavoidable that one person would enjoy this advantage over the others, Sayyiduna 'Umar (radhiyallahu 'anhu) did not allow his own wife to be that person, as he did not want his family to enjoy privileges through his khilaafah over others.

3. While misuse of even one's personal wealth is a sin, the sin of misusing or misappropriating public wealth is very grave indeed. Hence, the highest level of caution must be applied in this regard. Thus, people who are appointed in positions of trust should take special care to ensure that every cent is used correctly and complete transparency is maintained. Among those in such positions are:

- Trustees and administrators of masjids and madrasahs
  
- Officials of public organizations
  
- Executors of estates

- Guardians of minors and elderly people.