



Are women compared to animals ?

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Ibn 'Abbas said: "A man came to the Prophet and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, my master married me to his slave woman, and now he wants to separate me and her.' The Messenger of Allah ascended the pulpit and said: 'O people, what is the matter with one of you who marries his slave to his slave woman, then wants to separate them ? Divorce belongs to the one who takes hold of the *calf* [i.e. , her husband]. [1](#)

A christian missionary after citing this hadith comments:

pay attention how Muhammad disparages women by likening to *animals*, to chattel which men possess

Response:

First of all the translation of the hadith in question is not very accurate. The Arabic word translated as "*calf*" is "*saaq*" which means "*shin*". Bassam Zawadi in his article on the hadith in question states:

the word in Arabic is "*saaq*", which means "*shin*". So the translator intended to refer to calf, the body part, not the animal. The translator made a mistake; it should have been translated as shin [the front part of the leg from the knee downwards] and not calf [the back part of the leg from the knee downwards]. [2](#)

The hadith highlights the fact that no one can force a husband to divorce his wife. In the hadith we read that a man married his slave woman to his slave. Afterwards the master wanted to separate the two. The Prophet was informed about this and replied: "...divorce belongs to the one who takes hold of the *shin* [i.e. , her husband] ...". The expression "the one who takes hold of the shin" is probably a reference to intimate contact [touching]. In others words the Prophet pointed out that the right of divorce belongs only to the person who is allowed to have bodily contact or intimate relationships with the woman [i.e. , her husband] and no one else [not even the master of the slave or the slave woman]. Thirdly the hadith is "*weak*" as it has Ibn Laheema in the chain.

1: Ibn Majah 2081

2: Taken from www.call-to-monotheism.com